

BORDER NEWS

April 15, 2009

An update about projects along the San Diego/Tijuana Border

Southbound Checks

Southbound checks will soon become the norm with the announcement by the Mexican Consul General that Mexico will begin inspection of vehicles entering Mexico. Anticipated to begin this summer, Mexico enforcement officers will deploy technology commonly referred to as "license plate readers" and a vehicle identification system (sensors, readers weigh in motion scales) to assist them with the security check. The focus of the inspections will be to identify weapons and other contraband entering Mexico.

Additionally, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations will be increased for southbound traffic. These have been occurring at random intervals, but that program will increase in number of operations. In addition to the search for weapons, ICE operations will also focus on recovery of stolen vehicles, drug enforcement and money laundering.

SENTRI Update

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials announced the opening of a new SENTRI pedestrian lane and an additional SENTRI vehicle lane at the Otay Mesa port of entry. The establishment of a permanent Secure Electronic Network for Traveler's Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) pedestrian lane and additional vehicle lane at the port will allow current members to further expedite their border crossing on foot or through use of the SENTRI vehicle lanes. The new SENTRI pedestrian and vehicle lane will become operational on Wednesday, April 15 at 6 a.m. Hours of operation of the SENTRI pedestrian lane are from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, including holidays. The new dual use lane is in addition to an existing dedicated SENTRI vehicle lane available seven days a week including holidays and will allow the flexible use of the newest lane to process either SENTRI or normal vehicles, as traffic conditions warrant. Hours of operation of the existing SENTRI vehicle lane are Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m., and from 5 a.m. to *midnight* on weekends and holidays. The nation's first SENTRI pedestrian lane opened at the San Ysidro port of entry on September 9, 2008. CBP's SENTRI provides dedicated vehicle lanes and expedited processing at various ports of entry on the Southwest border. SENTRI is a land-border crossing program that provides expedited CBP processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers along the U.S./Mexico border. Currently the SENTRI program in San Ysidro has more than 105,000 members. Interested travelers may apply for the SENTRI program by visiting the Travel page on the CBP website at www.cbp.gov/travel. The application process takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete. The membership fee is \$122.25, valid for five years.

SENTRI card holders can use the special pedestrian lane at the border in San Ysidro also. The wait time is significantly less with only 600 daily users. If you are crossing the border on foot and are one of the 100,000 SENTRI card holders you are encouraged to use this special lane.

Since the bus lane at the San Ysidro Port of Entry is being used for SENTRI traffic when bus traffic permits, wait times for autos have decreased. Additionally, lanes 1 through 6 are now being used for SENTRI traffic. There is an increase in SENTRI trained officers which is also assisting with the reduction in wait times.

Look for new signs and police officers to assist you with finding SENTRI lanes. Additional signs to direct vehicles to the SENTRI lanes have been placed in Tijuana to help facilitate the traffic flow. Additionally, the Tijuana Police have an officer stationed at the entry to the SENTRI lanes to ensure only SENTRI participants enter the lane.

Construction

Improvements to the San Ysidro Port of Entry continue. Lane 13 is being converted into a feeder lane that will feed traffic into 4 additional booths. Five stacked booths will be added to the current lanes.

Phase 1 improvements in San Ysidro are completely funded. Phase 2 funding is part of the Federal Economic Stimulus package. Phase 3 is still in need of funding.

Construction has begun between midnight and 4 am at the San Ysidro Port of Entry for road demarcation. Additionally, a large fence has been added around the port of entry building for security purposes.

Passport Required

Effective June 1, 2009 travelers entering the United States, including US citizens will be required to present a passport. Frequent crossers are encouraged to obtain a SENTRI pass or a Passport Card which contain the RFID technology allowing these documents to be scanned and read more efficiently. To facilitate crossers new equipment is being installed at the ports of entry. Known as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will require those traveling without a valid passport, passport card or SENTRI card to be further scrutinized leading to potential additional delays.

This publication is intended to keep you current with the projects along the border. While every effort is made to inform you of the most recent events circumstances may change what is stated above. Border News is published by the Port Working Group comprised of individuals from the following organizations: South County Economic Development Council, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, California Department of

Transportation, Otay Mesa Chamber of Commerce, San Ysidro Business Association, San Diego Association of Governments, General Services Administration, Customs and Border Protection Agency, State of Baja Tourism Office, Mexican Consul General's Office, Senator Boxer's Office.