



PORTS-TO-PLAINS

TRADE CORRIDOR

Securing the Benefits of Trade to North America's Energy & Agricultural Heartland

Ports-to-Plains - Texas Department of Transportation - Del Rio - Cd. Acuña

Partners for an Extraordinary 2008 Ports-to-Plains Conference!

With just over 260 attendees at the 11th Annual Ports-to-Plains Conference, Ports-to-Plains and the Texas Department of Transportation partnered with the City of Del Rio and Cd. Acuña to host one of the largest events in Ports-to-Plains history. With a red carpet welcome from both cities, the conference delivered its promise by hosting a first-class event while providing an excellent line-up of speakers, topics, and tours. The foremost conference mission was accomplished by providing participants with innovative ideas, tools, and information that is necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor provides.

The conference began on Wednesday evening, October 1, with a business networking reception in the Grand Ballroom of the Del Rio Ramada Inn where the Mayor of Del Rio, Efrain Valdez; Cd. Acuña Mayor, Evaristo Lenin Pérez; Ports-to-Plains Chairman Sid Cauthorn and John Barton from the Texas Department of Transportation extended a heartfelt welcome to conference attendees.

Ports-to-Plains President Michael Reeves opened the conference presentations the following morning with the "State of Ports-to-Plains Address" discussing current and future projects as well as upcoming legislative work to be done in 2009. Attendees heard that 2009 will be a crucial year for Ports-to-Plains and transportation in general, with TxDOT undergoing the sunset review process in the Texas Legislature, and the federal highway bill set to expire in September. "While this is a great challenge for Ports-to-Plains, it is also a great opportunity for Ports-to-Plains members to be actively involved in crafting new transportation policy that greatly advances the development of the corridor," stated Reeves.

John Barton, Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations followed with an update from the Texas Department of Transportation stating there is a critical need to shore up the infrastructure now. "While Texas is at approximately 24 million people now, by 2040, it is expected to reach from 35 million to 51 million," stated Barton.

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Buzz David, President and CEO for the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation; John Friess, Director for Sonora Industrial Development Corporation and Mike Running, Executive Director for Dumas Economic Development Corporation spoke about how their organizations have utilized the Ports-to-Plains Corridor to boost business in their respective communities.

Pat Sauer, Vice President, Director of Development for the Staubach Company from Phoenix, Arizona gave an insight to pursuing retail opportunities in rural areas. He stated there is a need to be realistic in regard to the size of the community and the types of retail businesses you pursue, so search retail opportunities that have a history of success in comparable communities.

Jack Schenendorf, who serves as Vice Chairman for the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission in Washington, D.C. spoke about the need for transportation funding. "You cannot have a healthy and robust economy without a healthy and robust transportation network," stated Mr. Schenendorf. Serving as federal consultant for the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor Coalition, Schenendorf has been instrumental in the success of Ports-to-Plains.

The interesting keynote address was given during lunch by San Antonio's Joe Krier, Chairman of Texans for Safe and Reliable Transportation. "The bottom line is that transportation is vital to our economy, our jobs, our safety and to our family's quality of life. It's often overlooked as a public policy issue," stated Krier. "We must do our part to restore civility, urgency and common-sense to the transportation debate."

The conference then turned to business success stories where Kevin Butcher of Cameron-Butcher Commercial Real Estate from Colorado Springs discussed with the audience how they recently facilitated the addition of a business park and Flying J Travel Center in Limon, Colorado which has already brought more than 75 jobs in the past year to that community of 2000 persons.

New energy opportunities was the topic following the afternoon break with Ken Becker, Executive Director for Sweetwater Economic Development, Inc. and Kathy Keane, Executive Director for San Angelo Economic Development Corporation. Ken Becker

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showed an astonishing map of the wind energy potential that follows the entire Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor and on north through the Great Plains all the way to Canada. Ms. Keane stating how new energy opportunities can open the door for manufacturers and new job creation along the Ports-to-Plains Corridor. San Angelo has recently been named the home for Martifer Energy Systems, a manufacturer that produces wind towers that will soon provide 225 new jobs in San Angelo, Texas.

Trinidad Herrera, Director of Municipal Development, Cd. Acuña; Del Rio's City Manager Frances Rodriguez and Jorge Ramon, Director of Economic Development in Cd. Acuña gave a preview of Del Rio and Del Rio/Acuña ports of entry as well as a preview of the upcoming tours scheduled for the last day of the conference. Participants were given the opportunity to choose which modern maquiladora manufacturing facility in Acuña they wanted to tour. Facilities participating in the tours were Terex, Takata, Livestock Export Facility and Bendix Madasa. The day concluded with a business networking reception held at the historic Whitehead Memorial Museum in downtown Del Rio.

Conference attendees were greeted by hosts early Friday morning with buses provided to transport them across the border to reconvene the conference at Salon R.L. in Acuña and tours of the maquiladora facilities. The tours ended around noon with lunch back at Salon R.L. where the conference concluded and participants were loaded on the buses and driven back across the border into Del Rio.

Ports-to-Plains Chairman Sid Cauthorn commented, "The conference was very successful. The conference attendees were brought up to date on the current status of Ports-to-Plains and the national discussion on transportation infrastructure. In addition, the emphasis placed on the business benefits was, I believe, very helpful in that it gave us the opportunity to showcase the economic benefits of Ports-to-Plains for communities."

Ports-to-Plains President Michael Reeves stated, "The fantastic participation shows the enthusiasm and commitment to Ports-to-Plains throughout the corridor. Our members received some practical examples of things they can do to generate new jobs and economic opportunities because of Ports-to-Plains."

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Ports-to-Plains would like to thank everyone who assisted with organizing this outstanding conference and for all participants who took the time out of their busy schedule to attend. In addition, we would like to once again thank the sponsors who through their generosity were able to support one of our most successful conferences to date.

The 2008 Ports-to-Plains Conference Presentations are available on portstoplains.com. More will be added in the coming weeks. To access the presentations click here http://www.portstoplains.com/2008_conference.html.

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