

88TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION



McALLEN DAY IN AUSTIN



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Border Security Campaign

Many have researched the safety of the U.S. Border Region and research continues to show its safety contrary to the belief about the insecurity of the U.S.-Mexico border and frequent claims for the need to secure the border to prevent the spread of violence into the rest of the country. Rarely are border residents asked how they feel about safety and crime, which could help explain the claims that the border is an insecure warzone posing a threat to the entire country.

Claims to secure national border is common, and it gives negative perceptions of an unsafe border which is not supported by official crime rates and statistics, Border Patrol apprehensions, or the everyday experiences of people in cities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Data from a survey about perceptions of crime, sense of security and safety in neighborhoods and the city in general shows results that most border city residents feel safe.

What continues to hurt the McAllen MSA is the "collateral damage" caused by this negative perception of McAllen and regional cities, but the low levels of violence show our area is safe. McAllen is 7th safest city in the nation, and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) showed McAllen was ranked second lowest in Texas for violent crimes.

Although the Anti-immigrant rhetoric, crime and immigration, perceptions of fear of crime continue, McAllen MSA residents do not display any sense of danger living within proximity to the border of Mexico. The high level of federal law enforcement agencies in our area helps deter criminal activity, but so do the increasing job opportunities in the U.S.

In McAllen there is not a border security crisis, but a humanitarian crisis caused by violence abroad, family separation, and the encampment of asylum seekers in and outside the U.S.

To address the effect of the state's border security programs and the negative perception of the Valley being unsafe for tourism, employment, and the general economic growth that the rest of the state of Texas is experiencing, we ask our elected officials to help us in the following manner:

- Encourage public publicity for the Texas Border Region relating to the "immigration crisis" and its negative effect on cities.
- Emphasize that Valley cities are the safest cities in the state of Texas according to both state and criminal statistics.
- Encourage leaders to recognize the "collateral effect" of the negative border safety rhetoric on cities.

Prepared by:

Jim Darling
Former Mayor
City of McAllen



Workforce Development Priorities for McAllen MSA

The WFS service delivery area has a population of 978,942 individuals and is projected to grow 8% within the next 10 years (2022-2032). Currently 377,473 individuals are employed in the WFS service delivery area. As such, WFS has identified the following two workforce priorities for the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission (McAllen) Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA):

1. Expansion of TWC Grant Initiative(s)

The McAllen MSA has a current employment number of 297,200 jobs. The largest industries in the McAllen MSA are Education and Healthcare, Government, Trade, Transportation, and Logistics. As the Healthcare industry continues to experience tremendous growth, the labor shortage in this industry worsens, specifically for publicly funded employers. All healthcare employers in the region and the McAllen MSA have focused their efforts towards upskilling their current workforce to create an internal talent pipeline to fill vacancies.

The TWC Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant program currently assists private sector employers by leveraging funds to upskill incumbent employees. In 2022, TWC temporarily increased SDF funding by \$5 million to support the training of employees in healthcare occupations such as nurses, phlebotomists, and other healthcare related occupations, for public sector employers (e.g., public hospitals). However, the increased funding availability is set to expire in August 2023.

The expansion of the following is strongly supported by WFS a) TWC SDF Grant, and b) Apprenticeship Expansion Grant funding to include all publicly funded employers and nonhealthcare occupations. If grant eligibility is expanded to include publicly funded employers permanently, the grant will support local entities and municipalities that have experienced shortages because of demand growth and vacancies caused by tenured staff exiting the workforce. Furthermore, the expansion of these two grant opportunities (a & b) will leverage funding necessary for sustainable workforce development in high-demand industries.

2. Aligning and Accelerating Career Pathways

In the WFS service delivery area at least 22% of jobs available require a minimum of postsecondary education and 46% require from 1 to 6 years of work experience. In the McAllen MSA, there are currently more than 3,400 job openings requiring specialized skills such as Nursing, Merchandising, Bilingual, Marketing, and CPR. In addition, job openings require other soft and/or technical skills such as Communications, Customer Service, Management, Leadership, etc., and software skills such as Office Software, Database Software, Virtual Meetings, Operating Systems, etc.

Therefore, accelerating avenues for employment through education, training, internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities aligned to target and demand occupations are critical. Career pathways should include the following seven key components: 1) alignment with high wage, in-demand labor market information, 2) links between secondary and postsecondary education with multiple entry and exit points, 3) credential and degrees with value in the labor market, 4) integration of rigorous academics and career-focused learning, 5) strong college and career advising and counseling supports, 6) continuum of work-based learning opportunities, and 7) cross sector partnership.

Prepared by:

Francisco Almaraz
Chief Executive Officer
Workforce Solutions



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Boosting the Health Care Workforce Pipeline

Long-term workforce challenges existed well before the COVID-19 pandemic, with an aging workforce and shortages of nurse faculty and clinical training sites. Roughly 500,000 nurses are expected to leave the workforce bringing the overall shortage to 1.1 million nurses in Texas. To keep up with the state's rising population and growing health care needs, increased support should be prioritized for educational and loan programs. Health care workforce shortages (particularly nursing) have strained the state's health care system and threaten hospitals' ability to care for patients. Investments are needed to build a robust pipeline of health care professions in shortage, with a strategic focus on nursing.

- **Nursing Shortage Reduction Fund** – provides grants to nursing education programs for public and private schools of higher education. In 2013, the state appropriates \$35 million to the fund, however, by 2021 it falls to \$19 million. Significant funding is needed to increase nurse graduates and grow the number of bedside nurses.
- **Graduate Medical Education Expansion Program** - supports the effort to increase first-year physician residency programs. The 87th Legislature appropriated \$199 million to the program for the 2022-2023 biennium.
- **Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Assistance Program** – encourages qualified nurses to serve as faculty at eligible institutions of higher education. In 2021, the program had about \$3 million in appropriations. Hospitals support additional funding to increase the availability of nurse faculty.
- **Physician Education Loan Repayment Program** – encourages qualified physicians to practice medicine in a Health Professional Shortage Area or to provide Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance program services. Texas hospitals support an increase in physicians in rural and underserved areas.
- **Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals** – provides assistance to behavioral health providers including psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health advanced practice nurses, counselors and social workers. Currently funded at \$2 million per biennium, THA supports increasing funding to help address the critical shortage of behavioral health professionals.
- **Hospitals support the growth of the allied health care workforce** – the Texas Legislature needs to direct an evaluation of acute and ongoing allied health care workforce and develop strategies to increase these professionals.
- **State-of-the-Art Research Facility for Hispanic Health in the Rio Grande Valley** - Building a state-of-the-art research facility will provide the foundation needed to establish Texas a national leader in Hispanic focused medical research and provide a strong bioscience ecosystem and economic engine for the State of Texas. The research conducted at the facility will directly impact the welfare of Texans who will be majority Hispanic by 2030 and draw hundreds of millions of dollars in investment into the state, fuel economic growth, and further cement the State of Texas as the future of the bio-science industry and the epicenter for Hispanic research nationally.

Provided by: The Texas Hospital Association

Presented by:
Todd Mann, CEO
South Texas Health System



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McAllen Independent School District Student Funding Allotment

Current School Funding Model:

State funding, as calculated with Texas Education Agency is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA), District Tax Effort and Available School Fund. The allotment per student, if present every day, is \$6,160. Regular allotment is further reduced by the District's tax effort.

For example, based on our fiscal year 2022-2023 projections: regular allotment net of Tax Effort and Available School Fund totals \$54,467,586. Calculation is based on a 92% attendance rate of our projected enrollment.

Proposed School Funding Model:

We propose that school funding be based on enrollment versus ADA. This could be determined at snapshot date, currently the last Friday in the month of October or any other pre-determined date.

Why?

Texas is one of only 6 states that currently funds based on attendance including California, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Missouri. The pandemic has exemplified the need for stability in the funding model. Most District's attendance rates have not recovered to pre-pandemic numbers. Additionally, all resources and overhead expenditures remain constant if a classroom has 20 students or 18 students. Districts have extreme pressure to provide appropriate staff compensation increases.

For our District alone, the increase in projected state funding is approximately \$9 million; providing for the ability to recruit and retain quality staff to continue to provide excellent services to our students.

Prepared by:

Dr. J.A. Gonzalez
McAllen ISD Superintendent



Anzalduas International Bridge Land Port of Entry Expansion Project

BACKGROUND

The Anzalduas International Bridge (Anzalduas) is a crucial international crossing on the U.S.-Mexico border which is owned and operated by the cities of McAllen, Mission, and Hidalgo. Anzalduas' strategic location puts it at a major crossroads for manufacturing, trade and travel in Mexico and the U.S. Anzalduas is poised to facilitate millions of dollars in trade daily because Anzalduas connects North America's most powerful manufacturers, goods, and people. Across the river from Anzalduas in Reynosa, Mexico, there are 150 maquiladora manufacturing facilities producing cell phone parts, home appliances, medical equipment, and many electronics. In addition, Anzalduas lies two hours north on a direct route from Monterrey, Mexico's manufacturing leader.

Anzalduas directly connects McAllen's 775-acre Foreign Trade Zone and its 400 companies to Mexico. It is also the preferred route for tourists and other travelers to shop in McAllen.ⁱ

What happens at Anzalduas impacts manufacturing, logistics, agricultural supplies, and retail sales around the country.

The Port of Hidalgo, which encompasses three bridges [Pharr, Hidalgo and Anzalduas] in the McAllen area, is the second-busiest land port in the country for the importation of fruit and vegetables into the United States. Currently, the Pharr International Bridge is the only bridge connecting Hidalgo County to the Reynosa, Mexico area that is allowed to handle commercial traffic. Its average of 9,500 commercial trucks per week forces many to endure long hours waiting in lines that drives down economic potential.ⁱⁱ TXDOT completed a study in 2010 that showed the Pharr-Reynosa Bridge experiences wait times of nearly 100 minutes during peak traffic times.ⁱⁱⁱ As trade and its importance grows, so must bridge capacity, capability, and infrastructure.

NORTHBOUND AND SOUTHBOUND EXPANSION

The Anzalduas Land Port of Entry Expansion Project will expand the current facility operations to include full commercial capabilities for both north and southbound commercial vehicles. The northbound and southbound facilities will be an investment by the Anzalduas Bridge Board, the state and federal governments, and the City of McAllen. The funding cost for this project is estimated to be \$83 million.

There are many benefits for the region by having this facility, but the top six identified benefits include:

- Substantial fuel savings and reduction of environmental footprint
- Reduction of commercial vehicle congestion and wait times at the Pharr Land Port of Entry,
- Reduction of border crossing times at the Anzalduas Land Port of Entry,
- Improved inspection systems (x-ray and non-intrusive technologies),
- Improved distribution of personnel at Pharr and Anzalduas Land Ports of Entry, and
- Enhanced regional competitiveness due to an increase in commercial crossing options in the region.

i. McAllen Chamber of Commerce

ii. Texas Center for Border Economic and Enterprise Development

iii. TXDOT/Texas Transportation Institute, 2010



I-2 and FM 396 (Anzalduas Hwy) Direct Connectors

The City of McAllen, in coordination with the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP), is improving the Anzalduas Land Port of Entry (LPOE) to receive commercial traffic entering and departing the land port. The full commercial infrastructure improvements will support the inspection and processing of fully laden commercial motor vehicles (CMV) for the southbound (departing) and northbound (entering) inspection facilities. The proposed improvements are expected to significantly increase the commercial vehicle traffic along Anzalduas Highway (FM396), the main access thoroughfare to the Anzalduas LPOE. CMV traffic at LPOE is forecasted to reach over 1,500 northbound average daily CMVs.

CMVs entering and departing the U.S. travel on FM396 Highway northbound and southbound, via Interstate 2 (I-2), three and one-half miles north of the Anzalduas LPOE. CMVs en route to or departing from the U.S. mainland and Canada travel on I-2 in an eastbound or westbound direction to and from Interstate 69C (I69C) nonstop directly connecting northbound and southbound with minimal delay. The current junction of FM 396 and I-2 is an on-grade signalized intersection in which the existing FM396 Highway main lanes merge with the I-2 frontage road at the roadway intersection. Westbound travelers on I-2 must exit to enter FM396 at this signalized intersection. The forecasted increase of CMV travelers approaching the FM396 and I-2 intersection will be merging with local traffic, posing an increase in traffic movements and congestion that will in turn evolve to a decrease in operating conditions of the approaching roadways in all directions, and leading to a drop in the level of service and increase in travel time causing a freight transportation delay.

To increase the Anzalduas LPOE efficiency on moving incoming and outgoing freight traffic, the City of McAllen recognizes the need for the construction of a direct connection between the FM 396 and the I-2 main travel lanes, connecting northbound FM396 to eastbound I-2 main lanes, and connecting westbound I-2 to FM396 main lanes, thus allowing free flow nonstop of CMVs entering and departing the country with cargo and goods. The improvement to the junction of FM396 and I-2 freeway direct connection allows an efficient and safe transportation delivery route of goods and services regionally, nationally, and internationally consistent with U.S. DOT and FHWA.

The overall project cost is estimated at over \$143 million dollars, including but not limited to project development process, right of way acquisition, environmental impacts, utility relocations, and construction.

Prepared by:

Eduardo J. Mendoza, PE, PTOE, City Engineer
City of McAllen
Engineering Department

Presented by

District 2
Mayor Pro-Tem Joaquin Zamora

THE CENTER FOR URBAN ECOLOGY AT QUINTA MAZATLÁN

Executive Summary



ADVANTAGES OF SUPPORTING A SHOVEL-READY PROJECT FOR TEXAS

In 2016, the City of McAllen and Quinta Mazatlan began fundraising to create the Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlan which will offer enrichment programming that fosters interest in STEM programs, health, eco-tourism and sustainable communities.

ECONOMIC IMPACT TO THE REGION

The expansion of Quinta Mazatlan is estimated to have a \$284 million direct economic impact on the region through construction, operations and visitor spending and 700 jobs will be attributed to the expansion of Quinta Mazatlan.

TEXAS RECOGNITION ON THE GLOBAL TOURISM MAP

The state-of-the-art project will draw worldwide attention to South Texas, attracting over 200,000 annual visitors from around the world.

TEXAS' FIRST

The Center for Urban Ecology will be a Texas first, reaching far beyond the footprint of the campus. The Center for Urban Ecology will achieve both LEED and Sustainable SITES Certifications.

CHILD WELL-BEING IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY OF TEXAS

The Valley has over 433,000 school-aged children, 94% Hispanic and Latino. By 2050, the projection is for over 600,000 children. As population grows, the future depends on the health and education of its children. The center will work to raise the bar for STEM learning in partnership with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

INVESTING IN THE CENTER FOR URBAN ECOLOGY

The City of McAllen-Quinta Mazatlan has received \$8.5 million in grants from Texas Parks & Wildlife to help create the Center for Urban Ecology. The grants afforded the project the ability to purchase 5 acres, bringing the total expansion to 14 acres, doubling the urban sanctuary. The grant also influenced the commitment from other lead donors including UTRGV.

STEPS TO COMPLETE THE CENTER FOR URBAN ECOLOGY

Over \$35 million has been raised to help complete the extraordinary ecotourism-based education center in South Texas. The City of McAllen-Quinta Mazatlan is seeking a \$10 million investment from the state to help open the Center for Urban Ecology in 2025.

Views of the Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlán, McAllen, Texas

ENTRANCE TO THE CENTER FOR URBAN ECOLOGY



PALM ROOM & WILDLIFE POND



PALM DECK



The Center for Urban Ecology at Quinta Mazatlán

OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATRE & RIVER PLAZA



OUTDOOR DISCOVERY & TEACHING DECK



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM





2022 OCTOBER

PROJECT BUDGET:	\$34,856,627	\$52.6 MILLION
Phase I	\$5,638,419	\$5,638,419
Phase II	\$29,218,208	\$47,000,000

PHASE I	\$5,638,419	
Master Plan	\$392,150	Overland Partners
Design Services	\$3,715,397	Megamorphosis
Commissioning	\$23,800	Verifies HVAC, electrical, plumbing-for LEE Platinum
Land to 10th	\$1,507,072	City of McAllen

PHASE II	\$29,218,208	
Park n Ride	\$3,662,779	
CUE Project	\$17,549,603	
Alt-West Wing	\$6,372,095	(East \$5,101,454 + West \$1,270,641)
Sky Bridge	\$303,071	
Palm Room	\$371,827	
Other?	\$958,833 ???	

INCOME	\$34,027,779
\$8,500,000	TPWD
\$5,000,000	UTRGV
\$5,000,000	City of McAllen (2022-2023 Budget)
\$4,065,000	Friends of QM
\$4,000,000	MISD
\$3,662,779	Transit
\$1,800,000	EDA
\$1,000,000	HUD-Vicente
\$1,000,000	McAllen Public Utility



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Kappler Campground

Currently, the City of McAllen has three campground pads at the McAllen Fireman's Park in McAllen. It has no Archery lanes, only three catch and release fishing ponds, and no designated off-road bike riding trails.

Proposed Campground Project:

The Kappler Campground improvements will add a nature haven in the ever-growing north area of McAllen on north 23rd Street between Frontera and North Gate. Access to the native landscaped 20-acre property will give visitors an immersive experience through fishing, kayaking, camping, archery, and bike riding.

Site amenities will include a mile walking trail, off road biking trail, an archery alley, camping pads, a Group Pavilion, fire pits, restrooms, (2) two – piers (fishing and boating), enclosed eating area, a multipurpose meadow, and access to utilities will be centralized for water and restrooms. To make overnight camping for first time campers an authentic experience, solar lighting will be utilized to maintain a dark sky rating to allow the twinkling of the stars to shine down from the beautiful South Texas night sky.

Why?

McAllen Parks and Recreation is committed to promoting an unsurpassed quality of life in McAllen through expanding and developing venues for family gatherings and recreation. Crafting a native space like Kappler Campgrounds provides the citizens and visitors a place to experience South Texas Nature just minutes from their home.

To fund a project of this size requires \$1.1M. The City of McAllen is respectfully requesting funding to provide this unique opportunity to the residents of McAllen and surrounding municipalities.

Prepared by:
Denny A. Meline
Director of McAllen Parks & Recreation Department

Presented by:
City Commissioner District 2
Joaquin Zamora

Schematic design on the following page.

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Kappler Campground

SCHEMATIC DESIGN - REVISED
KAPPLER PARK

McAllen, Texas



