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Vecinos is a partnership between the Arizona-Mexico Commission and Chamber Business News. The Arizona-Mexico Commission is Arizona's premier cross-border nonprofit organization focused on improving the economic prosperity and quality of life for all Arizonans through strong, public/private collaborations in advocacy, trade, networking and information. To learn more, visit azmc.org.

To highlight the often-untold stories, Chamber Business News delivers insider information, engages newsmakers and addresses issues that drive Arizona toward a brighter and more prosperous future. Chamber Business News is an initiative of the Arizona Chamber Foundation. To learn more, visit ChamberBusinessNews.com.
GOVERNOR DUCEY ADVANCES RELATIONS WITH MEXICO

Governor Doug Ducey has become a national leader when it comes to strengthening relations with Mexico. As chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission, Governor Ducey recognizes the importance of working collaboratively with his counterparts in Mexico to ensure both economies thrive.

BY LORNA ROMERO

Arizona’s relationship with Mexico, especially with Arizona’s neighbor to the south, Sonora, has become a national model for diplomacy and collaboration. Shortly after taking office, Governor Doug Ducey led a delegation to Mexico City to meet with elected officials and business leaders to share the message that Arizona is open for business. Today, Arizona enjoys a thriving relationship with Mexico that can be seen in the strong ties between Governor Ducey and high-level dignitaries in Mexico.

Last fall, Governor Ducey traveled to Mexico City to take part in new President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s inauguration festivities. While there he met with many cabinet level officials, bolstering his binational reputation as one of the U.S.’ most internationally engaged governors.

“It’s always great to be in Mexico, solidifying our relationship as trading partners, neighbors and friends for years to come,” Governor Ducey said. “From increased security at our ports of entry, to unique educational opportunities for our citizens, and more efficient flow of goods between our states and countries, we have so much groundbreaking work to build upon, and this trip was an opportunity to continue those efforts.”

During his trip, Governor Ducey met with Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and Ambassador of Mexico to the United States Martha Bárcena to discuss how to build upon the strong bond Arizona and Mexico share. The governor also met with the president and CEO of the United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, Albert Zapanta, to discuss the best practices for creating strong economic ties between the two countries.

“I think the governor has a deep understanding of what makes Arizona prosper,” Arizona-Mexico Commission President Jessica Pacheco said. “What makes Arizona prosperous is a thriving economy. Our trade relationship with Mexico is integral in making our economy not only a healthy one, but one that can compete globally. We are dealing with a global stage and Governor Ducey’s leadership with our relationship...
with Mexico—understanding the importance of our economic, social, and cultural ties—has really been a national best practice model.”

In 2018, two-way trade with Mexico exceeded $16 billion, and can be tied to 91,000 jobs in Arizona. This is due in part to our ports of entry, which are critical to facilitating healthy two-way trade. Systems like Unified Cargo Processing, in which U.S. and Mexican customs officials conduct inspections side-by-side, are helping to streamline the movement of goods and services through our ports.

“Arizona and Sonora have set an example of pragmatism that is already delivering results for the economy on both sides of the border,” said John Murphy, senior vice president for international policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. “From the governor to the Arizona Chamber and members of the congressional delegation from both parties, the focus has been on delivering real solutions that support trade, growth, and jobs. There’s an innovative approach, exemplified by initiatives such as SkyBridge, that is really exciting.”

“Governor Ducey has positioned Arizona at the forefront of cross-border collaboration and has re-energized the Arizona-Mexico Commission to lead the way in this important relationship,” said Juan Ciscosmani, Senior Advisor to Governor Ducey and Vice-Chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission. “The AMC is proud to execute on the Governor’s vision by hosting events like the 2019 Governor’s Luncheon with Mexico Ambassador to the United States Martha Bárcena earlier this year.”

The event focused on the issues facing both countries and opportunities for Arizona and Mexico in a new era of North American trade. Governor Ducey and Ambassador Bárcena’s desire for mutual prosperity aligns with the Arizona-Mexico Commission’s mission to foster a strong relationship between Arizona and Mexico and to embrace the economic, geographic and cultural ties.

“I just want to [say] how much I appreciate the leadership of Governor Ducey with other governors, other colleagues,” Ambassador Bárcena said. “Without his leadership, other governors would not be so sympathetic to Mexico and the USMCA. He’s a respected governor among his peers, he is a leader among his peers and he represents Arizona with great pride. So, you should also be very proud of your governor.”

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Arizona Governor Paul Fannin put it best when he said, “God made us neighbors, let us be good neighbors.”

Today the Arizona-Mexico Commission keeps Gov. Fannin’s words close as it works in collaboration for the mutual prosperity of Arizona and Mexico.

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF GLOBAL TIES

Arizona-Mexico Commission President Jessica Pacheco and Board Member Glenn Hamer discuss the organization’s expansive and lasting contributions.

BY JESSICA PACHECO & GLENN HAMER

For 60 years the Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) has served to promote a strong and cooperative relationship between Arizona and Mexico.

The organization has been a constant in Arizona since 1959 when Governor Paul J. Fannin and Sonora Governor Álvaro Obregón saw the importance of fostering cross-border cooperation and common ground. Together they launched what began as the Arizona-Mexico West Coast Trade Commission and its sister organization in Sonora, the Comité de Promoción Económica y Social de Sonora-Arizona.

In 1972, Arizona Governor Jack Williams expanded and elevated the newly renamed Arizona-Mexico Commission’s activities and appointed a select group of prominent business and community leaders to serve on its board of directors. Today, binational committees chaired by leaders in the public and private sector drive the work of the AMC to improve the economic prosperity and quality of life for all throughout the region.

The AMC has expanded its scope to a broad array of shared issues, including trade, infrastructure, energy, and tourism, becoming stronger under this structure even as state leadership changed hands under multiple Arizona and Sonora governors.

Throughout its 60-year history, the AMC’s contributions are expansive and lasting, focusing on advocacy for policies that uplift the joint region. Most recently, the Commission has played an essential role in advocating for the ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Through its work, the AMC is keenly aware of the deep impact trade between the U.S. and Mexico has on furthering economic prosperity in the region, and regularly discusses the importance of enhancing the two economies.

A report released earlier this year by the AMC and the Arizona Chamber Foundation found that in 2018 Arizona’s two-way trade with Mexico equaled $16.6 billion – nearly $7.6 billion in exports and $9 billion in imports.

Keeping trade, commerce, and tourism flowing is, of course, key. The organization is doing its part to reduce border wait times through championing innovative programs like Unified Cargo Processing, a joint U.S.-Mexico inspection program piloted at the Nogales Port of Entry.

The AMC also works to facilitate joint promotion of the region as a tourist destination, and supports binational university partnerships for Arizona’s universities through international degree programs and classes, student exchanges, and collaborative research initiatives. To support regional safety and strong infrastructure, the AMC has facilitated unique cross-border partnerships such as the Lukeville-Puerto Peñasco Safety Corridor and the commercial driver-training program that make our infrastructure safer and more efficient.

As chair of the AMC, Gov. Ducey knows the importance of keeping Arizona’s relationship with Mexico strong. Under his leadership, the AMC has never been more vibrant or effective. By continuing an open dialogue on common issues of importance, the two states have been able to advocate effectively on behalf of the region even as international tensions over border issues rose and fell over the years.

As we move into an increasingly interconnected world, the role of the AMC in strengthening Arizona’s ties with Mexico, Arizona’s number one trading partner, will become even more important. International business and global trade are on the rise, and increasingly our key partners are those across our own borders.

The AMC has set the standard as to how to develop and maintain a lasting neighborly relationship built on trust and mutual understanding.

The organization’s 60-year legacy of cross-border collaboration is one to celebrate. As permanent neighbors looking to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship, Arizona and Mexico are incredibly fortunate to have organizations like the AMC and its counterpart in Sonora working as neighbors for good.

Arizona Governor Paul Fannin put it best when he said, “God made us neighbors, let us be good neighbors.” Today the AMC keeps Gov. Fannin’s words close as it works in collaboration for the mutual prosperity of Arizona and Mexico.

Jessica Pacheco is the Vice President of State and Local Affairs for Arizona Public Service and Glenn Hamer is the President & CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
ARIZONA-MEXICO COMMISSION THROUGH THE YEARS

The Arizona-Mexico Commission was founded in 1959 and has since worked to strengthen Arizona’s relationship with Mexico. Take a look back at the last six decades.

BY SIERRA CIARAMELLA

The Arizona-Mexico Commission was founded in 1959 and has since worked to strengthen Arizona’s relationship with Mexico, especially its neighbor south of the border in Sonora. As it celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, the Commission looks toward the future. But, what are some of its key accomplishments in the last six decades?

THE FOUNDING

Former Arizona Governor Paul Fannin founded what is now called the Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) in 1959 following his election. Shortly after taking office, Gov. Fannin attended the Arizona-Sonora International Conference in Tucson held the following year. His trip was motivated by the conference and decided to create a permanent Arizona-Sonora committee. At the first committee meeting, Gov. Fannin overheard a Sonoran attendee say, “God made us neighbors, let us be good neighbors.”

1960s

From 1960-1961, the edible animals and animal imports group was valued at $68,087,859. The vegetable, food products and beverages group was valued at $41,648,908, according to tracking reports by the University of Arizona. Imports for consumption are measured by the value of merchandise that clears customs or U.S. Foreign Trade Zones and enters the market.

Former Arizona Governor Jack Williams rebranded the Arizona-Mexico West Coast Trade Commission to what is now known as the Arizona-Mexico Commission in 1967.

1970s

In 1972, the AMC established formal committees with a reorganization. The committees formed that year included Trade and Commerce, Banking and Finance, Agriculture and Livestock, Education, Tourism, Health, and Art and Culture.

In 1975, the AMC published the first bi-monthly bulletin, which was designed to help inform members and stakeholders of the AMC’s different happenings.

1980s

Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora officially became Sister Cities in 1980. The two cities became known as Ambos Nogales while Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt and Sonora Governor Samuel Ocaña García were in office.

In 1984, the AMC expanded to eight committees with the addition of the Legal Advisory Committee.

In 1989, the first U.S.-Mexico Border Governors Conference was held in Arizona.

1990s

In 1992, the State of Arizona opened a trade office in Hermosillo, Sonora to support business growth in both states and benefit the entire Arizona-Sonora region.

In 1994, the U.S. House of Representatives issued a conference report instructing the U.S. Customs Service to undertake a unified binational border port management pilot project. It was intended to design and test a model of unified border port management in the Nogales Customs District.

The following year, the Arizona State Legislature appropriated $925,000 for the border port management pilot project as well as the initiation phase of the CANAMEX multistate trade coalition.

The AMC assisted in the designation of the U.S. consulate in Hermosillo as a U.S. Consulate General office in 1998. It opened that year and established a permanent Consulate office in Nogales, Sonora.

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In 2008, Arizona and Sonora high school students compete in the Arizona-Sonora Bowl II, in celebration of Super Bowl XLII. Arizona beat Sonora.

In 2009, the AMC Environment & Water Committee completed a study of the feasibility of binational desalination to address water needs of the region. It was funded by the Central Arizona Project and Salt River Project.

**2010s**

The Transportation and Trade Corridor Alliance (TTCA) was established in 2012. It was geared to raise the level of attention “to issues and opportunities in trade, transportation, logistics and supply chain development,” according to the TTCA. Partners of the TTCA included the AMC, Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Office of Tourism, and the Arizona Department of Transportation.

In 2014, the State of Arizona Trade Office opened in Mexico City and the Mariposa Port of Entry expansion was completed. The expansion totaled about $200 million.

Arizona and Sonora teamed up in 2017 to create the “Home Port,” an agreement designed to pave the way for residents of the region to have easy access to cruises in Puerto Peñasco.

That same year, Gov. Ducey and Sonora Gov. Claudia Pavlovich signed the Lukeville – Puerto Peñasco Safety Corridor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The safety corridor was established to improve the safety of those traveling to and from Arizona and Sonora.

Unified Cargo Processing was piloted at the Mariposa Port of Entry as well. Through the pilot, agents on both sides of the border would conduct cargo clearance examinations in an effort to reduce wait times at the border.

In 2019, the Lukeville – Puerto Peñasco Safety Corridor launched after the MOU between Gov. Ducey and Gov. Pavlovich.

That year, Gov. Ducey announced the launch of SkyBridge Arizona at the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. SkyBridge Arizona is similar to the Unified Cargo Processing pilot in that it intended to speed up cross-border traffic. The development is designed to allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Mexican customs officers to examine shipments at the same time.

After President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was elected president of Mexico, Gov. Ducey attended his inauguration in Mexico City December of 2018.

The AMC partnered with the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Arizona Chamber Foundation in 2019 to publish a policy review, The USMCA & Its Impact on Arizona.

The policy review covers the importance of Arizona’s trade relationship with Mexico and Canada and the ways in which the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) will benefit the state’s economy.

That year, Gov. Ducey welcomed Martha Bárcena, Ambassador of Mexico to the United States, on her first official trip to Arizona as ambassador.
Guest Commentary

**BINATIONAL COMMITTEES – THE AMC’S PROVEN DRIVING FORCE**

Juan Ciscomani, Senior Advisor for Regional and International Affairs to Governor Ducey and Vice Chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission Board of Directors, discusses the Commission’s binational committees.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
—Margaret Mead

There is perhaps no truer statement to describe the Arizona-Mexico Commission’s (AMC) binational committees and the extraordinary results they have produced over the course of 60 years. The individuals serving on these committees have the best interests of both Arizona and Sonora in mind as they tackle a range of issues important to each state and to their respective Governors. The ultimate goal? To improve the quality of life in our region through cross-border collaboration.

The AMC was originally established in 1959 as the Arizona-Mexico West Coast Trade Commission, and by 1972 Governor Jack Williams of Arizona felt the Commission could expand its binational influence. The organization was rebranded and shortly thereafter the committees have been signed and issued—all of which have contributed to improvements in public safety, ease of transportation, quality of education, and joint efforts in the promotion of tourism and economic development in the shared region.

This unique structure is what sets the Arizona-Mexico Commission apart from other organizations. Today, there are 16 such binational committees, each led by a public and private sector co-chair from Arizona and Sonora. Many of our committee chairs are state agency directors, private sector leaders and experts in their respective fields.

Committee meetings are where the bulk of the AMC’s ideas originate and are the driving force behind the organization’s successes — many of which have garnered international attention. The committees welcome participation from members of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and the Comisión Sonora-Arizona (CSA) interested in helping drive the initiatives planned over the course of the year. Committee actions lead to real results, and these accomplishments are presented to the governors twice each year at the summer and winter commission meetings.

Since 1972, these committees have been an integral part of the Arizona-Mexico Commission’s foundation and the binational relationship. Under Governor Ducey’s leadership, the work of these 16 committees has been re-energized through the cooperative and productive relationship shared with Sonora Governor Claudia Pavlovich. Between 2015 and 2018 alone, 13 memorandums of understanding, declarations of cooperation and joint statements have been signed and issued.

However, the committees have also inspired many lighthearted moments. Within the first two decades of the organization’s founding, we saw multiple friendly sports exchanges between Arizona and Sonora. Arizona hosted numerous Little League baseball teams while the University of Arizona sent multiple softball teams to play in Mexico. In 1968, the State of Sonora gifted Arizona a statue of Father Kino. The statue currently resides in Tucson, Arizona and contains a copper time capsule that is to be opened in 2235.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission has ensured that the shared language, history, culture, stories, food, and most importantly, values, transcend our shared border to offer a unique and vibrant region. It is through the 16 committees that the Arizona-Mexico Commission is empowered to champion these values that continue to strengthen an incredibly important relationship. Our ties with Mexico have never been stronger, and through the impactful work of the AMC’s thoughtful, committed partners, we will continue to make a lasting impact for the next 60 years and beyond.

BY JUAN CISCOMANI

Arizona-Mexico Commission Binational Committee Members, 2019.

Lukeville-Puerto Peñasco Safety Corridor at the Lukeville-Sonoyta Port of Entry in 2018.
ARIZONA-MEXICO COMMISSION TIMELINE

The Arizona-Mexico Commission has 60 years of rich history. This visual timeline explores the early days of the AMC and recent accomplishments.
The University of Arizona
Arizona Governor Paul
During the conference,
Arizona-Mexico West
Social Sonora-Arizona.
Promoción Economica y

Governor Fannin and
imports for
Arizona.
Samuel P. Goddard
An Arizona-Sonora Delegation
Recognition Day" at the New
is inaugurated
Jack Williams
and contains a time capsule
that will be opened in 2235.
Arizona a statue of Father
Governor Williams.
XIX Olympiad in October
Arizona-Mexico
Commission by
Commission is
1968, in Mexico City.
5th Arizona-Sonora Committee
The City of Phoenix
transportation systems
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2018

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Mining Committee is established.
• The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Organizations Committee is
established.
Governor Napolitano
• The Arizona-Mexico
Commission Emergency
Initiative is implemented.
Arizona and Sonora enter into a
Arizona-Sonora Bowl II, in
Guadalajara, Jalisco.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Third Annual Conference is
in Arizona.
The Arizona-Mexico
Commission partners with
the Comisión Sonora-Arizona
for Arizona.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Second Annual Conference is
in Arizona.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
First Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
First Annual Conference is
in Arizona.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission
Second Annual Conference is
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Q&A WITH ARIZONA GOVERNOR DUCEY

In this exclusive interview, Governor Doug Ducey discusses his role as chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission and why Arizona’s relationship with Mexico is important to the state.

QUESTION: Governor, what are your duties as the chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission?

ANSWER: My duties as the chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission are to make sure that we’ve got the right people in the room so that we can best advocate for this most valued relationship that Arizona has with our number one trading partner, Mexico. It’s a position and responsibility I embrace as governor.

Q: Why do you think the work the Arizona-Mexico Commission does is important for Arizona?

A: First, I don’t think it can be stated enough that the work the Arizona-Mexico Commission does builds relationships across the border with areas of influence across the sphere—public sector, private sector and education. I come at it, first and foremost, from a commerce perspective because Mexico is our largest trading partner. I think it’s important that we maintain that relationship, but also build on it—focusing on the things we can do together, like making sure that commerce can flow more freely across the border, what we’ve done with Unified Cargo Processing, tourism, joint law enforcement efforts and more. All of these issues are real issues for both myself and Governor Claudia Pavlovich and the Arizona-Mexico Commission has been a leadership organization for solutions.

Q: What are the top trade opportunities between Arizona and Mexico in the next few years?

A: I would begin with our trade relationship and I would start with the USMCA. I’m someone who is a huge fan of this idea. I believe in free trade and if this is how we’re going to define free and fair trade, I want to make sure that Congress gets this ratified. I think another reason that the USMCA is so important is not only do we want to protect the agricultural relationship that we have with Mexico right now along with the manufacturing relationship, but it’s really these ideas of the future. It’s what’s coming that we can’t see. We’ve seen how the economy has been transformed over the past ten years, I think it’s only going to change exponentially going forward.

Q: Why is it important for Arizona to focus on maintaining and continuously build a relationship with Mexico?

A: Arizona should continually focus on its largest opportunities and its best friends and partners. I mean, you can always do more with the relationships that you already have and that are existing. We have an incredible relationship with the nation of Mexico and an incredible relationship with Sonora, which is beginning to grow with other states in Mexico. It is one where I think Arizona is the lead advocate, the ambassador state, for what can be done when you have the leader-to-leader relationships.

Q: The Arizona-Mexico Commission is celebrating its 60th anniversary, what has been its biggest achievement in the last 60 years?

A: First, I want to say happy anniversary. It is something to be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Arizona-Mexico Commission. And if I had to pick one single accomplishment, I think that would be very difficult to do. I would actually point to the totality of the relationship and how our economy is fundamentally dependent on the Sonora and Mexico economies and I believe vice versa. It shows the work ethic and the relationship that has been built by people that came long before I came into this office and it’s something that Governor Pavlovich and I both want to see outlive our administrations. We think that this type of relationship, this type of spirit and partnership and friendship that we’ve seen over the past four years is the way that it should be for the next 60 years and beyond.

Q: What is your top priority regarding our relationship with Mexico for 2019?

A: My top priority with Mexico every year is to build on the relationship. We’re seeing our economy boom here in the state of Arizona. We’re seeing our population grow at record numbers and that provides opportunity for all of our citizens, and the relationship that we have with Mexico brings jobs to the state of Arizona, it brings companies that relocate to the state of Arizona outside of our urban core. So, it’s something that’s really benefited the state of Arizona and I think if we take care of the relationship leader-to-leader, we make sure that we have the proper delegations of influencers and decision makers, we make sure we have the education exchange opportunities, that will maintain the relationship, that will help us weather whatever storm.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to mention about the Arizona-Mexico Commission?

A: I just want to say one of the things I’m most proud of as governor is what we’ve been able to do with the Arizona-Mexico Commission over the last four years. I think it’s not only been reset, it’s been refreshed and recharged for the future and I think everyone in Arizona knows what’s possible with this positive and productive relationship we have with the nation of Mexico and the state of Sonora. And I think the future has never been brighter.

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey with Claudia Pavlovich during the NGA North American Summit in Phoenix, Arizona in May 2018.
TRANSPORTATION & TRADE ON THE BORDER

There’s a lot going on at the border with walls and migrants and long wait times and tomatoes. While those issues are headline-grabbing, Arizona’s ports of entry and transportation routes are busy, expanding and flying in under the radar. From budgets to borders, trade partners to trade routes, here’s a brief look at what’s going on down south.

BY NICK ESQUER

From Arizona’s border region to Washington, D.C., elected officials, business leaders, and vocal supporters are promoting Arizona’s efforts to advance trade, commerce and stronger relationships with Mexico.

The Arizona-Mexico cross-border trade and tourism relationship cannot reach its full potential without a well-planned, well-built, safe transportation system.

Without robust roads and highways, and well-maintained routes for trucks and trailers and travelers, the Arizona-Mexico border risks being known more for congestion and frustration than facilitation.

The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is the state agency essential to strengthening this infrastructure link to Mexico.

The agency, in collaboration with the Arizona-Mexico Commission and additional stakeholders, has been setting plans in motion for some time to develop more ports of entry, build new connector roads, and enhance the overall freight movement in the state.

ADOT is currently in the environmental review phase of a long, multi-step process for a development known as the Sonoran Corridor. The project will completely redo the entire transportation landscape of southern Arizona for not only freight traffic, but everyday drivers as well.

The project looks to add more routes and roads to the booming area and brings with it more jobs and a positive economic impact.

“ This could provide an economic boost in several ways. Companies that benefit from access to the airport and a new freeway would be attracted to the area, as would companies that provide services to those companies,” said Tom Hermann, a representative for ADOT. “It also could make the Tucson International Airport region even more attractive to companies from international commerce and others along both Interstate 19 and Interstate 10. And it would benefit companies already in the Tucson area by reducing congestion on I-10 around downtown Tucson.”

In addition to freight mobility, ADOT is integral to the ability of travelers from Mexico to enjoy Arizona excursions with ease, and for Arizona-based vacationers to head south to enjoy a weekend of sun and surf in Mexico safely and hassle-free.

Arizona is working to ease the overall travel process for travelers who want to visit destinations like Puerto Peñasco, the location for the soon-to-be-christened cruise line port.

The inaugural Cruise & Maritime Voyages cruise will set sail this December and create new economic development opportunities for commuter towns along the way to welcome travelers stopping in to eat, fuel up, and rest up.

IMPROVEMENTS AT PORTS OF ENTRY FACILITATE SMOOTHER TRADE, TOURISM FLOWS

In Nogales, San Luis, and Douglas, Arizona’s ports of entry have been experiencing longer crossing wait times, higher numbers of trucks, and bigger flows of people coming to Arizona for work and shopping on Arizona’s side of the border.

To handle these larger volumes of trade and traffic, state and local officials are asking federal lawmakers to invest more heavily into the infrastructure at these ports of entry like the ones in San Luis.

In President Trump’s budget outline for 2020, the administration proposed $248 million be invested in modernizing and expanding the port of entry in San Luis.

In the state of the art facility to the west.”
The president’s proposal has garnered support from officials in Yuma County like San Luis Mayor Gerardo Sanchez who is working to ensure the budget item survives the lengthy congressional appropriations process.

“We estimate that 70 percent of our sales tax revenue is directly attributable to our Mexican visitors and our experience has shown us that the number one deterrent to crossing the border is border wait times,” Mayor Sanchez wrote in a letter to Arizona U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D) and Sen. Martha McSally (R). The letter urged both of them to work with their colleagues in Congress to make sure the money is approved this year.

More than 2.5 million pedestrians pass through the San Luis port each year, making it the second-busiest non-commercial port in Arizona. Last October, the port of entry unveiled a series of renovations that cost $6 million and included new technology in a new building to analyze images taken by cameras that Customs and Border Protection officers review along with travelers’ documents. Altogether, 165 new cameras were installed in the new building.

In Nogales, a $700,000 investment will be made at the Mariposa Port of Entry as part of the FY20 state budget. The refrigerated docks will support inspection processes of imported fresh produce and will encourage Mexican export companies that currently ship through Texas to consider entering at Nogales.

The improvements at the Mariposa Port of Entry in Nogales would boost trade between Arizona and Mexico and help the exporters on the other side of the border cut down on shipping costs.

“We’re trying to keep the existing flow of cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers going. But we’re also wanting to bring in more grapes, berries, and avocados. If you can offer that to a producer in Mexico who is shipping to Texas, then that would boost their efficiency,” border affairs consultant Luis Ramirez said. “Over the last 10 years, or so, we have put a focus on improving ports of entries, especially in terms of federal highway structure. We’re really invested in our highways and ports of entry.”

Last year, Governor Ducey announced the investment of $134 million to expand State Route (SR) 189, which connects the Mariposa Port of Entry to I-19. This investment will help improve the flow of north and southbound traffic and relieve congestion issues in Nogales.

“The expansion of SR-189 is critical for the ever-increasing flow of commerce through the Mariposa Port of Entry,” said Juan Ciscomani, Vice Chair of the Arizona-Mexico Commission. “The expansion of SR-189 addresses traffic issues in this community, while increasing efficiency for commercial drivers traveling through Arizona’s largest port of entry.”

In Douglas, Mayor Robert Uribe has been touting growth and development at and around the border city’s Raúl H Castro Port of Entry. According to Uribe, the port is obsolete, encumbered, and heavily congested.

“The port requires a significant modernization to address current and future needs of the community, trade, commerce, security, and tourism,” Uribe said. “The port is landlocked, particularly on the Agua Prieta, Sonora side. However, the City of Douglas, along with stakeholders are advocating for a two-port solution that will take all truck traffic out of the downtown areas on both Douglas and Agua Prieta and relocate it to a new state of the art facility to the west.”

Currently, semi-trucks that cross through the middle of the border town usually carry a mix of dry goods and fresh produce, but can also bring in hazardous materials. A new port of entry would separate risky materials from those that come in contact with the general public and redirect commercial traffic away from the city. The existing port of entry would be assigned to non-commercial traffic, which would increase pedestrian flow as well as car and bus movement through the downtown facility.

Ramirez described a modernization process behind updating highways, including the I-10, I-17, and other high-speed connectors with better pavement, as well as new bypasses around major metropolitan areas, including Guadalajara, Tepic, Mazatlán, Culiacán, Ciudad Obregón and Hermosillo.

Investment along the Sonoran Corridor is forecasted to save trucks at least four hours on the road and maybe even up to 18 hours between Mexico City and Arizona.

“This makes the corridor more effective, more competitive and a better location decision for companies that want to expand their business interests,” Ramirez said. ■
The Arizona-Sonora Region—an Economic Powerhouse

Gail Lewis, Director of P3 initiatives and Senior Advisor for International Affairs at the Arizona-Mexico Commission, and Bruce Wright, Arizona-Mexico Commission Board Member, discuss the Arizona-Sonora Strategic Economic Vision.

By Gail Lewis and Bruce Wright

The Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) and the Comisión Sonora-Arizona (CSA) have been the prime stewards of Arizona Governor Paul Fannin’s vision for an enduring partnership of cross-border cooperation and collaboration between Arizona and Sonora. The relationship that has emerged is unique and is a model for transborder cooperation worldwide. With that spirit of cross-border cooperation in mind, in 1992 a group of Tucson business leaders asked the University of Arizona (UA) to assess the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on Arizona and to explore ways that Southern Arizona could prosper within the emerging North American economy. In response, the Organization for Free Trade and Development (OFTD) was founded to guide this effort led by former Congressman Jim Kolbe. The effort sparked statewide attention and eventually, Arizona State University (ASU) and the Morrison Institute joined forces with the UA to develop a statewide NAFTA initiative, organizing two statewide summit meetings with participation from key stakeholders.

Two initiatives emerged. The first was the creation of the Summit Six; a coalition led by the AMC to coordinate statewide NAFTA efforts. The second initiative was the outline of a strategic plan focused on initiatives that would have a lasting impact on the region.

A group of researchers from eight higher education institutions in Arizona and Sonora formed the University Consortium to develop this plan through a series of studies examining the economic dynamics of the region. What resulted was a list of proposed projects designed to advance the development of Arizona and Sonora as a binational region.

With the support of Governors Fannin and Beltrones, AMC and CSA began implementing the Arizona-Sonora Strategic Economic Vision, with three key principles: (1) transforming the Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) and the Arizona-Mexico Office of the Governor (AMOG) into a coalition led by the AMC to coordinate statewide NAFTA initiatives; (2) taking advantage of the region’s strategic geographic location along major trade corridors in North America and (3) exploiting the complementarities among key industry clusters and institutions in the two states.

The Vision sparked game-changing results for Arizona that have transformed the Arizona-Mexico relationship, including:

- CANAMEX Trade Corridor: The Arizona Department of Transportation spearheaded efforts to develop the CANAMEX Trade Corridor through the mountain west portion of North America. A key project under this initiative was the construction of a bridge across the Colorado River.

- The Two Nation Destination: The Arizona and Sonora Offices of Tourism joined forces to market the region as an international tourism destination by promoting tourism assets in both states such as the Grand Canyon and beaches along the Sea of Cortez.

- Kozolchyk National Law Center: The Center was established to harmonize banking and trade laws, regulations and practices among countries in North and South America.

- Port of Entry Improvements: Major infrastructure improvements to Arizona’s ports of entry, supported by innovative process enhancements, have helped drive major increases in trade, including the modernization of the Mariposa Port of Entry and the construction of San Luis II Port of Entry. Today, we look forward to the modernization of the San Luis I Port of Entry and expansion of SR-188 in Nogales, both critical to our trade growth.

- Nogales Cyberport Study: The University Consortium recommended deploying leading-edge technology at the ports of entry, and early adoption by the Tucson Field Office of Customs and Border Protection has paved the way for Arizona to become a leader in the use of these technologies.

The Arizona-Sonora Strategic Economic Vision has withstood the test of time and its success is demonstrated in the dramatic increases in trade, business, tourism and innovation. Today, Governors Ducey and Pavlovich have reenergized the concept of the Vision and have set the region on a new, more ambitious path that will help position the region as an economic powerhouse in North America and beyond.

Gail Lewis is the Director of P3 initiatives and Senior Advisor for International Affairs at the Arizona-Mexico Commission.

Bruce Wright is an Arizona-Mexico Commission Board Member.

Today, Governors Ducey and Pavlovich have reenergized the concept of the Vision and have set the region on a new, more ambitious path that will help position the region as an economic powerhouse in North America and beyond.

By Gail Lewis and Bruce Wright
A TWO-NATION DESTINATION

Most of Arizona’s international visitors come from Mexico and more than 10,000 overnight tourists from Mexico visit each day. Tourism between Arizona and Mexico, especially Sonora, creates a noteworthy economic impact. Collaboration between leaders, like the Arizona-Mexico Commission, and the bond between the binational neighbors foster the tourism relationship.

BY SIERRA CIARAMELLA

While there is an international border that cuts through the Arizona-Sonora region, the collaboration between leaders and the bond between the binational neighbors make it a two-nation destination.

“Mexico is Arizona’s number one source of international visitors. More than 10,000 overnight tourists from Mexico visit Arizona each day, and thousands more day-trippers travel across the border to shop, dine and recreate,” Debbie Johnson, Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT) executive director, said.

Visitors from Mexico see attractions throughout all of Arizona, and many make short trips up to Tucson to shop.

“Shopping is the main purpose and reason for visitors to come here,” Felipe Garcia, Visit Tucson executive vice president, said. “In addition, we’ll see visiting family and friends; they come here to see doctors [and] specialists for medical reasons, and for business as well.”

According to AOT’s 2018 Mexico Market Profile, 84 percent of Mexican overnight visitation to Arizona was for leisure. Of that, 75 percent was for shopping and five percent was for visiting friends and family.

While Arizona and Sonora are bordering states, the two still have to continuously communicate and collaborate to encourage and promote tourism back and forth.

“The Arizona-Mexico Commission, they provide the framework for Sonora and Arizona to get together, to sit down and have a conversation about the challenges in the tourism industry between our two states and two countries,” Garcia said.

The Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) works to help maintain and build relationships in varying industries in Arizona and Mexico to benefit both sides of the border.

It takes the work of leaders in Mexico and Arizona to foster the relationship, but the bond between neighbors throughout the Arizona-Sonora region keeps it strong.

“What binds us together isn’t our shared border but all the things that span it: family ties, cultural alliances, daily commerce. These innate connections shape the identities of citizens on both sides of the border, and they motivate us to help one another succeed,” Johnson said.
“This is a good way for individuals to connect, to really understand,” Garcia said. “When someone travels, even the perceptions they might have about your neighbor or somewhere you’re visiting, it changes when you are able to go to that city, that community, and you understand the people and connect to the people.”

Puerto Peñasco, commonly referred to as Rocky Point by Arizonans, will be a base for a cruise ship operated by Cruise & Maritime Voyages starting in December 2019.

“Big picture, I hope this maiden service is another stepping stone toward a completed cruise port in Rocky Point, which would strengthen the tourism economies of both Arizona and Sonora, and is something Governor Ducey and Governor Pavlovich have long supported,” Johnson said.

Arizona is working to ease the travel process for those who want to set sail from Rocky Point by making plans to offer transportation and tour options that lead to the cruise.

“We’ve been meeting with tour operators on both sides of the border to help facilitate binational tours either tour operators coming to Tucson to pick up people to take down to Rocky Point, or to take down to the missions in northern Sonora, or take down to San Carlos for scuba diving-and, vice versa,” Garcia said.

This will draw more people to book a spot on the cruise and will give people traveling from elsewhere the chance to visit Arizona.

As Arizonans travel south and as Sonorans travel north, leaders continuously work with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to ensure a safe trip.

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey and Sonora Governor Claudia Pavlovich speak to the media during the 2018 Arizona-Mexico Commission Summit in Tucson.

“We tend to connect a lot, and we have to, of course, make sure that those visitors coming here are coming safely as they travel north,” Garcia said.

ADOT facilitates transportation throughout the state, and it is committed to finding safe methods for those traveling to or from Arizona.

“What we try to do in working with our counterparts in Sonora is on a number of fronts, and probably the most prevalent one is what we call a safety corridor,” said John Halikowski, ADOT director.

“We work on common transportation-related issues that deal with commercial, non-commercial vehicles, ports of entry issues, tourism trying to go back and forth between the border and above all trying to ensure safety of travelers on both sides of the border,” Halikowski explained.

He added, “It’s an area where we try to have motorists focus more attention on their speed and driving. We may use enhanced enforcement and first responder techniques to respond quickly to crashes.”

“What binds us together isn’t our shared border but all the things that span it: family ties, cultural alliances, daily commerce. These innate connections shape the identities of citizens on both sides of the border.”

DEBBIE JOHNSON, ARIZONA OFFICE OF TOURISM

Halikowski uses his transportation expertise as the co-chair of the AMC’s Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

“We work on common transportation-related issues that deal with commercial, non-commercial vehicles, ports of entry issues, tourism trying to go back and forth between the border and above all trying to ensure safety of travelers on both sides of the border,” Halikowski explained. ■
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