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Mexican officials interested in cross-border terminal study

The San Diego County Regional Airport Authority has received confirmation that Mexican officials are interested in building a cross-border terminal, the South County Economic Development Council announced Monday.

Luis Cabrera, Mexico's counsel general, gave the assurance to airport authority chairman Alan Bersin in a letter sent March 2.

"We are extremely happy that Mexico and the United States are collaborating and setting a historical precedent regarding air transportation in a cross border environment," said Jim Janney, president of the South County EDC's board of directors. "We are pleased (they) have set this important effort in motion. The South County EDC can now take a step back and look forward to the results of the study."

In February, the airport authority agreed to spend a maximum \$385,000 on a market demand study for a terminal that would allow San Diego passengers to access flights out of Tijuana's Rodriguez International Airport without having to drive across the border.

Previous South County EDC studies have found that a cross-border terminal could reduce traffic congestion at both the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa border crossings. The South County EDC has been evaluating the cross-border connection for about 10 years.

"I am ecstatic about the fact that the airport authority is looking to maximize the existing airport facilities to relieve congestion," said Steve Castaneda, a Chula Vista councilman and a South County EDC member. "This is a remarkable partnership where the airport authority is joining hands across the border with local groups and federal agencies to further transportation options for the entire region."

The market demand study will look at four different schematics for terminal operations: a parking structure in California linked to the Tijuana airport terminal by a secure walkway; a full-service terminal in California, linked to the Tijuana airport by a secure walkway; a full-service terminal in California linked to a new U.S. concourse at the Tijuana airport by a walkway; and a terminal, concourse and gates in California with a taxiway across the border to the Tijuana airport.

"The significance of the confirmation from Mexico cannot be overemphasized," said Doug Perkins, South County EDC member. "All of us who have been working on this vision appreciate the consul general's prompt attention to this matter. South County is a thriving area for business. The more transportation options available throughout the region will only help our economy continue to grow."