

**Statement of John S. Wotowicz**  
**La Entrada al Pacifico Feasibility Study Public Meeting**  
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I would venture to guess that everyone in this room is familiar with what I would call the classic debate of environment versus economy. The sole supporters of the La Entrada al Pacifico trade corridor, MOTRAN, would like you to think that their poorly-crafted plan for a 4-lane divided highway stands to bring a quantum of economic benefit to the region that justifies the catastrophic harm that it would cause. They would like the world to believe that this is just another "not in my backyard" debate between self-interested citizens and a thoughtful, public minded economically sophisticated organization.

The fact is that the debate about La Entrada is not the classic debate. It is paradoxically a debate about a project that actually stands to have a negative effect on the region's and state's economy even before you consider its negative environmental consequences. It has been devised by an organization without support from even the city that it calls home. It has been devised by an organization that thinks that a 4-lane divided highway cutting through the heart of the Big Bend will increase tourist traffic when it is the absence of 4-lane highways that is the primary reason that tourists visit the region. It has been devised by an organization that is using an absurdly out of date 1950's-style playbook for economic growth that is completely out of touch with the drivers of economic growth today. It has been devised by an organization that thinks progress is collecting a toll from people who see Texas as a place you pass through on your way to somewhere else.

Before I speak about what I believe is behind La Entrada, why we have all been forced to spend countless sleepless nights and working hours in pursuit of the truth about La Entrada and why our state and federal governments have spent millions of taxpayer dollars investigating this ill-conceived trade route, I want to refresh your memories as to how all of this started.

In the days following the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, there was a great deal of discussion of the shortcomings of the transportation links between Mexico and the United States. The understandable concern was that the newfound opportunities for trade between the two countries would be restricted by the inability of goods to flow freely across the border. As a result, planners came alive with proposals for a multitude of expansions and enhancements to border "ports of entry" as well as the transportation corridors that served them in both countries. It is in this context that the La Entrada corridor was designated as one possible route.

In the 11 years since this designation, much has been done to address the identified transportation bottlenecks. The ports of entry at Laredo, Fabens, El Paso, Santa Teresa, Nogales and San Diego were significantly enhanced and expanded while major

infrastructure was created and/or expanded on nearly every preferred road and rail route. Port operator Hutchison Port Holdings has developed the port of Lazaro Cardenas on the Mexican West Coast into a world-class container ship facility and Kansas City Southern railway in partnership with TFM has created a world-class rail and road corridor stretching through Laredo and the major Texas population centers all the way to Kansas City.

Against the backdrop of all of this activity, La Entrada has not moved forward. It has not moved forward because nearly every governmental and private sector entity that has looked at the project has found it to be economically flawed. The costs of developing the necessary infrastructure to expand the port of Topolobampo and build the road and rail corridor between the port and Chihuahua City and then on to Ojinaga is prohibitive and unjustified by the potential revenues that the project would create. The market has spoken and it has cast its vote against La Entrada.

MOTRAN, as many of you know, is an acronym. It stands for Midland Odessa Transportation Alliance. Unfortunately, MOTRAN is also a misnomer because Midland does not support MOTRAN's proposal. MOTRAN tried to get the Midland City Council to pass a resolution supporting its plan for a 4-lane divided highway through the Big Bend region. However, the city council refused to approve the resolution that MOTRAN had drafted and chose instead to express their consensus view that the environment, wildlife, lifestyle and other unique aspects of the region must be respected.

In the classic debate, it is big business and big cities against the environment and the small town. But La Entrada has no big business or big city support. In fact it appears that the only ones who support the development of La Entrada are MOTRAN's allies who build roads.

And what of the economic benefit to those of us living South of I-10. MOTRAN has encouraged our friends in Presidio to support their scheme by telling them of the great job creation that La Entrada will stimulate. And yet they have offered no details of the exact number and skill and pay levels of the jobs that they allege will appear. The fact is that La Entrada will do little more for Presidio than to slightly increase the number of government border-crossing-oriented positions and potentially add a few warehouse and truck stop jobs. These are hardly the jobs that one Presidio community leader said he hoped would result in the teenagers of Presidio staying in town rather than leaving after high school.

Tonight, Brian Swindell and his team of consultants have told us that their study has revealed that there is no need for a 4-lane divided highway along the La Entrada route. A reading of their complete report reveals that they believe that there will not be a need unless ALL of the Mexican infrastructure is completed, and they have echoed the findings of Big Bend Sentinel reporter Sterry Butcher in voicing their doubt that the Mexican infrastructure will ever be completed. HDR should be commended for their hard work in reaching such realistic conclusions.

Against this backdrop, the real question, then, is why a project with no net economic benefit, no real popular support, no backing of big business, no private or public sector funding and with a catastrophic environmental profile is still alive? The answer obviously is that MOTRAN has utilized its connection to a powerful Austin player to keep money flowing and to prevent the life support system from being turned off even when all indicators show that there is no sign of life.

At a time when our state faces both a transportation funding crisis and a multitude of severe transportation bottlenecks that are having a dramatically negative impact on lifestyle and commerce, why are we wasting time, resources, and money on La Entrada.

Tonight, in light of all that we now know about La Entrada, I want to ask you all to join me in calling for an end to all of this with legislation that removes the La Entrada designation from our legislative annals, removes the La Entrada signs from our roads, and removes from MOTRAN the ability to waste taxpayer dollars to further terrorize our region and our state with the specter of their ill-conceived plan.

It is time for MOTRAN and their few supporters to:

Respect the market;

Respect the views of the consultants;

Respect the views of the region;

Respect the views of the Midland city council.

Borrowing upon words uttered in Berlin just over 20 years ago:

"Mr. Craddick, Mr. Perry and Mr. Bush tear down these signs!"