

## CHAPTER 1.0

### PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The General Services Administration (GSA) proposes the reconfiguration and expansion of the existing San Ysidro Land Port of Entry (LPOE). The San Ysidro LPOE is located along Interstate 5 (I-5) at the United States (U.S.)-Mexico border in the San Ysidro community of San Diego, California. The proposed San Ysidro LPOE improvements are herein referred to as the “Project.” The total area of the Project Study Area, which comprises the anticipated maximum extent of disturbance, including improvements, staging areas, and temporary impacts resulting from Project construction, encompasses approximately 50 acres. Figure 1-1 illustrates the regional location of the Project, and Figure 1-2 shows the Project Study Area and the Project vicinity.

The Project is included in the San Diego Association of Governments’ (SANDAG) 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP; SANDAG 2007); and the 2008 Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP; SANDAG 2008), which covers Fiscal Years (FY) 2009 through 2013.

## 1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

### 1.2.1 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the Project is to improve operational efficiency, security, and safety for cross-border travelers and federal agencies at the San Ysidro LPOE.

Project goals include:

- Increase vehicle and pedestrian inspection processing capacities at the San Ysidro LPOE;
- Reduce northbound vehicle and pedestrian queues and wait times to cross the border;
- Improve the safety of the San Ysidro LPOE for vehicles and pedestrians crossing the border, and for employees at the LPOE;
- Modernize facilities to accommodate current and future demands and implementation of border security initiatives, such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), the United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology program (US-VISIT), and the Secure Border Initiative (SBI).

### 1.2.2 Need for the Project

#### Capacity and Transportation Demand

The San Diego and Tijuana region is the largest urban border area along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, with a combined population of over four million people. The combined population of this area is anticipated to grow to over 5.5 million by 2020 (SANDAG/California Department of Transportation [Caltrans] 2006).

Two international LPOEs, San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, currently link San Diego and Tijuana, while a third LPOE is located east of the San Diego metropolitan area at Tecate. A fourth LPOE, Otay Mesa East, is currently in the early planning stages. Together, these LPOEs are

intended to serve as the gateway for all pedestrian traffic and vehicular movement of people and goods between the San Diego region and Baja California, Mexico.

The San Ysidro LPOE is the busiest land port in North America. It is open 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and handles passenger vehicle, pedestrian, bus, and limited use rail traffic (commercial traffic in the region is currently restricted to the Otay Mesa and Tecate LPOEs). The San Ysidro LPOE currently processes approximately 50,000 northbound vehicles and 26,000 northbound pedestrians per day (SANDAG 2007). The existing San Ysidro LPOE has become a bottleneck in the system of interchange between the two countries, increasingly restricting the movement of passenger vehicles during peak times. Recent studies have estimated that existing wait times for vehicles at the San Ysidro LPOE average 1.5 to 2 hours during the commuter peak period (weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.; KOA Corporation 2009). Queues of passenger vehicles during the same commuter peak period have been estimated to number approximately 2,900 vehicles (KOA Corporation 2009).

Improvements to the San Ysidro LPOE are needed because the capacities of the existing LPOEs in the region and the San Ysidro LPOE specifically are currently being exceeded, causing excessive border wait times. Cross-border travel is forecasted to continue to grow due to projected local and regional growth, and border delays are expected to increase correspondingly, placing a strain on existing border facilities and infrastructure at the San Ysidro LPOE. It is estimated that maximum wait times would exceed three hours during the commuter peak period by the year 2014, and 10 hours by the year 2030 (KOA Corporation 2009). Pedestrian and passenger vehicle border crossings between the U.S. and Mexico have risen dramatically in the past decade, reaching over 60 million people in 2006 in the San Diego County (County)/Baja California border area alone (SANDAG/Caltrans 2006). At the San Ysidro LPOE, it is anticipated that the total number of primary inspections will increase by approximately 28 percent by 2025 (Caltrans/GSA 2007). This increase in cross-border travel, in combination with recent increases in U.S. security requirements has resulted in facility and infrastructure-related challenges. The existing facilities and infrastructure were not designed to handle the current and projected traffic volumes processed at the San Ysidro LPOE.

In addition, over 750 U.S. Government employees work at the San Ysidro LPOE. Existing on-site parking is not adequate to meet around-the-clock employee parking demands. Large areas of the secondary inspection area have been converted to employee parking. Additional employee parking spaces are needed to improve operational efficiency and accommodate employee parking demands.

Because growth is outstripping capacity at the existing LPOE, improvements are necessary to expand capacity, improve processing efficiency, and reduce border wait times.

### **Safety and Border Security**

In addition to the need to expand the San Ysidro LPOE to improve operational efficiencies, the Project will address public and employee safety and border security concerns. Buildings within the northbound inspection facility are approximately 35 years old and cannot effectively support U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) infrastructure and enforcement operations. Due to the age and condition of the existing buildings, a complete retrofit and remodel is required to accommodate operational needs. A space needs evaluation concluded that an approximately 30-percent increase in building floor area is required to properly house existing tenants (Cannon Design 2002). Seismic and blast resistance upgrades; mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems upgrades; and comprehensive improvements to the communications and data

infrastructure are needed. Additionally, the layout of the existing facility compromises public and employee safety. The overcrossing is located directly above the primary inspection area, creating a potential risk in the event of a criminal incident within the inspection area below. The overcrossing also serves as the pedestrian route from East San Ysidro Boulevard into Mexico. No inspection of the southbound pedestrian traffic occurs on this overcrossing, creating similar potential safety and security issues in the event of criminal incidents. In addition, the LPOE Administration Building is not sufficiently remote from the inspection area.

As previously discussed, large areas originally designed for secondary inspection have been converted to expand employee parking and accommodate a vehicle impound area. Movement through the remaining, constrained secondary inspection area is confusing for the public and creates the potential for vehicular and pedestrian conflicts because there is no clear separation between vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

Furthermore, the mandated implementation of border security programs, such as WHTI, US-VISIT, and SBI, requires modernization and facility upgrades. These programs require DHS to implement new inspection technologies to track cross-border traffic at the San Ysidro LPOE. The WHTI plan, as directed by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, is designed to enhance U.S. border security while facilitating legitimate travel and trade. Under WHTI, travelers entering the U.S. must present specified documentation that proves both identity and citizenship. US-VISIT is a program that uses biometric data (digital finger scans and photographs) to verify travelers' identity and to check against a database of known criminals and suspected terrorists. The SBI is a multi-year plan to add more border patrol agents; expand illegal immigrant detention and removal capabilities; and upgrade border control technology, including manned/unmanned aerial assets, and detection technology; increase investment in border infrastructure improvements; and increase interior enforcement of U.S. immigration laws. In order to implement these security programs, an increase in staff, space, and systems is needed, which cannot be accommodated within the existing configuration of the LPOE.

In summary, reconfiguration and expansion of the San Ysidro LPOE are necessary because: (1) the existing facility is undersized and requires modernization due to mandated security programs; and (2) the current configuration is inefficient and increases the potential for safety hazards and security concerns.

### 1.3 Existing Facilities

The existing San Ysidro LPOE was constructed in 1973 and consists of several buildings and infrastructure to support border inspection operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Existing buildings are located within the northbound inspection facility and include the Administration Building, Pedestrian Inspection Building, the East and West Head Houses, and the Old Customs House. Existing buildings encompass a total of approximately 70,000 square feet and are briefly described below.

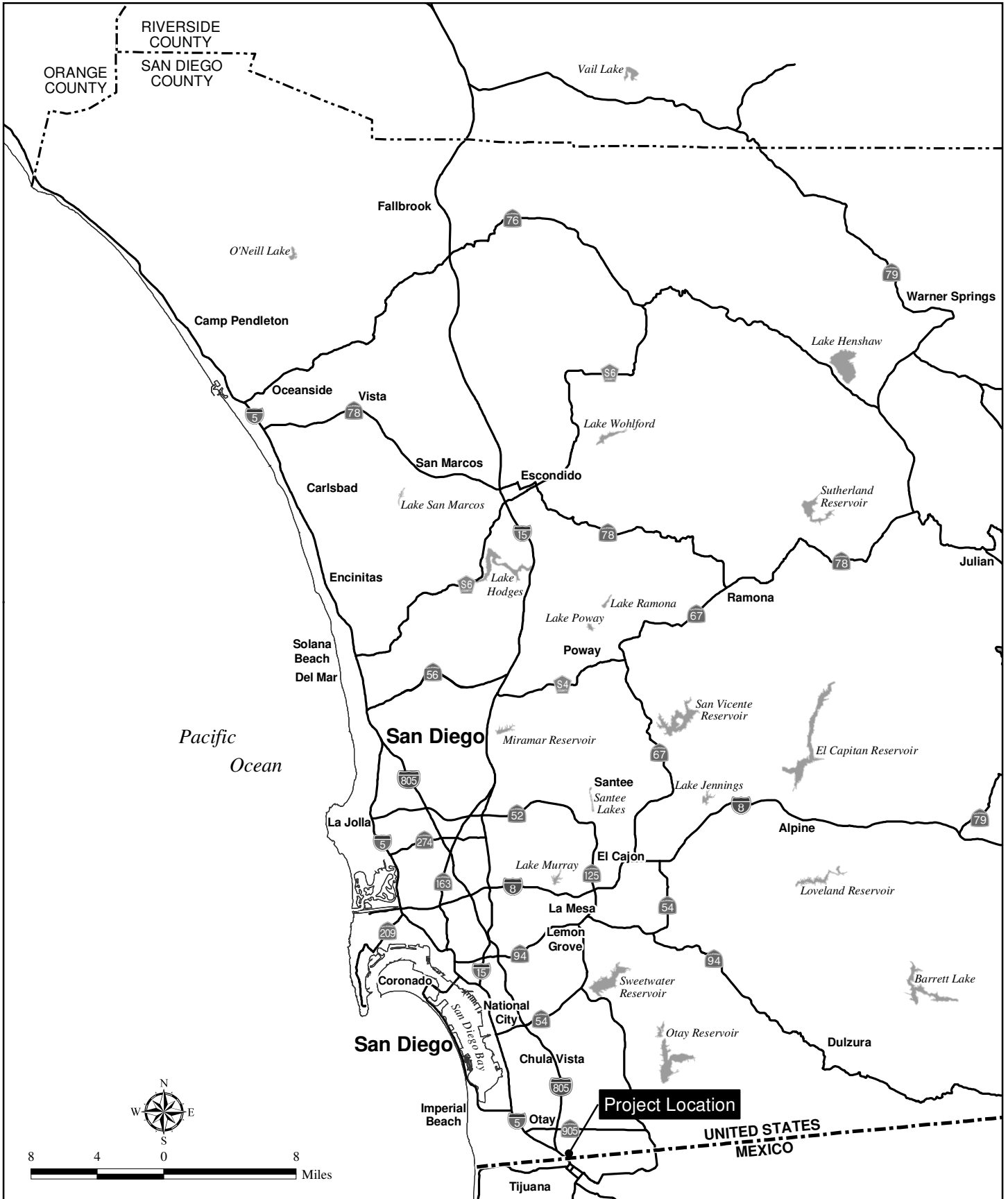
- **Administration Building:** The Administration Building was constructed as a bridge structure that spans the northbound primary vehicle inspection lanes. This elevated one-story building contains administrative offices and holding cells.

- **Pedestrian Inspection Building:** The Pedestrian Inspection Building is adjacent to the Administration Building and handles pedestrian and bicycle processing operations. This building also contains holding cells.
- **East and West Head Houses:** Two head house buildings are located immediately north of the Administration Building at ground level within the Secondary Inspection Area. The head houses provide operations offices for supervisors.
- **Old Customs House:** The Old Customs House, located on the east side of the northbound vehicular lanes, was constructed in 1932 and has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) since 1982. The two-story Old Customs House encompasses approximately 20,500 square feet of office space.

Other facilities and infrastructure within the northbound inspection facility include 24 vehicular lanes, inspection booths, and vehicle canopies within the Primary Inspection Area, as well as 27 vehicle inspection spaces, vehicle canopies, an impound lot, and parking areas within the Secondary Inspection Area. The 24 vehicular lanes within the Primary Inspection Area include four high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, one dedicated bus lane, and one lane dedicated to the Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) program, which allows expedited automated processing for vehicles with special permits. Pedestrian access into the U.S. (northbound) is provided on the eastern side of the northbound inspection facility.

The southbound facility consists of six southbound traffic lanes and a pedestrian crossing that provide southbound access into Mexico. Figure 1-3 illustrates the existing configuration of the San Ysidro LPOE.

Current tenants include Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP), all three of which are part of the DHS; the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); and the Consulate of Mexico.



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# Regional Location Map

## SAN YSIDRO LAND PORT OF ENTRY IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 1-1





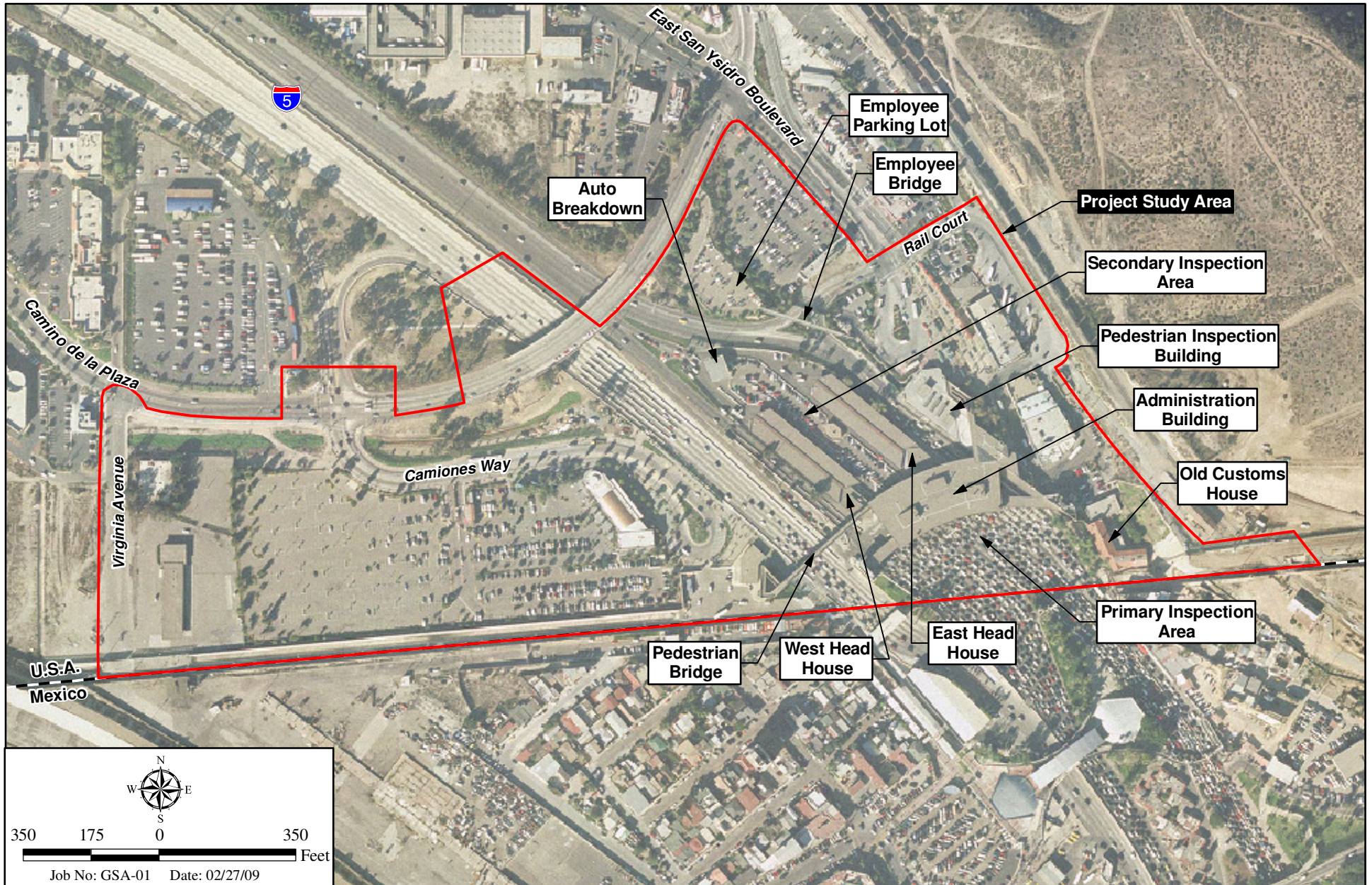
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## Project Vicinity Map

SAN YSIDRO LAND PORT OF ENTRY IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 1-2





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## Existing San Ysidro LPOE

SAN YSIDRO LAND PORT OF ENTRY IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 1-3