



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT: Cities, feds grapple with inadequate border-crossing infrastructure

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Port of entry infrastructure along the U.S. borders has struggled to keep up with the needs of cross-border trade and travelers, lawmakers and federal officials testing during a House hearing.

In some cases, the infrastructure is simply outdated—some land ports of entry are more than 50 years old. However, "even those constructed as recently as 15 years ago require renovation or replacement to meet present-day security standards" adopted after the 9/11 attacks, said John Wagner, the head of Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations, at the July 16 House Homeland Security subcommittee on border and maritime security [hearing](#).

The 9/11 attacks led not only to new security standards but also an overhaul of the federal

Wagner noted that most ports of entry "were built to support the distinct and independent operations of pre-DHS components," including the now-defunct Customs Service and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In cases where CBP has chosen ports of entry to upgrade, the execution has not followed soon enough, said Rep. Candice Miller (R-Mich.), who chairs the subcommittee.

A project to expand the port of entry on the U.S. side of the Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron, Mich.—which is in Miller's district and also one of the busiest border crossings between the United States and Canada—has been in the planning stages for more than a decade, Miller said.

She noted that buildings on the expansion site were demolished years ago, while the city waits for the federal government to deliver on its plan to expand its customs plaza.

While limited resources have prevented CBP from upgrading ports of entry to keep up with growing trade and security needs, a handful of cities have taken part in a pilot program to supplement federal efforts with their own resources.

El Paso, Texas, has given around \$400,000 of its own money to CBP to alleviate pedestrian, vehicle and commercial traffic along border crossings in the city. The money funds overtime pay for CBP officers during peak travel times, in order to keep more lanes open.

Oscar Leeser, the mayor of El Paso, who testified at the hearing, said he hoped the success of the pilot program would lead to a national rollout.