



U.S. General Services Administration

Bridge of the Americas Land Port of Entry Modernization Project

Draft Environmental Impact Statement Update

GSA Public Buildings Service

Oct. 17, 2024

Introduction

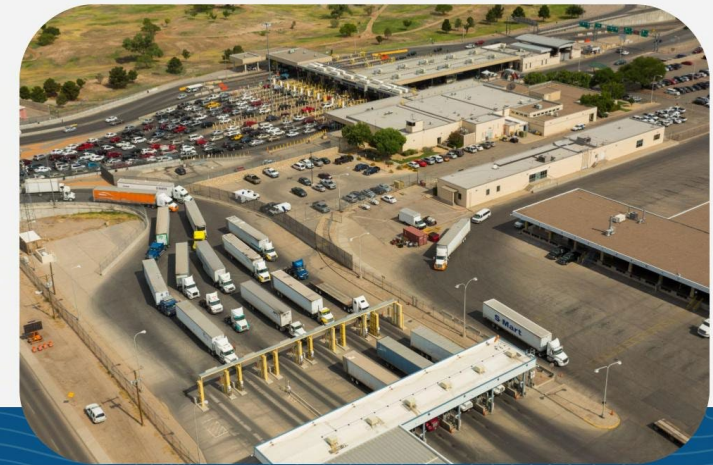


- Karla Carmichael - NEPA Program Manager
- CBP Representatives
- IBWC Representatives

Meeting Purpose and Agenda



- **Draft EIS Updates**
- Opportunity to submit **written comments** on the draft EIS



**BOTA LPOE
Modernization Project
Draft EIS Now Posted
for Public Comment**



Our Mission



GSA's mission is to provide federal agencies with the facilities, products, and services they need to effectively carry out their missions.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

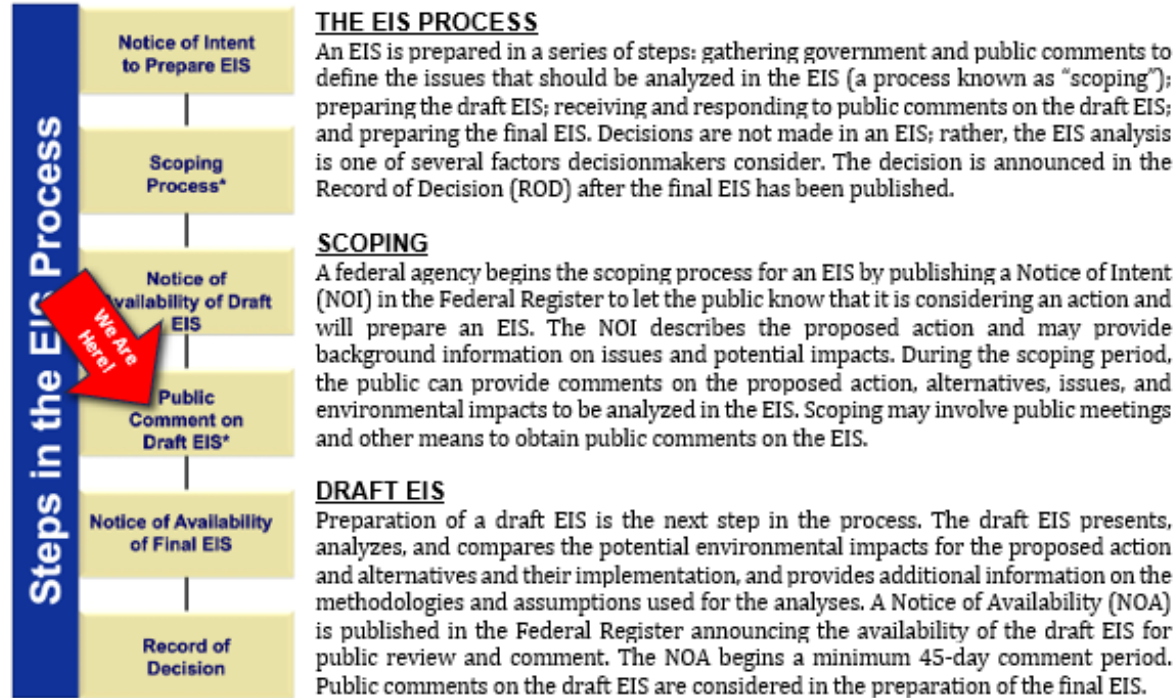


- The Congressional BIL funding is for long-overdue improvements to the **BOTA port facilities**, ensuring they meet federal operational standards.



THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to conduct an environmental impact statement (EIS) for major actions that could have significant impacts on the environment. Under NEPA, "environment" includes the natural and physical environment (such as air, water, geography, geology) as well as people's relationship with the environment (such as health, safety, jobs, schools, housing, and aesthetics). An EIS looks at both short-term and long-term effects and considers possible measures to reduce or mitigate those effects.



THE EIS PROCESS

An EIS is prepared in a series of steps: gathering government and public comments to define the issues that should be analyzed in the EIS (a process known as "scoping"); preparing the draft EIS; receiving and responding to public comments on the draft EIS; and preparing the final EIS. Decisions are not made in an EIS; rather, the EIS analysis is one of several factors decisionmakers consider. The decision is announced in the Record of Decision (ROD) after the final EIS has been published.

SCOPING

A federal agency begins the scoping process for an EIS by publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to let the public know that it is considering an action and will prepare an EIS. The NOI describes the proposed action and may provide background information on issues and potential impacts. During the scoping period, the public can provide comments on the proposed action, alternatives, issues, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIS. Scoping may involve public meetings and other means to obtain public comments on the EIS.

DRAFT EIS

Preparation of a draft EIS is the next step in the process. The draft EIS presents, analyzes, and compares the potential environmental impacts for the proposed action and alternatives and their implementation, and provides additional information on the methodologies and assumptions used for the analyses. A Notice of Availability (NOA) is published in the Federal Register announcing the availability of the draft EIS for public review and comment. The NOA begins a minimum 45-day comment period. Public comments on the draft EIS are considered in the preparation of the final EIS.

FINAL EIS

Once the public comment period on the draft EIS has been completed, a final EIS is prepared and distributed. Responses to public comments on the draft EIS are included in the final EIS.

RECORD OF DECISION

After the final EIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period is required before a ROD can be issued. The ROD notifies the public of the decision made on the proposed action and presents the reasons for that decision. The decisionmaking process may include consideration of factors such as cost, technical feasibility, agency statutory missions, and national objectives, as well as the potential environmental impacts of an action(s). No action can be taken until the decision has been made public.



PROPOSED MODERNIZATION
BRIDGE OF THE AMERICAS (BOTA) LAND PORT OF ENTRY (LPOE)
EL PASO, TEXAS

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND INPUT

- ▶ Comment sheets can be provided.
- ▶ Comments and input can also be submitted via email:

Email: *BOTA.NEPAcomments@gsa.gov*

Mail: Karla R. Carmichael
NEPA Program Manager
Environmental, Fire and Safety & Health Branch
GSA/PBS, Facilities Management and Services Programs Division
Greater Southwest Region 7
819 Taylor St, Room 12-B, FW, TX 76102

For assistance with translating, reading, writing or any questions please reach out to one of the GSA staff.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES of NEPA

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been prepared in accordance with Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 to 4370d), as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] §1500-1508).

The principal objectives of NEPA are to ensure the careful consideration of environmental aspects of proposed actions in federal decision-making processes and to make environmental information available to decision makers and the public before decisions are made and actions are taken.

Additionally, this EIS has been prepared in accordance with GSA NEPA guidelines (GSA Order ADM 1095.1F and the Public Buildings Service [PBS] NEPA Desk Guide, both dated October 1999) and serves as a mechanism for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended) and other relevant laws and/or regulations.

Preparation of this EIS is consistent with the 1983 La Paz Agreement between the U.S. and Mexico which is a pact to protect, conserve, and improve the environment of the border region of both countries.



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SAN XAVIER
COMMUNITY

WASHINGTON
PARK

CHAMIZAL
NATIONAL
MEMORIAL
PARK

EL PASO
ZOO

E. PAISANO DR.

BRIDGE OF
THE AMERICAS
LAND PORT
OF ENTRY

US 54

PAISANO
GREEN
COMMUNITY

EL PASO COUNTY
COLISEUM AND
EVENTS CENTER

375

DELTA
DR

BRIDGE OF
THE
AMERICAS

EL PASO
RHINOS

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is for the GSA to support CBP's mission by bringing the BOTA LPOE operations in line with current CBP land port design standards (i.e., CBP Land Port of Entry Design Standard [CBP 2023]) and operational requirements while addressing existing deficiencies identified with the ongoing port operations.

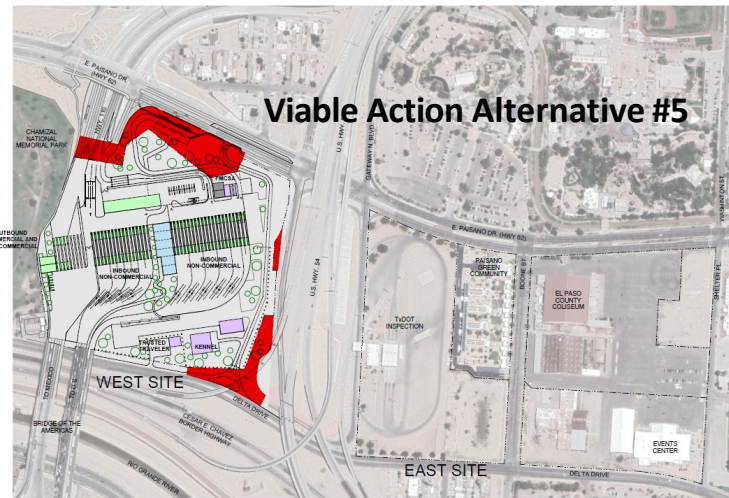
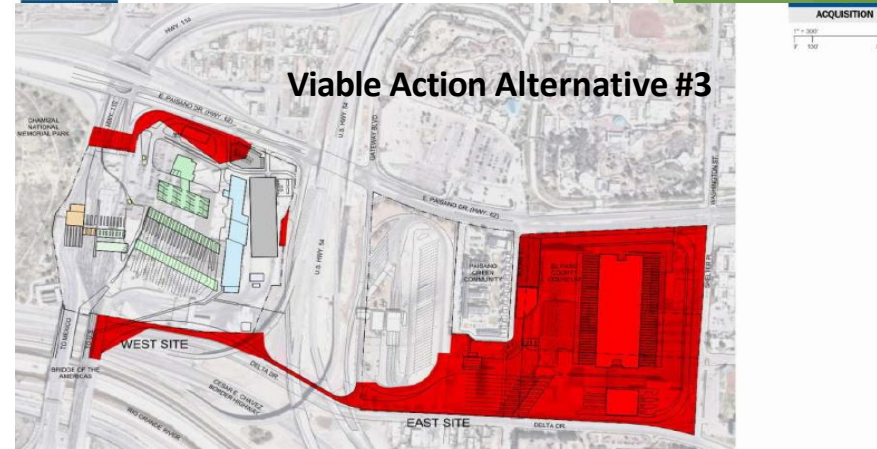
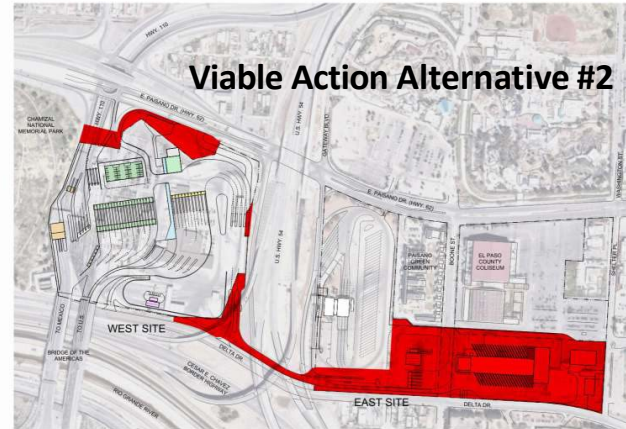
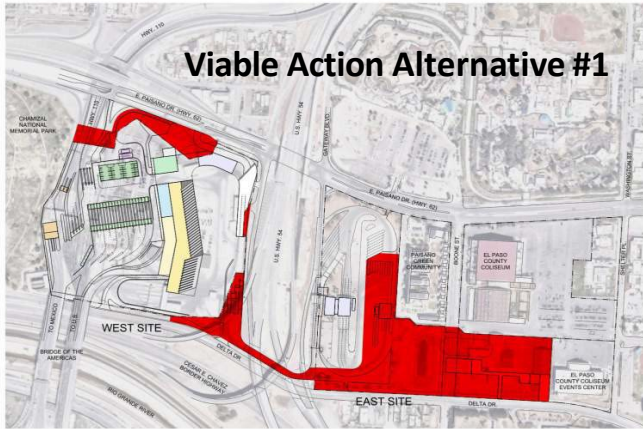
Based on the extensive public involvement conducted for the project and stakeholder input, the following alternatives and issues were included in the EIS:

- Hazardous Materials, Waste, and/or Site Contamination
- Socioeconomics (including Environmental Justice and Protection of Children)
- Public Services, Infrastructure, and Utilities
- Surface Waters, Drainage, and Floodplains
- Land Use and Zoning (including Visual and Aesthetics)
- Traffic (Vehicular and Pedestrian), Transportation, and Parking
- Air Quality (including Greenhouse Gas Emissions)
- Noise and Vibration
- Cultural and Historic Resources

ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTION

As part of initial planning for the proposed modernization of the port, GSA and its stakeholder partners developed four (4) Initial Possible Action Alternatives to satisfy the purpose and need.

As the project evolved, those were then revised into five (5) Viable Action Alternatives for further study.



**VIALE
ALTERNATIVE 4
LAND ACQUISITION**

**PROPOSED LAND
ACQUISITION**

ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTION

After extensive public input, the 5 Viable Action Alternatives were finalized into two (2) Viable Action Alternatives to be included in the EIS.

These Viable Action Alternatives were determined to best satisfy the purpose and need for the action and address overriding community concerns and issues:

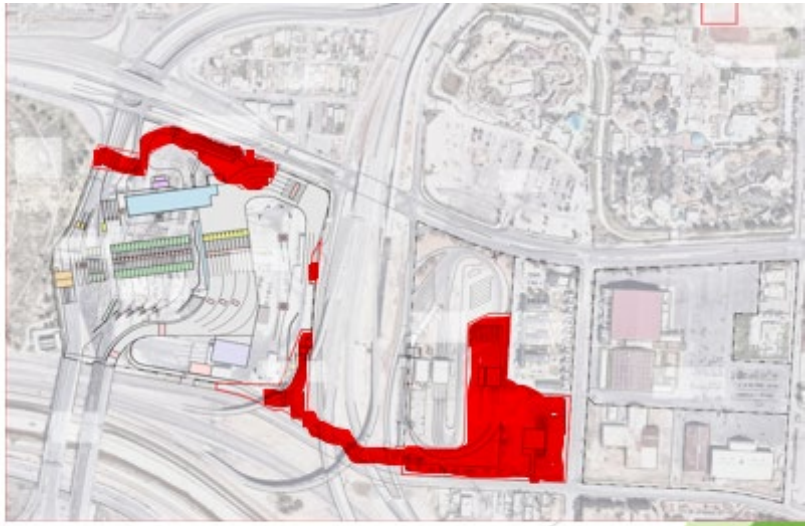
The no action alternative did not satisfy the purpose and need for the project; however, pursuant to NEPA, the no action alternative was carried forward as the baseline to which potential impacts of the action alternatives could be measured.

The following alternatives were carried forward:

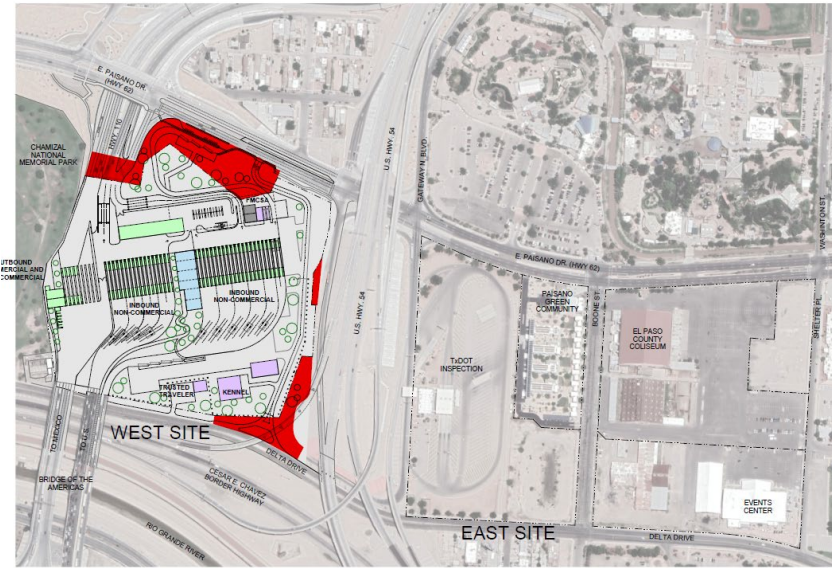
- No Action
- Viable Action Alternative 1a – Multi-Level Modernization (High/Low Booths) Primarily within Existing Port Boundaries with Minor Land Acquisition Immediately Adjacent to the Port (8 acres TxDOT) and Additional Land Acquisition to the East (13 acres – TxDOT)
- Viable Action Alternative 4 – Multi-Level Modernization within the Existing Port Boundaries with Minor Land Acquisition Immediately Adjacent to the Port (8 acres - TxDOT) and Elimination of Commercial Cargo Operations

ALTERNATIVES CARRIED FORWARD FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS

VIABLE
ALTERNATIVE #4
LAND ACQUISITION



Action Alternative #1A



Action Alternative #4

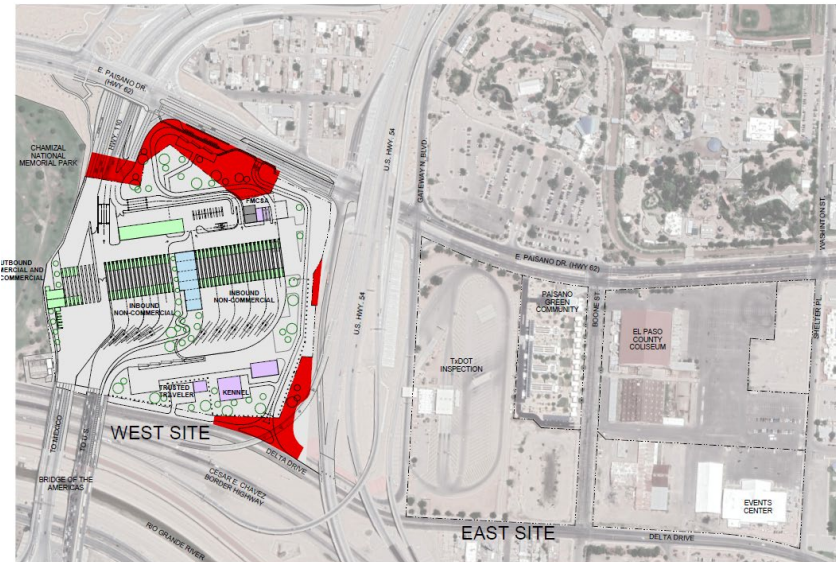


No Action Alternative

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

THE GSA HAS SELECTED **VIABLE ACTION ALTERNATIVE 4** AS ITS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

GSA BELIEVES THIS ALTERNATIVE WOULD BEST FULFILL ITS STATUTORY MISSION AND RESPONSIBILITIES, GIVING CONSIDERATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS, ENVIRONMENTAL, TECHNICAL, AND OTHER FACTORS.



VIABLE
ALTERNATIVE 4
LAND ACQUISITION

PROPOSED LAND
ACQUISITION

ISSUES BEING STUDIED IN DETAIL

Again, based on scoping, stakeholder and public input, the following issues were considered relevant to the Proposed Action:

- Hazardous Materials, Waste, and/or Site Contamination
- Socioeconomics (including Environmental Justice and Protection of Children)
- Public Services, Infrastructure, and Utilities
- Surface Waters, Drainage, and Floodplains
- Land Use and Zoning (including Visual and Aesthetics)
- Traffic (Vehicular and Pedestrian), Transportation, and Parking
- Air Quality (including Greenhouse Gas Emissions)
- Noise and Vibration
- Cultural and Historic Resources

ISSUES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

CEQ regulations (§1501.7) state that the lead agency shall identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not important, or which have been covered by prior environmental review, narrowing the discussion of these issues in the document to a brief presentation of why they would not have a dramatic effect on the human environment. In accordance with §1501.7, issues eliminated from detailed study include:

- Geology and Soils
- Vegetation and Wildlife
- Asbestos
- Lead-Based Paint
- Energy Efficiency

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

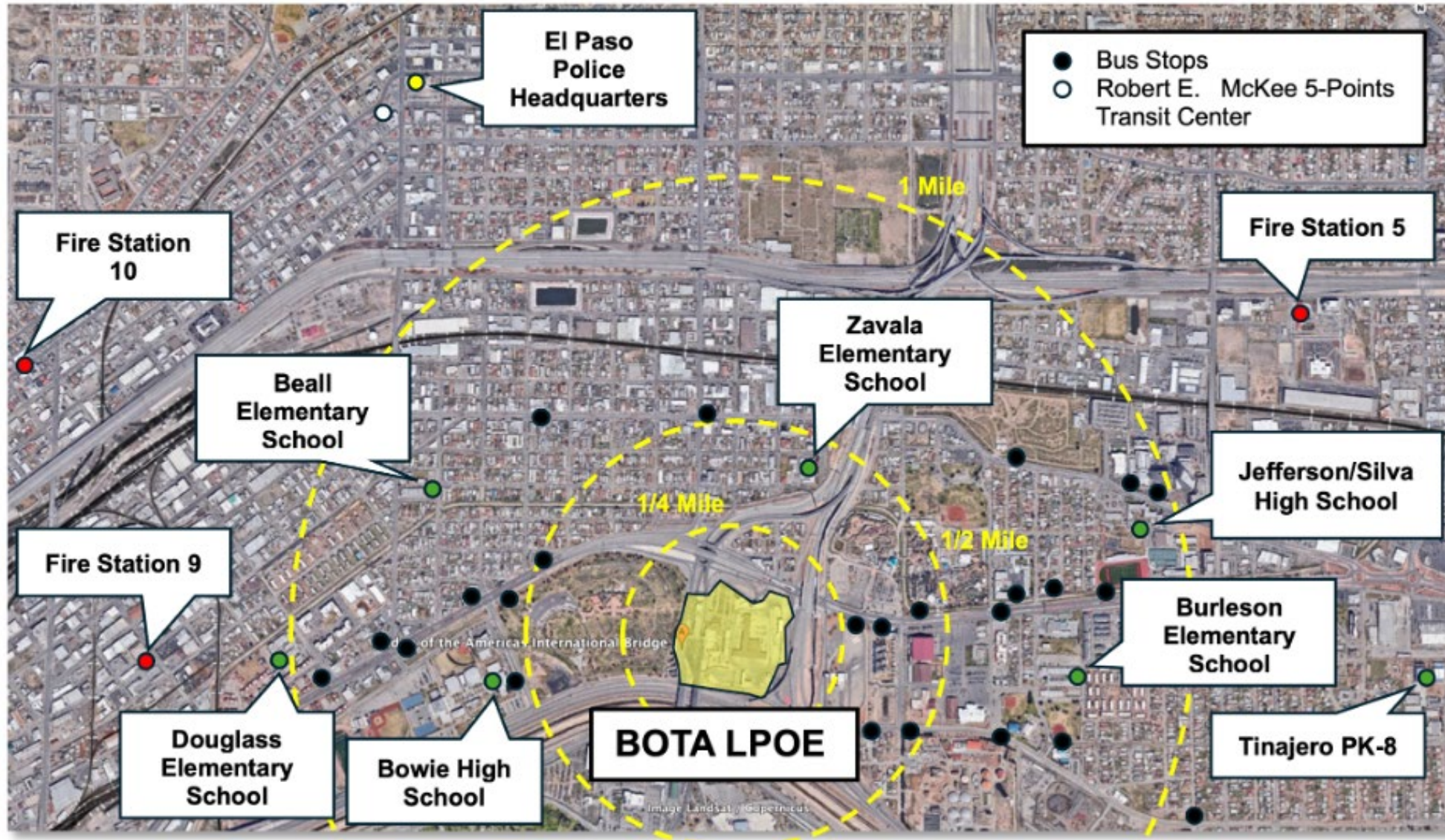
It is important to note that we are at the Draft stage and the environmental analysis and modeling is on-going in an effort to present as much pertinent up-to-date information as possible. As a result, ***potential environmental consequences may change.***

Hazardous Materials, Waste, and/or Site Contamination – No anticipated adverse impacts. One site immediately north of BOTA in the TXDOT ROW being further evaluated for past soil and/or groundwater contamination.

Public Services, Infrastructure, and Utilities – No anticipated adverse impacts. The proposed project would not have any long-term adverse impacts to or on existing public services, infrastructure, and/or utilities. Some short-term impacts could result during construction; however, they would be minor in nature and return to normal once the project is complete.,

Land Use and Zoning (including Visual and Aesthetics) – No anticipated adverse impacts. The proposed project is consistent with existing and planned land use and zoning in El Paso and a new modernized port is anticipated to be a visually appealing addition to the City and the border region.

Public Transportation in the Vicinity



ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Surface Waters, Drainage, and Floodplains – No anticipated adverse impacts.

Due to the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction, there would be no anticipated impact to the nearby Rio Grande or any excess runoff or drainage to adjacent properties or the Rio Grande. There are no wetlands or Waters of the U.S. that would be potentially impacted. There would also be no anticipated impact to the existing floodplain.

It is important to note that the nearby Rio Grande is designated as Zone A – Area Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE). The port and the area to the east are considered to be in the 100-year floodplain, protected by a levee. Under 500- or 100-year flood conditions, should the levee fail, these areas could be inundated.

Noise and Vibration – No anticipated adverse impacts.

There could be short-term impacts during construction, however, once construction was completed, conditions should largely return to normal. An overall positive impact is anticipated as a result of the elimination of commercial cargo traffic (i.e., trucks sitting stationary in the queue and idling).

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Cultural and Historic Resources – No anticipated adverse impacts.

Coordination with the Texas SHPO has resulted in a concurrence of no adverse effect to historic resources and/or properties (including the adjacent Chamizal National Memorial and El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1.). Continued coordination with the SHPO would be conducted as far as design of the port to ensure no aesthetic impacts to these nearby resources. An Inadvertent Discovery Plan has also been developed and would be implemented as part of construction, ensuring no impact in the unlikely event that archaeological remains were to be discovered.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Traffic (Vehicular and Pedestrian), Transportation, and Parking – Negligible to Minor impacts.

Based on current modeling vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) generated from the International Border Crossings (IBCs) is modeled to increase only 1.8% over time compared to current conditions. This additional VMT of 17,000 per day represents around 0.05% of the total VMT in the binational region. As such, traffic congestion would be anticipated to grow only marginally.

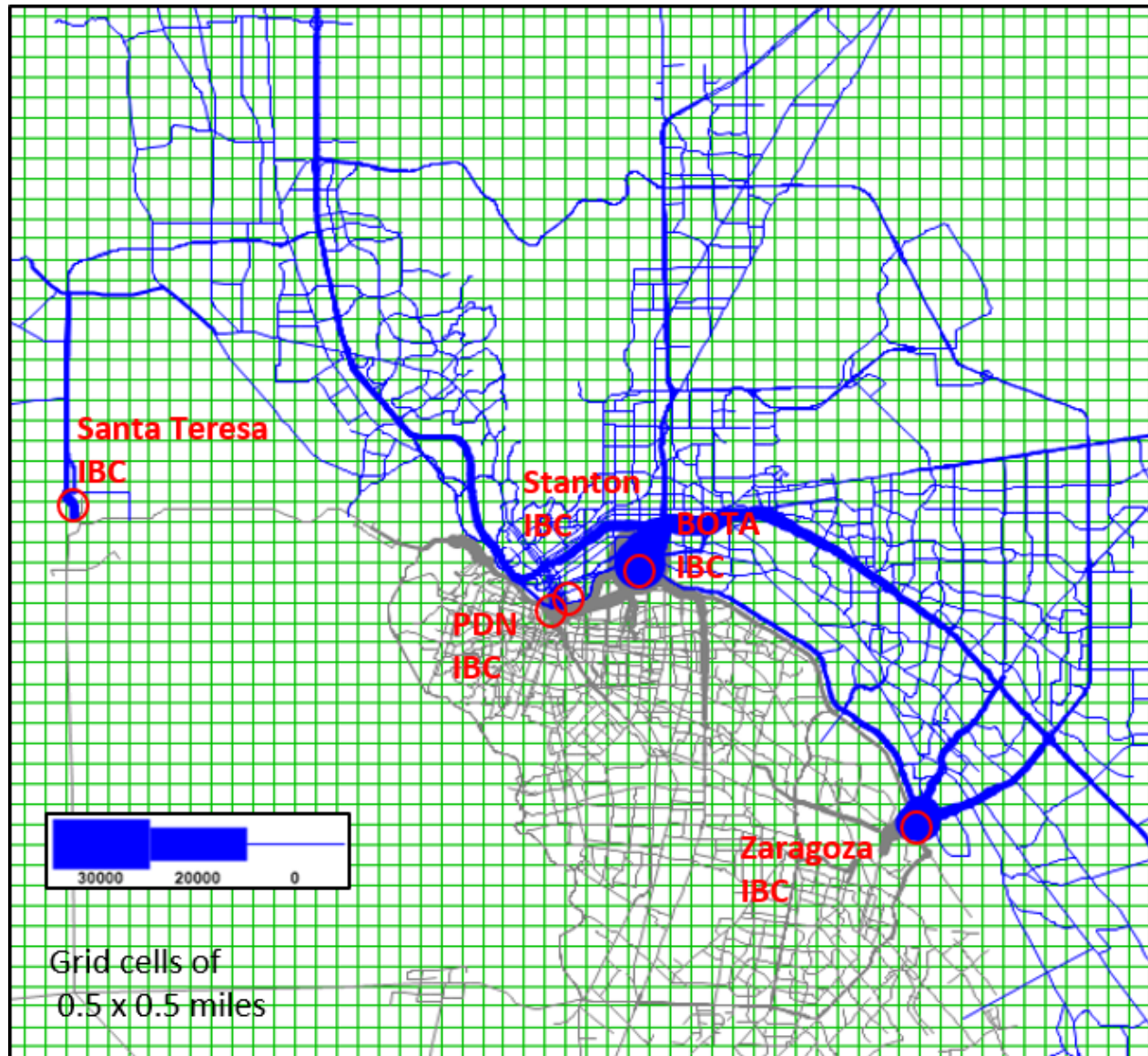
In terms of capacity to handle traffic at other ports that would likely receive commercial truck traffic, the Ysleta LPOE has been modeled to receive the most traffic (approximately 250 additional trucks per day, compared to the 2,500 trucks Ysleta currently handles). Again, this is considered only a marginal increase.

No POV traffic would be diverted to other ports should the Proposed Action be implemented, however because there would no longer be truck traffic, additional POV traffic at BOTA would be anticipated, again, with only marginal impacts.

Calculated from the number of booths opened from April 15-April 26, 2024, Weekdays

HOUR	% of booths opened
0	36%
1	29%
2	21%
3	21%
4	43%
5	43%
6	79%
7	79%
8	79%
9	79%
10	71%
11	71%
12	71%
13	71%
14	71%
15	71%
16	71%
17	64%
18	64%
19	64%
20	64%
21	64%
22	43%
23	29%

TRAFFIC POV/BUS/TRUCKS/OTHER

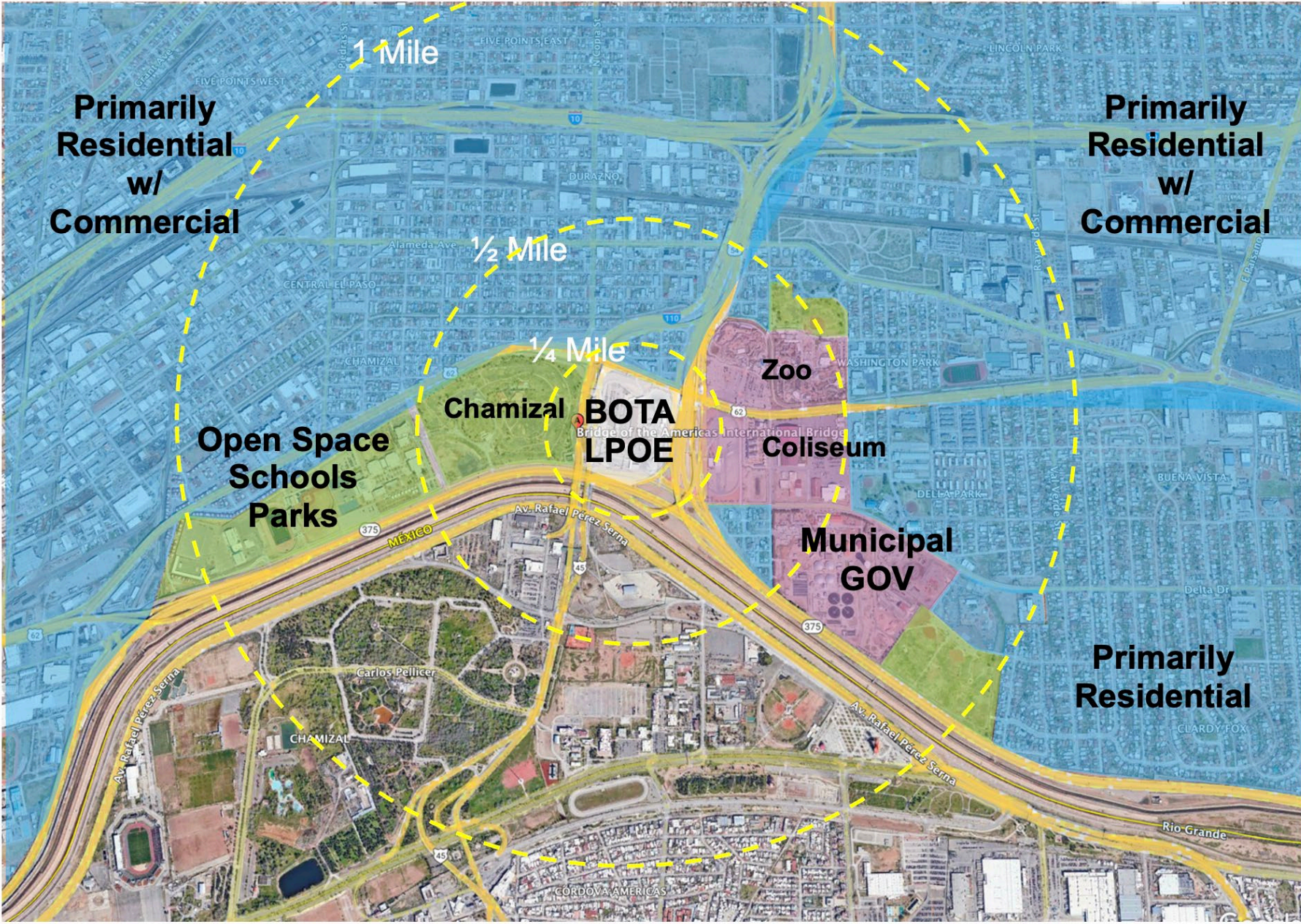


ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Air Quality (including Greenhouse Gas Emissions) – Negligible to Beneficial impacts.

In terms of NO_x emissions, compared to current conditions, Action Alternative 4 has been modeled to reduce local emissions approximately 10%, but could increase regional emissions by around 2% (trucks going to other ports). In total there is a net reduction of 3.2%. This net effect is considered to be beneficial at and around BOTA and negligible throughout the region.

In terms of VOC emissions, Action Alternative 4 has been modeled to reduce local emissions around 34% and only increasing regional emissions by around 2%. In total there is a net reduction of 6%. Very similar behavior has been observed for PM₁₀, where local emissions have been modeled to reduce by approximately 6% and regional emissions increasing negligibly 1-2% - a net increase of approximately 1%. This again is considered to be beneficial at and around BOTA and negligible throughout the region.



**Primarily
Residential
w/
Commercial**

**Primarily
Residential
w/
Commercial**

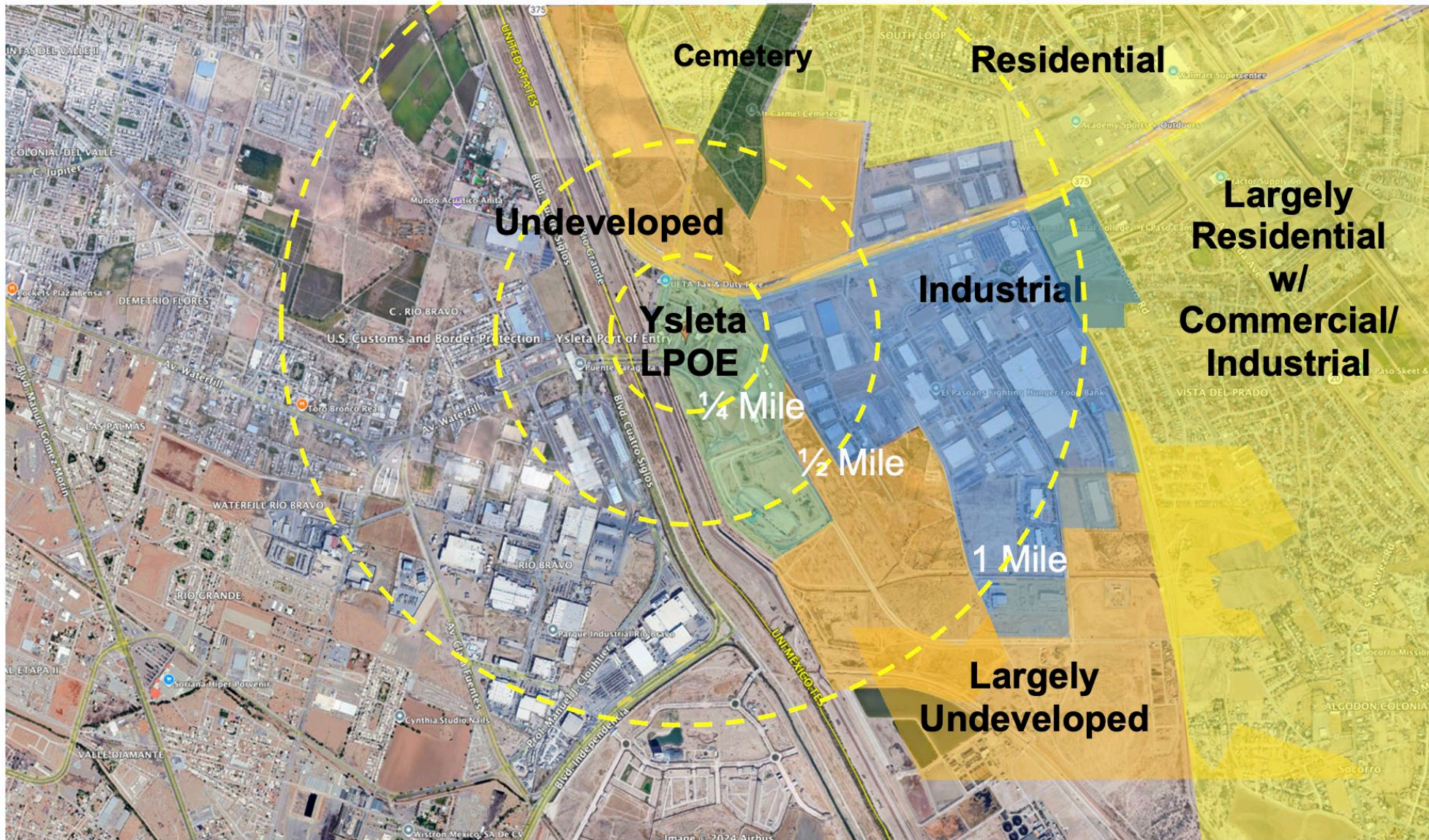
**Open Space
Schools
Parks**

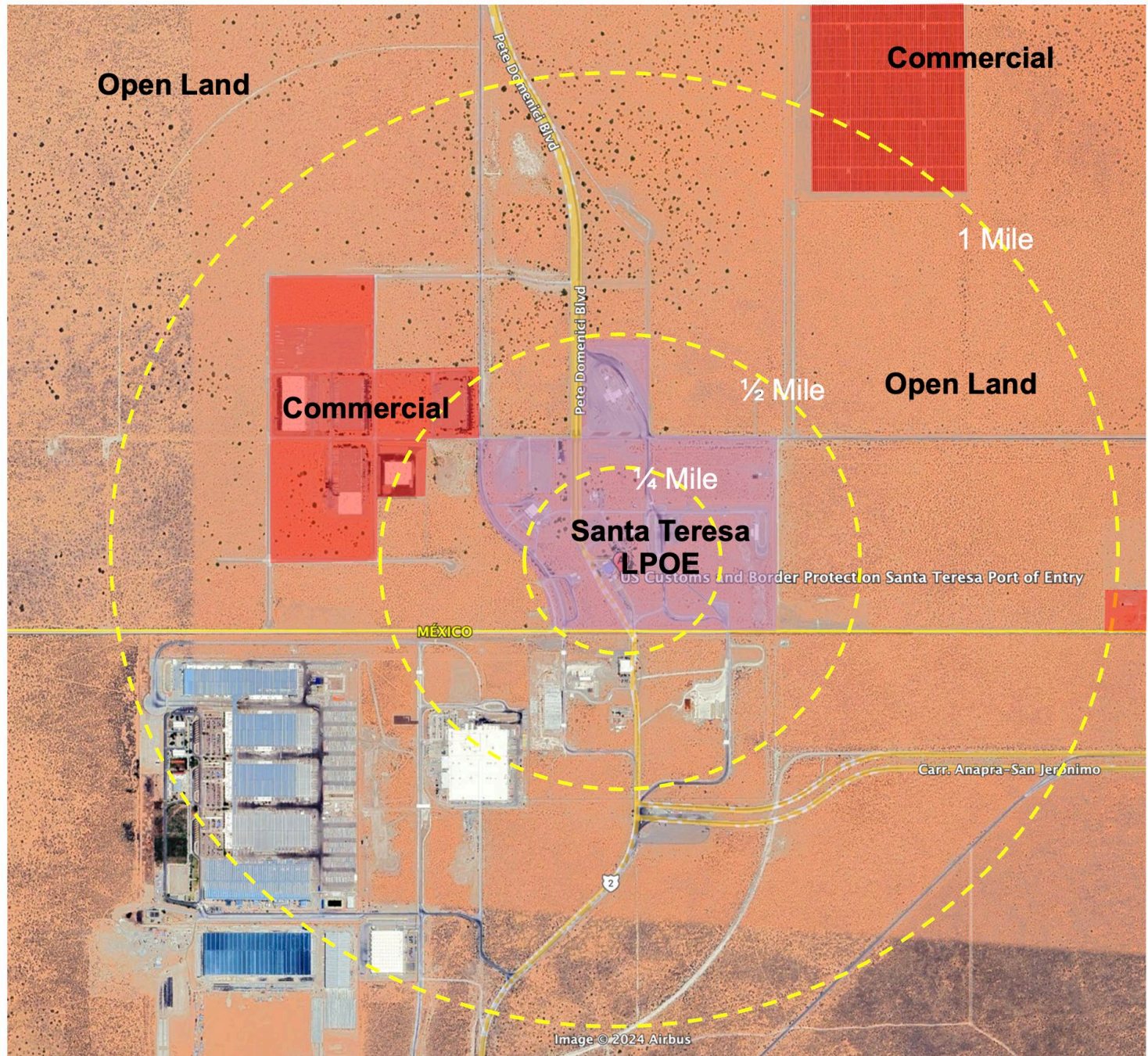
**Chamizal
BOTA
LPOE**

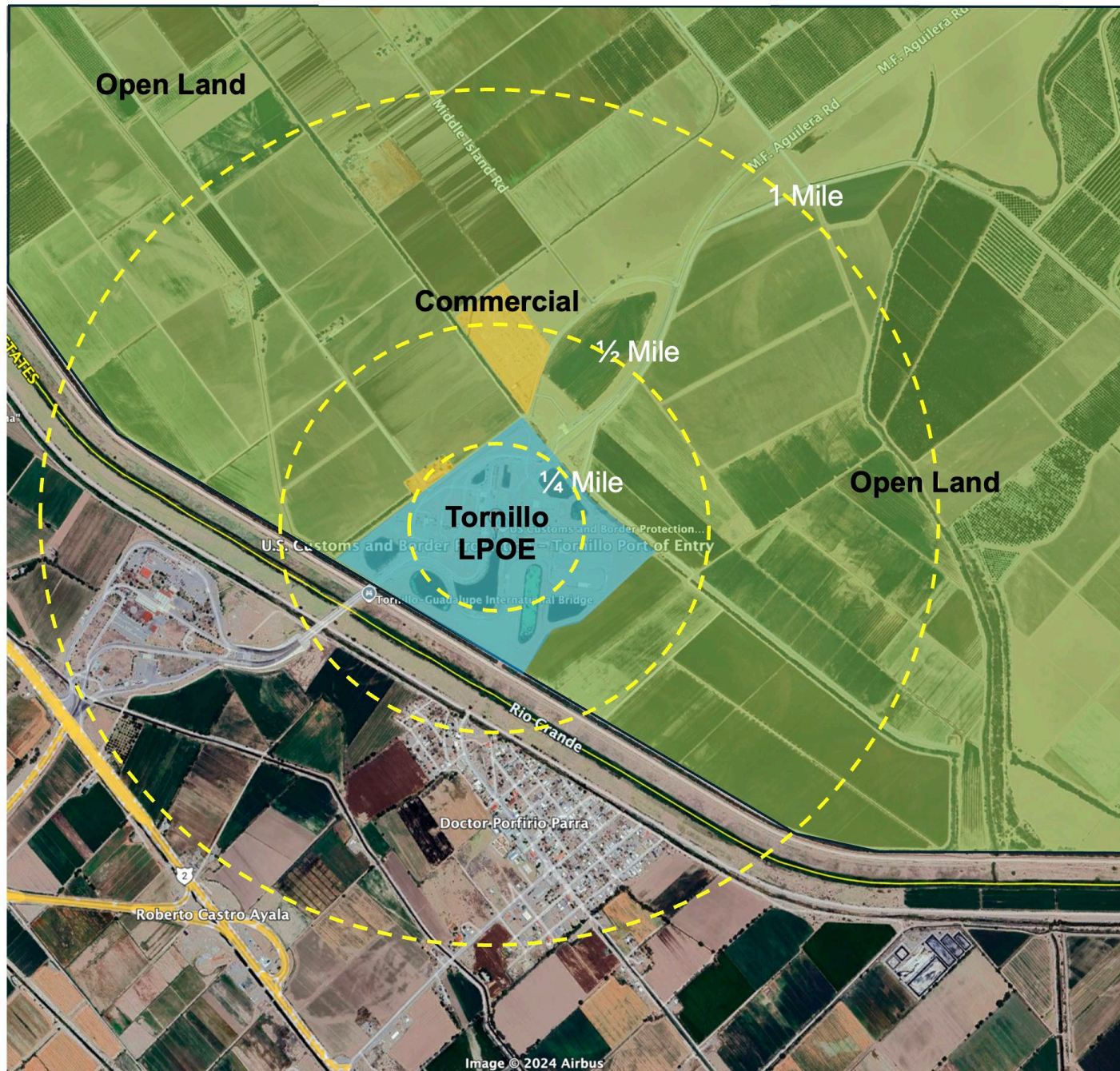
**Zoo
Coliseum**

**Municipal
GOV**

**Primarily
Residential**







ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Socioeconomics (including Environmental Justice and Protection of Children) – Minor to moderate beneficial EJ impacts and negligible to minor adverse socioeconomic impacts.

It is anticipated that local communities (including those environmental justice communities) would realize beneficial impacts as a result of no commercial truck traffic and the associated noise and emissions. Localized air quality should improve, noise would also be reduced. The localized area could see negligible to minor adverse economic impacts as a result of trucks now utilizing other ports (i.e., fuel, other minor purchases, etc. made as part of a trip).

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, drafting an EIS is a very scientific and methodical process used to identify possible alternatives to address a need. The NEPA document considers the environmental aspect and is only a portion of the projects decision making process.

The decision makers may include consideration of other factors such as cost, technical feasibility, agency statutory missions, and national objectives, as well as the potential environmental impacts.



PROPOSED MODERNIZATION
BRIDGE OF THE AMERICAS (BOTA) LAND PORT OF ENTRY (LPOE)
EL PASO, TEXAS

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND INPUT

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