



Cross Border Collaborative Planning in Otay Mesa

October 3 and 11, 2005



INTRODUCTION

The Otay Mesa – Mesa de Otay binational corridor has been identified by the Borders Committee and the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) as an area of opportunity to create an effective binational planning partnership. Transportation, housing, economic development, and environmental conservation are four key issue areas that have been identified for evaluation as part of the Otay Mesa – Mesa de Otay Binational Corridor Strategic Plan.

STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1 illustrates the study area, which was identified in collaboration with local and binational stakeholders. It encompasses the City of San Diego's Otay Mesa community planning area, the County of San Diego's East Otay Mesa community planning area including Otay Lakes, the eastern portion of the City of Chula Vista east of Interstate 805 (I-805) and south of Olympic Parkway, and the planning areas of Mesa de Otay and Centenario, which includes the Alamar River in the City of Tijuana. The following is a description of the existing setting in the study area.

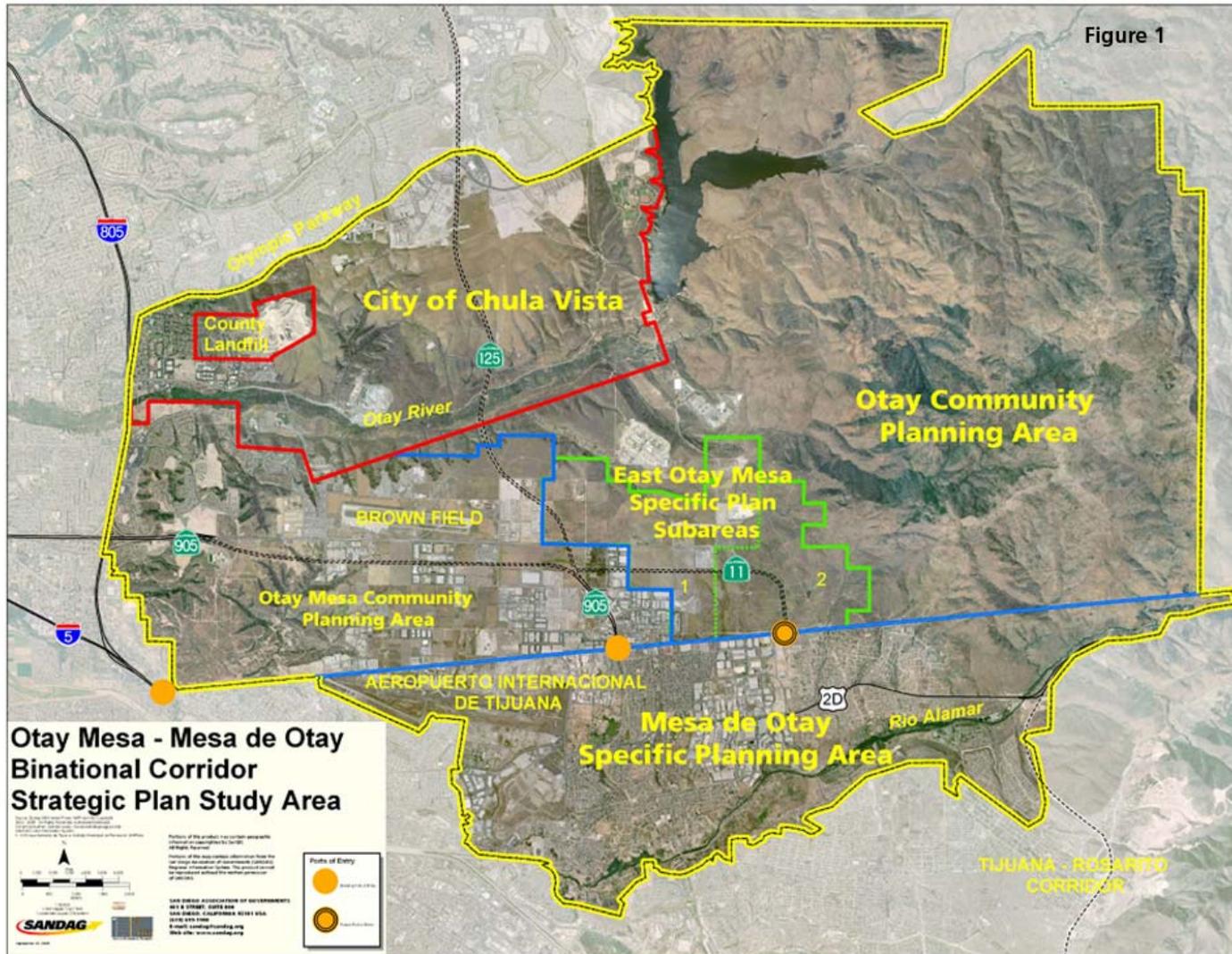
City of San Diego

Currently, the Otay Mesa Community Planning Area encompasses approximately 9,320 acres and has a population of almost 2,000 people that is forecasted to reach about 49,000 residents in 2030. Of the total area, 3,008 acres (32 percent) are designated for industrial parks, 1,325 acres (14 percent) for residential development, 2,333 acres (25 percent) for open space, and 397 acres (four percent) for commercial purposes. The remaining areas are designated for parks, schools, and general aviation. With the update of its community plan, the City of San Diego is evaluating possibilities for more residential and mixed use developments, which would change the industrial profile of this area.

The Brown Field Municipal Airport is located within the City of San Diego's Otay Mesa Community Planning area.¹ Even though it is within the City's planning area, the San Diego Regional Airport Authority also has certain responsibilities regarding land uses at the airport. In addition, the Airport Authority is responsible for preparing an Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), which deals with land use compatibility around the airport such as noise, overflight, safety and airspace protection. The San Diego Airport Authority currently is updating the San Diego County ALUCP. State law requires that future land use developments be consistent with compatibility criteria found within the ALCUP.

¹ San Diego County ALCUP-Public Use Airports Background Data (March 2005 Draft); Pg. 3.

Figure 1



County of San Diego

The County of San Diego's East Otay Mesa Specific Plan Area (SPA) encompasses an area of approximately 3,374 acres extending generally from the Otay River Valley southerly to the international border.² The area is bordered on the west by the City of San Diego and on the east by the San Ysidro Mountains. It includes two subareas.

The East Otay Mesa Specific Plan Subarea 1 is immediately adjacent to the City of San Diego's Otay Mesa Community Planning area and includes approximately 2,007 acres.³ Subarea 2 contains approximately 1,367 acres and is located to the east of Subarea 1.

City of Chula Vista

The City of Chula Vista's area south of Olympic Parkway and east of I-805 makes up the northern portion of the proposed study area. Most of this area is planned to develop within several interconnecting villages in the Otay Ranch master planned community. Several hundred acres already have been developed.

City of Tijuana

In 2000, the area of Mesa de Otay Este in the City of Tijuana had a population of 78,556 residents. This portion of the study area encompasses approximately 5,821 acres.

The City of Tijuana's Plan Parcial de la Mesa de Otay (Specific Plan for East Mesa de Otay) is in the final stages of completion. The preparation of this plan is a joint effort between federal, state and municipal governmental entities in Tijuana, Baja California, in response to the city's Urban Development Program 2002 – 2025 that identifies the Mesa de Otay, as a priority area.

This plan has the following goals:

- Support policies to mitigate and address urban development risks factors related to land use guidelines, public services and public safety considerations.
- Prepare transportation infrastructure guidelines to provide access to a new port of entry and connect it to the Tijuana-Rosarito corridor.
- Provide financial options or alternatives to fund the construction of city streets in the area of the proposed new port of entry.
- Establish a planning framework for the area.

Tijuana's International Airport is located within the Mesa de Otay area. It is managed by Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacifico (Pacific Airport Group). The Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transporte-SCT) is the Mexican government agency that oversees the operations of this government owned facility. The SCT controls land use in and around the airport that impact its safety and operation.

Data for the rest of the study area in Tijuana is currently being collected.

² Otay Subregional Plan; Pg. 10.

³ East Otay Specific Plan Amendment; Pg. 2.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation network in the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay binational area serves commuter, shopping, tourist, and goods movement travel within the United States and Mexico as well as crossborder travel via the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay Port of Entry (POE). This POE is the main commercial crossing between California and Mexico. In addition, the Otay Mesa POE handles a significant amount of commuter and tourist traffic between San Diego and Tijuana. Figure 2 illustrates the planned transportation network and land uses within the proposed study area.

Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay POE

In 2004, the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay POE handled more than 726,000 northbound trucks and \$22.2 billion worth of goods in both directions, which represents two-thirds of the value of trade moving between California and Mexico. Also, nearly 6.2 million private vehicles and more than 1.5 million pedestrians crossed northbound at the Otay Mesa border station in 2004.

A survey conducted at the Otay Mesa POE between November 2004 and February 2005 has provided current information on crossborder travel characteristics. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate trip purposes for crossborder crossings at the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay POE.

On average, more than 60 percent of border crossings into the San Diego region via the Otay Mesa POE made by people who live in Mexico are for shopping or errands (63.1%) and nearly one out of four crossings are work or business trips (23.8%). Visiting friends and family also is a significant reason for crossing and it accounts for almost one in five northbound crossings (19.8%).⁴

The surveys reveal different patterns for crossings into Mexico. The most common trip purpose is visiting friends or family (58.7%), then shopping or errands (26.7%), followed by work (25%).

A new POE has been proposed about two miles east of the existing Otay Mesa crossing. SR 11, an east-west extension of SR 905, would connect the future East Otay Mesa-Otay II POE to a planned facility linking to the Tijuana-Rosarito Corridor.

⁴ SANDAG, Analysis of crossborder surveys conducted at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry for *Estimating Economic Impacts of Border Wait Times at the San Diego-Baja California Border Region, 2004-2005*.

Figure 2

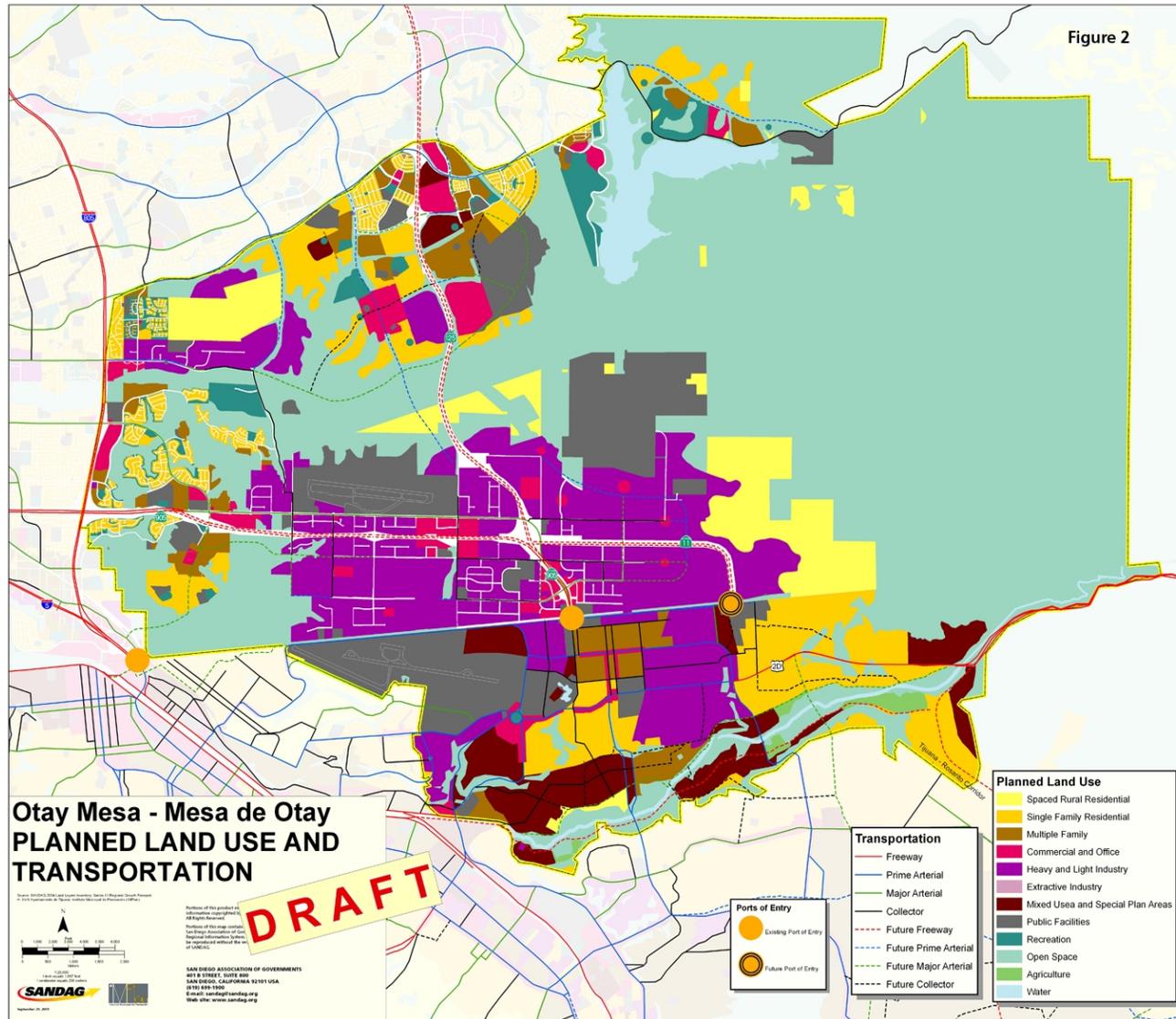


Figure 3
Trip Purpose for those who Live in Mexico

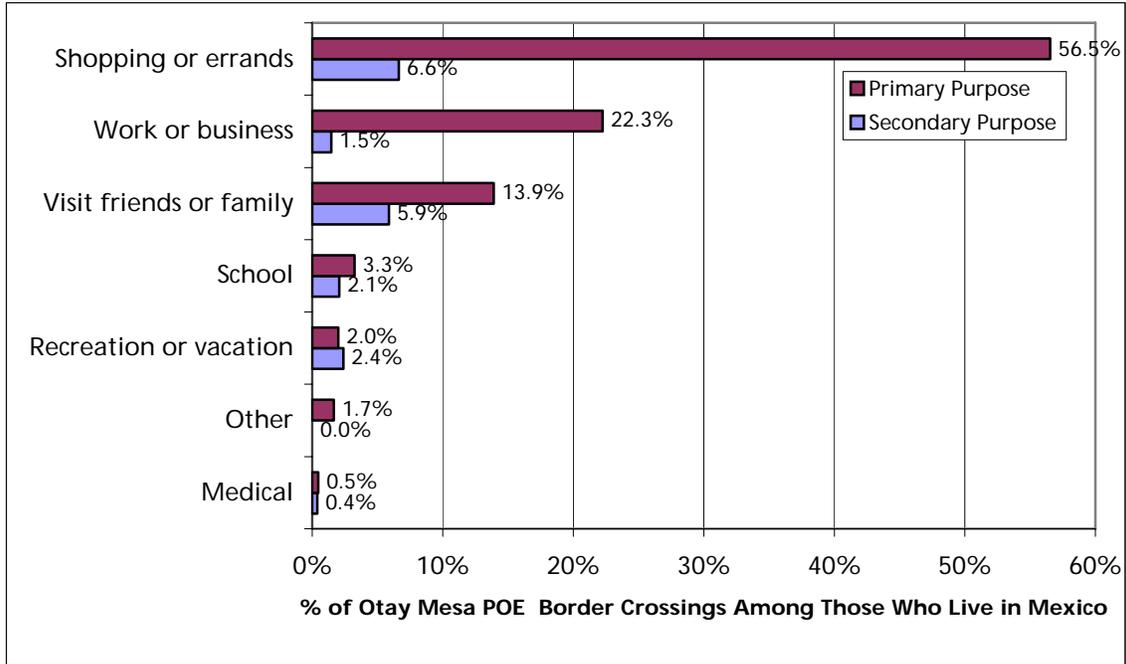
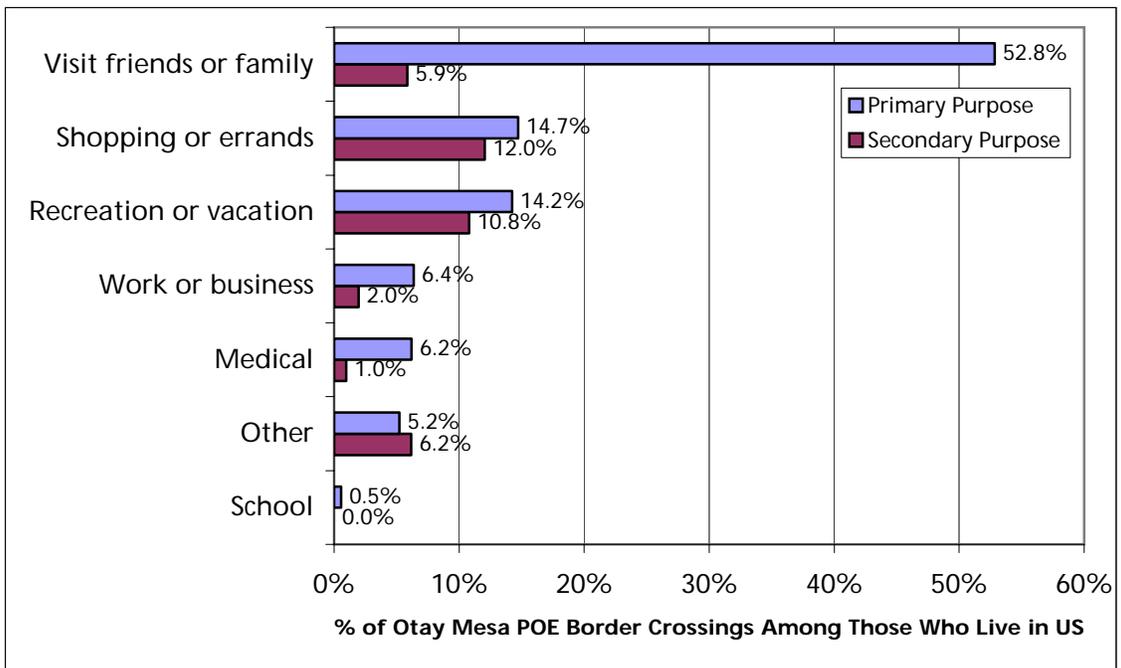


Figure 4
Trip Purpose for Crossborder Travelers who Live in U.S.



Highways

Interstate 805 (I-805) is the main north-south corridor serving the Otay Mesa area. Scheduled to open in late 2006, the South Bay Expressway (State Route 125) will provide a new north-south corridor linking the border area and new communities in eastern Chula Vista to the rest of the San Diego region.

Interim State Route 905 (SR 905/Otay Mesa Road) is the principal east-west facility and provides the only access to the Otay Mesa POE. Forty thousand to 60,000 vehicles travel daily on this road between I-805 and the border crossing. Trucks represent about 15 percent of the traffic. The first segment of the SR 905 extension, from the Otay Mesa POE to Airway Road, opened to traffic in September 2005. Construction of the second segment, from east of I-805 to Airway Road, is scheduled to begin in late 2006 and take three to four years to complete.

The Tijuana-Tecate toll road is the principal east-west highway in Mesa de Otay. It begins in the Mesa de Otay district of Tijuana, ending east of the city of Tecate. It is a 22-mile, four-lane, controlled-access highway. This highway continues as a free facility for 41 miles to La Rumorosa and as a 30-mile toll road to El Centinela, west of Mexicali.

Currently under construction, the Tijuana-Rosarito Corridor will link Mesa de Otay in Tijuana and Playas de Rosarito. A connection to the future Otay II POE is under evaluation. The entire 28-mile facility is anticipated to be completed by 2013.

Transit

The Metropolitan Transit Service (MTS) provides public transportation between the Otay Mesa POE and the Blue Line Trolley (Iris station) during weekdays from 4:50 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. In 2004, more than 416,000 passengers traveled on transit Route 905. MTS has identified this route for future expansion to address travel demand and improve connections to Otay Mesa.

The planned South Bay Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will provide direct service between the Otay Mesa POE and Downtown San Diego. This BRT route would travel on the South Bay Expressway, I-805, and SR 94 and would serve the developing communities in eastern Chula Vista. Service between eastern Chula Vista and Downtown San Diego would be implemented in 2010 and the extension to the Otay Mesa POE is anticipated to begin operating in 2015.

Airports

Two airports are located in the Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay binational area. Brown Field is a general aviation airport and POE for private aircraft flying into the United States from Mexico. This airport is owned and operated by the City of San Diego. It has an 8,000-foot-long runway that can accommodate most aircraft and a second runway with a length of 3,000 feet.⁵

⁵ <http://www.sandiego.gov/real-estate-assets/airports.shtml>, accessed on 9/16/05.

Tijuana International Airport is a passenger and cargo airport with service to major cities in Mexico. It has a single runway of 9,800 feet with options to extend it up to 15,000 feet and to build a second runway. Tijuana International Airport handled nearly 3.4 million passengers in 2004.⁶

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay binational area is home to the busiest commercial border crossing between California and Mexico. The Otay Mesa POE handled \$22.2 billion worth of freight in 2004, which represents the third highest dollar value of trade among all land border crossings between the United States and Mexico.⁷ The Otay Mesa POE also accommodates the second largest volume of passenger vehicles and buses between California and Mexico, after the San Ysidro border crossing. Crossborder travel contributes to economic activity on both sides of the border since the predominant reasons for crossing the border are for shopping, work, or social visits.

The border crossing is the main conduit for the economic relationship of the San Diego-Tijuana region. Structural and economic differences between San Diego and Tijuana have been capitalized over the years to provide the binational region with a competitive advantage in the global economy.⁸ The San Diego region relies on the labor force available in Mexico while Tijuana's economy benefits from employment opportunities in San Diego. Recently, the Tijuana housing market appears to be filling a gap in affordable housing in the San Diego region bringing about increased crossborder commuting for work.

The Maquiladora program has supported economic development in Baja California, particularly in Tijuana. Established in the mid 1960s, this program allows plants in Mexico to temporarily import component parts from the United States or other countries and then to export the products. Maquiladoras rely on comparatively lower cost Mexican labor to assemble, process, or manufacture goods. The maquiladora industry has created employment opportunities in Baja California but also in the San Diego region, including the Otay Mesa area. This industry is responsible for 52,000 manufacturing jobs in this area.⁹

Driving the San Diego regional economy are 16 export-oriented industrial clusters.¹⁰ Industrial clusters are groups of complementary, competing, and interdependent industries that drive wealth creation in a region, primarily through export of goods and services. They are:

- Recreational Goods Manufacturing
- Software & Computer Services
- Financial Services
- Computer & Electronics Manufacturing
- Biomedical Products
- Environmental Technology
- Entertainment & Amusement

⁶ <http://www.aena.es/>, accessed on 9/16/05.

⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Transborder Freight Data*, 2005.

⁸ SANDAG, *San Diego Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy: Toward a Shared Economic Vision for the San Diego Region*, 1998.

⁹ IMPLan's Plan Parcial de Mesa de Otay, 2005.

¹⁰ Ibid.

- Fruit & Vegetables
- Horticulture
- Defense & Transportation Manufacturing
- Visitor Industry Services
- Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals
- Communications
- Business Services
- Medical Services

In Tijuana, an objective of its 2005-2007 Municipal Development Plan is to promote the creation of industrial clusters in six strategic areas such as automotive industry, medical products, wood products, electronic industry, software, and information technologies.¹¹ This Plan calls for fostering the preparation of strategic plans to develop clusters, in cooperation with the federal, state, and private sectors. Opportunities exist for binational collaboration to support the development or expansion of common industrial clusters in the San Diego region and Tijuana.

The private sector and government agencies on both sides of the border need to work cooperatively to maintain and expand their collective competitive advantage in the global economy by providing infrastructure that improves access to both domestic and international markets and supports industry. In addition, the binational region needs to focus on building a strong base of small- to medium-sized firms that supports the larger industries in the region. A strong base of feeder or supplier industries will help strengthen the region's core industries and provide more crossborder business opportunities.¹²

Strategies to facilitate crossborder commuter travel and goods movement will be vital in avoiding larger economic losses to the San Diego-Baja California region due to long and unpredictable waits at the border.

The Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay area has the opportunity to play a major role in the economic development of the San Diego-Tijuana region. The City of San Diego's Otay Mesa and the County of San Diego's Otay community planning areas, as well as land in eastern Chula Vista contribute a large potential supply of developable industrial, commercial, and office land. Employment is forecast to grow significantly in these areas by 2030. Mesa de Otay, in Tijuana, also includes industrial land uses in the vicinity of the existing and planned border crossings.

HOUSING

Recent increases in housing prices in the San Diego region have made homeownership more difficult for much of the population. Demand has outpaced supply and has driven prices up. The percentage of California households that can afford to purchase a median-priced home in San Diego County dropped to an all time low of nine percent in July 2005.¹³ This trend is leading to an increase in long-distance interregional commuting by the region's employees who seek less expensive housing in Tijuana and surrounding Southern California counties.

¹¹ COPLADEM, XVIII Ayuntamiento Municipal de Tijuana, Plan Municipal de Desarrollo, 2005-2007.

¹² SANDAG, Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2004.

¹³ California Association of Realtors: <http://www.car.org/index.php?id=MzU0Mzg=>

The existing Otay Mesa Community Plan allows for approximately 12,900 housing units. The Draft Concept Plan proposes an additional 12,400 units.¹⁴ In line with the draft plan, there are currently major development proposals for the Otay Mesa Community Planning Area, which includes large land ownership areas.

The City of Chula Vista's portion of the study area south of Olympic Parkway is made up of several villages which contain land use designations that provide for the development of single-family homes, condominiums, and apartments. Approximately 18,000 units are planned for this area.¹⁵

San Diego County's Otay Planning area contains only a few scattered single family residences. The area's main population feeder comes from the Donovan State Correctional Facility, the County's George F. Bailey Detention Facility, and the East Mesa Juvenile Hall Complex. They have a combined population of 5,492 inmates.

Data for the rest of the study area in Tijuana is currently being collected.

ENVIRONMENT

Ecosystems know no political boundaries. Flora and fauna, air, water, and the pollution that plague them are governed by and circulate through a system not restricted by political lines or jurisdictions.¹⁶ Encroaching development on both sides of the border is threatening open space. The following is a summary of designated open space areas in the Otay Mesa study area.

The County of San Diego's Otay Planning area is made up of approximately 28,380 acres. In the unincorporated area, several thousand acres of the Otay Planning area are managed by the Bureau of Land Management.¹⁷ This area also is within the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) planning area.

The Otay River watershed encompasses approximately 160 square miles in southwest San Diego County and is one of the three hydrologic units that discharge to San Diego Bay. The watershed management plan area encompasses several jurisdictions. The watershed consists largely of unincorporated area, but also includes portions of the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, Coronado, National City, and San Diego. In 2004, the County of San Diego and Cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach and San Diego, and the Unified Port of San Diego entered into a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement (JEPA) to develop and adopt the Otay River Watershed Management Plan (ORWMP), which is under development. The final draft Plan is expected to be released in Fall 2005.¹⁸

The predominant land uses in the watershed are open space (67%) and urban/residential (20%). The major inland hydrologic features, Upper and Lower Otay Lakes, are two water supply reservoirs that also provide important habitat and recreational opportunities. Approximately 36 square miles of the watershed is part of the MSCP effort that provides habitat for a wide range of endangered plant and animal species. Other important conservation areas within the watershed include the San

¹⁴ Planning Commission Workshop Report No. P-02-130, dated July 18, 2003: pg.3

¹⁵ Otay Ranch General Development Plan Amendment, Table 32, December 2004.

¹⁶ SANDAG, *Regional Comprehensive Plan*, 2004.

¹⁷ East Otay Specific Plan Amendment; Pg. 5.

¹⁸ Multiple Species Conservation Program, Web Page address: http://dplu-mscp.sdcounty.ca.gov/pub_out/watershedinformation.htm.

Diego National Wildlife Refuge, the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve, and the vernal pool lands in the region.

The Otay River Valley Regional Park is located within the Otay River Watershed and includes approximately 8,500 acres stretching from the San Diego bay 11 miles up the Otay River Valley. The River Valley runs between the southern boundary of the City of Chula Vista and the northern boundary of South San Diego (Otay Mesa/Nestor). In 1990, the Cities of Chula Vista and San Diego, and the County of San Diego entered into a JEPA to coordinate the creation of this multi-jurisdictional park. This park contains a mix of recreation opportunities ranging from playing fields and picnic areas to hiking, biking, and horse trails, environmentally sensitive areas wildlife, culture, historic, agriculture, archaeological and scenic resources.

The northwestern and northeastern portions of the East Otay Mesa Specific Plan Subarea 1 are designated Conservation/Limited Use Area. This designation allows for uses such as outdoor participant sports, campgrounds, and resorts.¹⁹ This area, as well as Subarea 2 and the rest of the Otay Plan area include vernal pools, endangered plants, and Golden Eagle habitats.

The eastern portion of the study area in Tijuana is part of a habitat corridor that is threatened by eastward urban growth from Tijuana as well as proposed infrastructure projects. This area lies directly south of the border from the East Otay Planning area. The areas with the land use designations of Conservation and Preservation have approximately 72,664 acres. Even though there has been progress in designating and preserving open space areas both in the San Diego region and in Tijuana, no joint efforts to establish binational open space corridors have been undertaken.

The issue areas described in this paper focus primarily on land use-transportation linkages that will influence planning and investment decisions. Many other topics, such as air quality, environmental mitigation, and cultural resources, could be addressed or expanded in future planning efforts.

¹⁹ East Otay Specific Plan Amendment; Pg. 30