



Friendship Park Barrier Replacement Stakeholder Feedback Report

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1. Introduction and Background

CBP plans to replace approximately 0.6 miles of deteriorated primary and secondary barrier adjacent to Friendship Circle in San Diego Sector. The primary barrier, which included a monument gate, was not properly treated to withstand marine corrosion before it was installed. The secondary barrier was partially removed in preparation for the project prior to January 2021. While it has been temporarily repaired, it is not structurally sound, resulting in safety risks to Border Patrol agents, community members, and migrants. CBP's replacement barrier design is 30-foot high, four-inch diameter steel bollards fitted with an anti-climb feature. The project also includes a new vehicle gate in the secondary barrier, a new pedestrian gate in the primary barrier, and a new pedestrian gate in the secondary barrier.

The Department of Homeland Security announced it was moving forward with this project on May 27, 2022. However, on August 4, 2022, CBP announced it would pause executing the project to further engage with community stakeholders.

As part of the planning process for this border barrier project, CBP sought input from the public and other stakeholders on potential impacts to the environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life, including socioeconomic impacts. This input will be used to inform environmental planning, project planning and execution.

1.1 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to summarize the input received on the project to provide stakeholders and the public transparency into the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic issues that will be considered as the project moves forward. It does not present details of individual comments received.

2. Public Input Process

Input was collected from stakeholders between September 12 to October 12, 2022 regarding potential impacts to various resources as a result of the planned implementation of the project. CBP sent more than 300 letters and emails to interested stakeholders to solicit input on potential impacts to natural and cultural resources. The notification is included as an appendix to this report.

CBP received comments from stakeholders through email, mail, and hand delivery. CBP has also been meeting and discussing the project with non-governmental organizations, Tribal Nations, and other federal government agencies including the Department of the Interior, International Boundary and Water Commission, and the Environmental Protection Agency. CBP staff plan to continue meeting with interested stakeholders and subject matter experts to ensure impacts to the environment are avoided or minimized to the greatest extent possible.



The intent of the public comment period and other engagement with stakeholders was to solicit input on potential impacts. The intent was not to solicit comments as to whether the project should proceed.

2.1 Public Feedback Review

All comments received by CBP were reviewed and categorized. A total of 150 comments were received. Of those comments, 48 were considered unique. Five comments were signed by multiple people consisting of 595 signatures (“commenters”) in aggregate. Given the multiple signatures associated with the five letters, the total number of commenters was calculated at 740. As the comments were received, they were reviewed and categorized by their primary topic of concern. If a comment included substantive information on multiple topics, they were included in each relevant category below.

The Infrastructure Portfolio outreach team reviewed all comments received and prepared this report to summarize public input. The comment review was conducted based on explicit concerns; comments that were not specific or contained vague statements were not interpreted by the reviewers. Comments that provided substantive information were further assessed by CBP to confirm the information was considered during the review of potential environmental impacts

3. Summary of Public Feedback

The following sections summarize important considerations for CBP’s review of impacts provided by the public during the public comment period. CBP identified eight categories of primary feedback received.

3.1 Humanitarian Concerns

A total of five comments, signed by 438 commenters, mentioned humanitarian concerns regarding Friendship Park as a location to unite two countries and foster relationships between American and Mexican residents. Comments received suggested the need to preserve the park as a meeting space. Commenters also expressed concerns about the barrier preventing asylum seekers from entering the U.S. and placing those individuals in a dangerous situation.

3.2 Border Security

A total of six comments, signed by six commenters, mentioned the effectiveness of the border barrier. While many comments expressed opposition to new barrier in this location, four comments explicitly questioned the need for border barrier in this location. Two comments expressed support for the project. Many of the comments submitted suggested the repair of the existing barrier where possible and to only replace those sections needed to address life and safety concerns.

3.3 Public Health



A total of seven comments, signed by 58 commenters, were submitted on public health. Commenters noted the proposed height of the barrier (30 feet) is a danger to those who fall from the barrier while attempting to scale it and suggested the barrier remain at its current height (18 feet). Comments noted the increase in injuries and deaths from individuals falling from the barrier. One commenter expressed their belief that there is no life or safety risk in the project area from the current barrier as no one has been injured in the area.

3.4 Historical/Cultural Preservation

A total of 33 comments, signed by 676 commenters, focused on preserving cultural and historic resources in and near the project area, including tribal resources. Many comments emphasized efforts to maintain the history of the origins of Friendship Park, where people from Mexico and the U.S. have treated the Park as a shared space to unite the two countries and share history. Another comment noted the impact of the barrier on binational religious communities who have historically practiced their faith together in the area; this includes the Border Mosque, Border Church, and Via Crucis. Some comments suggested CBP undertake Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act review. Several comments noted the border monument in the project area as a historic resource. Three events were noted as important to the project area: the Fandango Fronterizo, the Friendship Park Anniversary and the Posada Sin Fronteras.

Some comments suggested coordination with the Kumeyaay Nation. One commenter requested a tribal monitor during the project.

3.5 Ecosystem/Environment

A total of eight comments, signed by 64 commenters, expressed impacts to the environment and ecosystem. Commenters expressed concerns about the impact of barrier construction on native plants and the binational garden. One comment noted the project's potential to impact nearby public lands including Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, and Border Field State Park. One comment noted potential impacts to habitat for the Quino checkerspot butterfly and Western burrowing owls. One commenter expressed concern about the ecosystem being split and affecting 21 endangered plant and animal species.

3.6 Views

A total of three comments, signed by 54 commenters, stated that the height of the replacement barrier will severely impact the view from the U.S. into Mexico.

3.7 Other

One comment, signed by one commenter, noted that the road to the Friendship Park area can get very muddy and hard to traverse and would like Border Patrol to improve this road. Many comments suggested CBP continue to meet with Friends of Friendship Park to collaboratively work toward a solution that meets all interests. Many commenters expressed interest in



reopening Friendship Park with adequate Border Patrol presence or contracting another agency to control the ingress and egress of persons to and from the area. Several comments requested CBP repair the rolling gate to provide access to visitors from the U.S. and Mexico. One comment provided a design for the Friendship Park area including renderings and comments from a summit held with interested members of the public.

4. CBP Response

4.1 *Endangered Species*

The preservation of natural resources is important, and CBP is fully engaged in efforts that consider the environment as we work to secure our nation's borders. As such, CBP previously conducted a wildlife inventory (in conjunction with vegetative assessments) during pedestrian surveys to identify potentially impacted plants and animals in the project area prior to original fence construction.

According to a 2022 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) report, 12 federally endangered and threatened wildlife and seven federally endangered and plant species have the potential to occur in the project area, although during previous surveys no potential habitat was found. Additionally, critical habitat for the Federally threatened Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) does overlap the proposed primary barrier project area. However, because the habitat is within a previously disturbed area, the project would not significantly affect the species or its habitat.

In addition, CBP is coordinating and consulting with resource agencies, and evaluating possible environmental impacts from the projects. If an endangered plant or critical habitat is identified, CBP works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify the appropriate mitigation.

4.2 *Historical Impacts*

A cultural resources inventory was conducted in support of the project and documented within a formal Archaeological Resource Management Report (ASM Affiliates 2011). This inventory was carried out in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, and the regulations set forth in 36 CFR Part 800. This inventory was conducted to identify new and existing cultural resources, consider project revisions to avoid or minimize effects, and provide reasonable mitigations for unavoidable effects. The inventory included a records search to identify previously recorded cultural resources, an intensive pedestrian survey of the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE), and ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey.

The records search and literature review were conducted at the South Coastal Information Center at San Diego State University on April 16, 2011 in order to assess the presence or absence of cultural resources within and adjacent to the APE. The records search encompassed a search radius of 0.5 mile around the APE and consisted of site location maps,



site forms, historic maps, a database of historic addresses, and National Archaeological Database citations for studies within the record search radius.

Pedestrian and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys were conducted. The goal of the GPR survey was to investigate the areas of Friendship Circle on the United States side of Monument Mesa to determine potential locations of a time capsule reportedly buried on-site.

The GPR survey surrounding Friendship Circle located a single anomaly that has a high probability of being the historic time capsule originally buried near the monument in 1849, when the monument was officiated by the United States and Mexican delegates. This anomaly is located beneath the concrete walkway northwest of the monument itself. No subsurface testing was conducted to evaluate this anomaly.

The border monument obelisk is a significant historic resource listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The project as proposed will not have an effect on cultural resources because no archaeological material was identified during the pedestrian survey. Additionally, as designed, construction of the project would avoid alteration of the border monument obelisk and will avoid disturbance of the time capsule, if encountered.

As mitigation, CBP will prepare a monitoring and mitigation reporting program to fulfill avoidance goals and direct the treatment of unanticipated discoveries. An archaeological monitor will be present, and a Native American monitor will be encouraged to be present, during all ground-disturbing activities for this project to protect against unanticipated discoveries, and to protect the border monument and areas thought to contain the historic time capsule. It is the explicit intent of the construction and repair activities to avoid and not disturb the border monument and time capsule in any manner.

The cultural landscape was not evaluated and there are no plans to do so.

4.3 Binational Garden

The Binational Garden abuts the existing barrier. To replace the barrier in this section, CBP will work with interested stakeholders and subject matter experts to identify and salvage the native plants which will be replanted when the garden is restored following construction. Prior to construction actions, CBP will identify native and protected plants in the Binational Garden that should be salvaged as well as any other items in the garden that should be collected.

4.4 Health and Safety

Friendship Park has been closed since early 2019 due to availability of personnel to patrol the area and the integrity of the existing fence and gate. The current primary barrier, which includes a gate, was not properly treated to withstand the corrosion from the adjacent ocean before it was installed. It is no longer structurally sound and is falling apart, which presents risks to Border Patrol agents, community members, and migrants. The current secondary



barrier was partially removed in preparation for new barrier construction. While it has been temporarily repaired, it is not structurally sound, resulting in a safety risk to Border Patrol agents, community members, and migrants.

There is a risk that people may be seriously injured if they attempt to climb over the barrier. The anti-climb feature is part of the design of the barrier to deter people from attempting to climb over the barrier.

4.5 Friendship Park Access

CBP recognizes the value of having a safe meeting place for families and friends on both sides of the border. USBP San Diego Sector's Border Community Liaison will work closely with stakeholders and the community to identify opportunities to provide the public with access to the Park, when it is operationally safe to do so. Upon completion of construction, Friendship Park will be open each Saturday and Sunday for four hours each day, for a maximum of 25 visitors.

4.6 Friendship Park Design

CBP has been communicating with the Friends of Friendship Park on the landscape design. CBP is committed to working collaboratively with the Friends of Friendship Park to restore the Binational Garden following construction and to allow for long term maintenance of the garden by the Friends of Friendship Park during the open weekend hours.

CBP recognizes concerns regarding the height of the planned 30-foot-tall primary barrier. To address these concerns, the height of the new primary barrier immediately adjacent to the Friendship Circle area (approximately 60 feet wide) will be reduced to 18-foot-tall bollards.



Appendix I: Notification

September 12, 2022

RE: Friendship Circle (San Diego County) Border Barrier Projects Request for Input

To Whom it May Concern:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seeks your input about the repair of border barrier sections in western San Diego County, California.

CBP plans to replace approximately 0.6 miles of deteriorated primary and secondary barrier adjacent to Friendship Circle in San Diego Sector. The primary barrier, which included a monument gate, was not properly treated to withstand marine corrosion before it was installed. The secondary barrier was partially removed in preparation for the project prior to January 2021. While it has been temporarily repaired, it is not structurally sound, resulting in safety risks to Border Patrol agents, community members, and migrants. CBP's replacement barrier design is 30-foot high, four-inch diameter steel bollards fitted with five-foot anti-climb plates and installation of communications fiber.

The Department of Homeland Security announced it was moving forward with this project on May 27, 2022. However, on August 4, 2022, CBP announced it would pause executing the project until mid-November to further engage with community stakeholders.

CBP requests your feedback about potential impacts to the environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life, including socioeconomic effects. Project maps are enclosed, and Spanish-language materials are available at www.cbp.gov/about/environmental-management. CBP is accepting comments from the public until Wednesday, October 12, 2022.

After the public comment period closes, CBP will create and publicly post a stakeholder feedback report at cbp.gov.

Submitting Helpful Comments

Helpful comments inform CBP's analysis of potential impacts. They are fact-based, include links to data or research, and provide specific information concerning potential impacts to biological, cultural, and natural resources.

Specifically, CBP is looking for answers to these questions:

- Are you aware of threatened or endangered plant or animal species within the construction area? If so, what species and where?
- Are you aware of recreational activities within the construction area? If so, what recreational activities and where?
- Are you aware of possible impacts to businesses? If so, where are those businesses?
- Are you aware of historical sites or areas of cultural significance located within the construction area? If so, what and where?
- Do you foresee the project impacting your day-to-day activities? If so, how?
- What studies, data, or other information would aid the analysis of project area environmental impacts?
- What practices should the construction contractor follow to avoid or minimize impacts?

How to Provide Comments

Email your comments to CBP at SanDiegoComments@cbp.dhs.gov. Please include “Friendship Circle Border Barrier Projects” in the subject line. Comments and personal information received in response to this letter, including names and addresses, will become a part of the public record.

You may also provide comments, questions, or concerns by calling 1-800-542-2753 or by mail:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Border Patrol Headquarters
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. 6.5E Mail Stop 1039
Washington, DC 20229-1100
ATTN: Paul Enriquez

As a reminder, CBP is accepting comments until October 12, 2022. We appreciate your assistance in evaluating the potential impacts of these projects.

Respectfully,



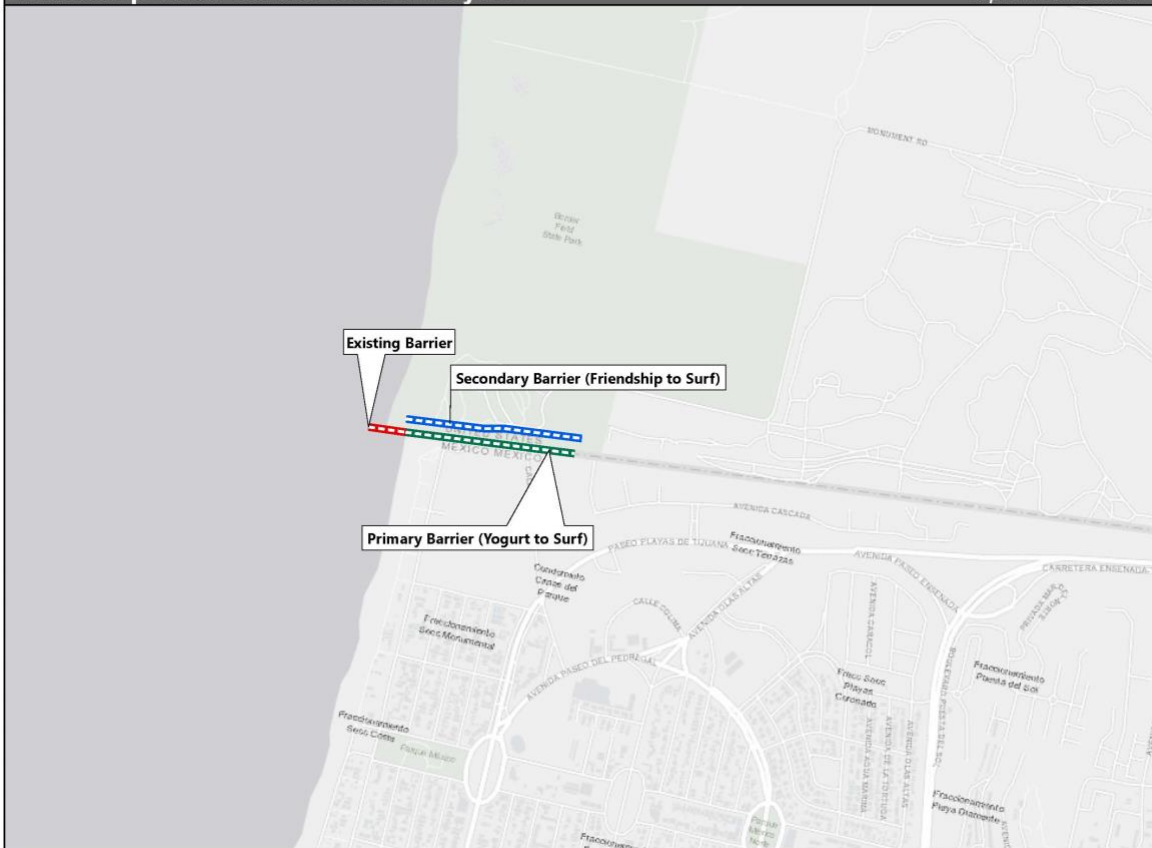
Paul Enriquez
Real Estate and Environmental
Infrastructure Portfolio Deputy Director
Program Management Office Directorate
U.S. Border Patrol

Enclosure: Friendship Circle Border Barrier Projects Map



Friendship Circle Border Barrier Projects

Imperial Beach Station



LEGEND

- Primary Barrier (Yogurt to Surf)
- Secondary Barrier (Friendship to Surf)
- Existing Barrier

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