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# Media Release



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SCAG, MEXICALI HOLD BI-NATIONAL HEARING TO IDENTIFY  
INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

**LOS ANGELES** – More than 130 elected, business and community leaders from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border convened today at an unprecedented bi-national hearing to explore emerging transportation infrastructure and economic development opportunities throughout the border region. Trade, transportation, economic development, goods movement, drug trafficking, public health, environmental and public safety were among the issues discussed at the hearing. Coordinated by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the hearing was part of a larger effort to develop strategic relationships throughout the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico.

“With this event, we hope that our border region will find new means of cooperation and fair arguments to avoid confrontation between our communities,” stated Mexicali Mayor Samuel Enrique Ramos Flores.

“With the explosion in global trade, Mexico will become an increasingly important partner in the economic development of Southern California and the nation,” stated Victor Carrillo, Imperial County Supervisor and SCAG Regional Councilmember. “I look forward to a continued collaboration with the Mayor of Mexicali as well as other leaders throughout the Border Region in this important effort to ensure that we are all prepared for the future that awaits us.”

The Southwest Compact represents a natural extension of recent efforts to bolster goods movement in Southern California and neighboring areas. By identifying priority infrastructure improvements and forging economic links among leaders in the U.S. (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas) and in six Mexican states (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas), the Southwest Compact would foster a ‘mega region’ with the size, diversity, industrial strength and geographic advantages to be a competitive force internationally.

The Southwest gateway forms a unique international trade region, receiving the majority of imports from the Pacific Rim for the entire United States. The Los Angeles and Long Beach port complex is already the fifth largest in the world, and the amount of cargo arriving from the Pacific Rim is expected to triple at the region's ports by 2030.

SCAG Executive Director Mark Pisano suggested that transportation infrastructure could be financed through such measures as public-private partnerships or changes to zoning and land use. Pisano also noted that more than a dozen separate government and private entities are currently working on various transportation, economic development and related efforts in the border region, and he expressed hope that the Southwest Compact Task Force can serve as an important coordinating body to bring these efforts together. The group also committed to developing a blueprint for future action that would include future coordinating events, exploration of federal and state legislative vehicles and an even more concerted effort to engage the private sector in developing critical transportation improvements.

San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Executive Director Gary Gallegos said that he looks forward to working closely with SCAG on an assortment of border issues, and he indicated that his organization would be making a series of recommendations to the Southwest Compact Task Force at a future convening.

"There are overwhelming efficiencies in global economies, including streamlining transportation, increased productivity, encouraging cost-sharing measures, and sustainable planning for population growth," stated Pisano. "Establishing a trade bloc with Mexico and a seamless logistics industry will best position our region to compete with Europe and Asia."

"Through this hearing, elected and business leaders in the border states will be laying the foundation to transform this region into a true economic powerhouse," said El Centro City Councilmember Jon Edney, a SCAG leader in the efforts to hold the bi-national hearing.

"If we can build upon today's event and forge new constructive working relationships between the political leadership on both sides of the border, we can really transform the collective future of our respective areas," said Greg Pettis, Cathedral City Councilmember and Chair of SCAG's Southwest Compact Task Force.

For more information about the April 26<sup>th</sup> Bi-National hearing, please call Don Rhodes at 213/236-1840 or Jeff Lustgarten at 323/466-3445.