



**Office of the Secretary of State
Border Commerce Coordinator Report 2024**

**Jane Nelson
Secretary of State**

Introduction

In January 2023, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Jane Nelson as Secretary of State and designated Secretary Nelson as Border Commerce Coordinator (BCC) pursuant to Section 772.010 of the Texas Government Code.

The BCC's role is to facilitate communication and coordination of border initiatives among state agencies, local officials, and the federal governments of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Additionally, the Secretary of State serves as the Chief International Protocol Officer for the State of Texas and acts as the Governor's Chief Liaison to Mexico and the Border Region of Texas, working closely with Mexican officials and other stakeholders to promote cross-border cooperation and collaboration.

This report covers the activities of Secretary Nelson as Border Commerce Coordinator in 2024.

I. Overview of Border Commerce Coordinator's Role and Responsibilities

Section 772.010 of the Texas Government Code outlines the duties and responsibilities of the State's Border Commerce Coordinator.

Pursuant to Section 772.010(a), the Border Commerce Coordinator is tasked with, among other duties: examining trade issues between the United States, Mexico, and Canada; acting as an ombudsman for government agencies within the Texas and Mexico border region by improving communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments; working with federal officials to resolve transportation issues involving infrastructure, including roads and bridges, to allow for the efficient movement of goods and people across the Texas-Mexico border; and working to identify problems associated with trade and transportation infrastructure and develop recommendations for addressing those problems.

Section 772.010(c) reflects that the BCC will coordinate with other state agencies, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, other "appropriate community organizations" along the Texas-Mexico border, and "comparable entities in Mexican states" along the Texas-Mexico border to "address the unique planning and capacity needs of those areas." Under this provision, "the coordinator shall assist those governments, organizations, and entities to identify and develop initiatives to address those needs."

Section 772.010(d) directs the BCC to work with: (1) "private industry and appropriate entities of Texas and the United States to require that low-sulfur fuel be sold along highways in Texas carrying increased traffic related to activities under the North American Free Trade Agreement"; and (2) "representatives of the government of Mexico and the governments of Mexican states bordering Texas to increase the use of low-sulfur fuel." In addition, Section 772.010(e) provides for the creation of the "Texas Good Neighbor Committee," consisting of the mayors of "every municipality located in this state along the border between Texas and Mexico that has an adjoining sister city in Mexico." The Good Neighbor Committee is tasked with advising the BCC

on “key trade, security, and transportation-related issues important to the municipalities appointed to the task force”; meeting with mayors of Mexican cities to identify problems and recommend solutions; seeking assistance and input from private-sector stakeholders; and providing recommendations to the BCC in carrying out the BCC’s statutory duties.

This report is being submitted pursuant to Section 772.010(c) of the Texas Government Code, which provides that before January 1 of each year, the BCC “shall submit to the presiding officer of each house of the legislature a report of the coordinator’s activities under this subsection during the preceding year.”

II. Communications with Mexican Officials and Others Relating to Texas-Mexico Trade

In 2024, the Border Commerce Coordinator and representatives of the Secretary of State’s office actively engaged with Mexican government officials and other key border affairs stakeholders.

As Border Commerce Coordinator, Secretary Nelson visited multiple border cities, where she met with economic development leaders from Texas and Mexico. She also collaborated closely with officials from Mexico’s four border states and other influential stakeholders to promote economic growth, enhance cross-border trade, and advance infrastructure projects. These efforts have proven critical to maintaining the strong partnership between Texas and Mexico.

Secretary Nelson hosted Edgar Guillaumin Ireta (Vice President of Public Affairs, Constellation Brands) in February at the Texas Capitol. During the meeting, Mr. Guillaumin underscored the real-world impact of Texas-Mexico trade, citing that a single brewery across the border supports approximately 34,000 jobs in Texas and contributes \$5 billion annually to the Texas economy. The following month, Assistant Secretary of State for Mexican and Border Affairs Carlos Ealy represented the Secretary of State’s office at a Texas Association of Business event in honor of Nuevo León Governor Samuel García Sepúlveda.

In May, Secretary Nelson delivered the keynote address at the annual Port of Eagle Pass Trade Summit, highlighting Texas ports’ vital role in driving economic growth and supporting trade across the state and the nation. That same month, Secretary Nelson’s staff met with Miguel Torruco (Mexico’s Secretary of Tourism) to discuss expanding flight connections between Texas and Mexico and promoting the trade of traditional and cultural products. Additionally, the Secretary’s staff delivered remarks at the Sister Cities International All Americas Summit in San Antonio, which brought together citizen diplomats, dignitaries, and elected officials from across the Americas.

In July, Secretary Nelson hosted Humberto Hernández-Haddad, the newly appointed Consul General of Mexico in Austin. During the meeting, Consul General Hernández-Haddad conveyed the Mexican federal government’s commitment to fostering closer collaboration with Texas.

In August, Secretary Nelson attended an event at the Governor’s Mansion, where Governor Abbott and Governor Manolo Jiménez Salinas of Coahuila signed a Statement of Mutual

Cooperation to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Coahuila and Texas.

Throughout the year, Secretary Nelson and her staff participated in events focused on the Texas-Mexico trade relationship. The Secretary's staff attended the U.S.-Mexico Leaders' Summit: Binational High-Level Dialogue, organized by the American Chamber of Commerce Mexico. At the SMU Texas-Mexico Center's 8th Annual Integration Symposium, Assistant Secretary Ealy delivered opening remarks highlighting the partnership between Texas and Mexico. Assistant Secretary Ealy also attended the University of Texas at Austin's inaugural Nearshoring Summit, a Texas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Coalition event at the Texas Association of Business, and the Lone Star Trade Summit. In addition, Secretary Nelson's staff met with Jacobo Rodríguez, the mayor-elect of Piedras Negras, to explore opportunities for future collaboration on border security and economic development initiatives.

The Secretary of State's office also engaged in multiple meetings with Mexican Consuls General, including Pablo Marentes (Austin), Humberto Hernández-Haddad (Austin), Francisco de la Torre Galindo (Dallas), Rubén Minutti Zanatta (San Antonio), Mauricio Ibarra Ponce de León (El Paso), and Judith Arrieta Munguía (Brownsville). These discussions focused on strengthening the economic and cultural ties between Texas and Mexico. Likewise, Secretary Nelson's staff maintained regular communication with Mexican federal government representatives and officials from Mexico's four border states and other regions, including Querétaro and Sinaloa.

Secretary Nelson and staff look forward to continued collaborations with Mexican officials and other partners in 2025 to advance the Texas-Mexico trade relationship.

III. Border Trade Advisory Committee

Established in 2001, the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC) was created to develop strategic solutions, address challenges in border trade and transportation, and provide recommendations to the Texas Transportation Commission and the Governor. The Border Commerce Coordinator serves as the presiding officer of BTAC. The committee's membership includes distinguished leaders from the Texas border region, such as mayors of border cities, representatives of metropolitan planning organizations, directors of border crossings, and leaders from private sector and trade associations involved in cross-border commerce.

In 2024, Secretary Nelson convened BTAC meetings on February 20 in El Paso, April 16 in Brownsville, August 27 in Baytown, and November 12 in Austin. The Committee focused on the continued implementation of the Border Transportation Master Plan (BTMP), a comprehensive strategy released in 2021 through a collaborative effort between the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and BTAC. The BTMP underscores the border region's critical role in the Texas economy and provides recommendations on policies, programs, and projects to address infrastructure challenges. This year, the BTMP's implementation activities included advancing key projects, conducting connectivity studies, and developing driver training programs and other initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure in the Texas-Mexico border region.

This year's BTAC meetings featured discussions with binational private sector and regional stakeholders representing diverse modes of transportation, including rail, trucking, maritime, and space. In addition, members were briefed on the House Bill 4422 study, which seeks to identify strategies to strengthen border security initiatives, implement public safety measures, and enhance technological and transportation infrastructure along the Texas-Mexico border. TxDOT issued a final report on the study's findings in November 2024. Several members of the Texas Legislature—including Senators César Blanco and Morgan LaMantia and Representatives Claudia Ordaz, Charles Cunningham, and Vikki Goodwin—attended, and provided input at, BTAC meetings.

Representatives from the Mexican states along the Texas-Mexico border participated in BTAC meetings in 2024 as well. These representatives included Fernando Alba (Chihuahua), Sergio Guajardo (Tamaulipas), Marco González (Nuevo León), and Devorah Karren (Nuevo León). The Mexican federal government was represented at BTAC meetings by Consul General Humberto Hernández-Haddad, Consul General Mauricio Ibarra Ponce de León, Consul General Judith Arrieta Munguía, and Deputy Consul Juan Pablo Cortés (Houston).

In 2025, BTAC will focus on monitoring the progress of the BTMP implementation and evaluating the HB 4422 study.

IV. Communications with Canadian Officials and Others Related to Texas-Canada Trade

As Texas's second-largest foreign export partner after Mexico, Canada plays a vital role in the state's international trade landscape. In February, Secretary Nelson met with Susan Harper (Canadian Consul General in Dallas) at the Texas Capitol to discuss strategies for enhancing collaboration and strengthening binational trade between Texas and Canada. The following month, Secretary Nelson engaged with several Canadian delegations, hosting meetings with Vic Fedeli (Ontario's Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade) and Frédéric Tremblay (Quebec's Delegate to Texas). Secretary Nelson later delivered remarks at the Canada House on the importance of cross-border collaboration and shared economic opportunities.

This year, Consul General Harper and Sandra Shaddick (Canadian Consul General in Northern Mexico) participated in BTAC meetings. Both consuls contributed valuable insights, fostering meaningful discussions and helping to strengthen connections between vital binational stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

The Secretary of State's office participated in a meeting with Governor Abbott, Mary Ng (Canadian Minister of Trade and Economic Development), and Kirsten Hillman (Canadian Ambassador to the United States) to discuss trade relations between Texas and Canada. The meeting included provincial leaders from Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia and representatives from major Canadian companies, fostering dialogue on strengthening economic ties and expanding bilateral trade opportunities.

In March, the Deputy Secretary of State traveled to Houston to meet with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith at the CERAWeek Conference. In August, Secretary Nelson joined Governor Abbott in a meeting with Premier Smith to discuss economic development and trade between Texas and Alberta. Deputy Secretary Nelson and Assistant Secretary of State for International Protocol Jacqueline Walker met with Nathan Neudorf (Alberta's Minister of Affordability and Utilities) regarding policy initiatives and collaborative opportunities, particularly in the areas of energy and electricity.

Throughout the year, Secretary Nelson and her staff maintained regular communication with federal and provincial leaders in Canada to coordinate trade and economic development efforts between Texas and Canada. Assistant Secretary Walker represented the Secretary of State's office at key events, including the Texas Association of Business welcome luncheon for Minister Ng and Ambassador Hillman and the Friends of Canada Golf Tournament in Dallas.

V. The North American Development Bank

The North American Development Bank (NADBank) is a binational financial institution established by the governments of the United States and Mexico to finance and support the development and implementation of critical infrastructure projects. NADBank provides technical expertise and other assistance for initiatives aimed at preserving, protecting, and enhancing the environment, thereby improving the quality of life for communities in both countries. Section 772.010(a)(6) of the Texas Government Code directs the Border Commerce Coordinator to work to "increase funding for the North American Development Bank to assist in the financing of water and wastewater facilities," reinforcing the state's commitment to addressing essential infrastructure needs in the border region.

Secretary Nelson's staff participated in the 2024 NADBank Board of Directors meeting, which included a report of the bank's annual activities and discussions on proposals to enhance its programs and initiatives. In August, Assistant Secretary Ealy attended the NADBank Summit 2024: Innovation for Sustainability in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region in San Antonio, which included experts from both nations to explore innovative strategies for environmental sustainability and economic development in the border region.

VI. Continued Work with Federal, State, and Local Officials and Stakeholders

Secretary Nelson maintained active communication with the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the agency responsible for implementing boundary and water treaties between the United States and Mexico. Secretary Nelson's staff participated in Rio Grande Minute Team negotiation meetings between the two nations, resulting in the development of Minute 331, signed on November 9. This agreement aims to enhance the reliability and predictability of Rio Grande water deliveries. In addition, the Secretary of State's office attended the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the State of Coahuila, which focuses on improving environmental quality and safeguarding public health along the Texas-Coahuila border.

Secretary Nelson regularly communicated with federal, state, and local officials and other stakeholders on matters concerning the Texas-Mexico border region. For example, Secretary Nelson and her staff met with BTAC members, participated in DPS Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Transportation meetings, and briefed legislators and their staff on Mexico-related issues.

Beyond the BTAC initiatives and other activities outlined in this report, Secretary Nelson remains committed to collaborating with public officials and stakeholders on critical border issues, as outlined in Section 772.010 of the Texas Government Code. The Secretary will continue to engage with mayors and local officials to address trade, security, and transportation challenges affecting the Texas-Mexico border and to drive regional economic growth.