

Land Port Of Entry

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OVERVIEW

A Land Port of Entry, also known as a border station, is the facility that provides controlled entry into or departure from the United States for persons and materials. It houses the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and other Federal Inspection Agencies responsible for the enforcement of federal laws pertaining to such activities. The Land Port of Entry consists of the land, the buildings, and the on-site roadways and parking lots that the Port of Entry occupies. The facility serves as a point of contact for travelers entering or leaving the country for the purposes of enforcement; prevention of illegal aliens from entering the country; collection of revenues; prevention of injurious plants, animal pests, human and animal diseases from entering the country; examination of export documents; registration of valuable articles being temporarily taken out of the country; and commercial transactions.

Located at land and inland water (river) boundaries with Canada and Mexico, land ports of entry have varying needs and requirements based on their location. For example, one land port of entry could be on a major shipping route and, therefore, process a high volume of commercial traffic and yet have virtually no pedestrian traffic. On the other hand, another land port of entry can process as many as 15,000 pedestrians each day. Beyond these obvious programmatic differences, the perceived threat at a land port of entry (e.g. terrorist and other illegal entry, drug smuggling, tax fraud, etc.) will have a significant impact on individual land port of entry design.

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Point Roberts Port of Entry

Typically, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) or one of the Federal Inspection Agencies owns and operates these land ports of entry, although they may be leased to the government by municipalities, other local governments, or private entities such as toll bridges. GSA, through their Public Buildings Service, is typically responsible for border station facility development and management. For more information, contact the [GSA Border Station Program](#).

BUILDING ATTRIBUTES

A. Types Of Spaces

A Land Port of Entry consists of a number of space types accommodating the functional needs of the primary federal inspection agencies that maintain staff on-site, including:

- **U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)**—A branch of the Department of Homeland Security within the Border and Transportation Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security. CBP facilitates legitimate trade and travel while utilizing all of the resources at its disposal to protect and defend the United States from those who would do the United States harm. Generally, CBP conducts the primary inspection of goods and people seeking entry into the U.S. Depending on the need, either CBP, VS, or FDA may conduct a secondary inspection. CBP processes the majority of the vehicular and pedestrian traffic at the station. Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection (AQI), a program now within CBP, conducts inspections to control the import of plant- and animal-based agricultural products into the U.S. at Land Ports of Entry. The U.S. Border Patrol is part of CBP, but does not participate in inspections.
- **USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**—USDA-APHIS conducts inspection of livestock imported into the U.S. and may be present at Land Ports of Entry.
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**—FDA conducts inspections to control the import of foods, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, biological products, animal feeds and drugs, and radiation-emitting instruments.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS)**—FWS regulates the importation of birds protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992 (WBCA).
- **General Services Administration (GSA), Public Buildings Service**—The GSA, through their Public Buildings Service, is responsible for facilities management, such as maintenance and repair, at the land ports of entry.

Generally, CBP, APHIS, and FDA conduct the primary and secondary inspections of goods and people seeking entry into the U.S. CBP processes the majority of the vehicular and pedestrian traffic

at the station.

The *U.S. Land Port of Entry Design Guide (For Official Use Only)* details the types of spaces found in land ports of entry. These include:

- Pedestrian/Bus Passenger Queuing, Processing, and Inspection Areas
- Commercial and Non-Commercial Vehicle Queuing, Processing, and Inspection Areas: including areas for animal and agriculture inspection and quarantine.
- Counter/Work Areas
- [Offices](#)
- [Laboratory \(Dry\)](#)
- [Laboratory \(Wet\)](#)
- Holding Cell/Detention Areas: for holding detained travelers.
- [Private Toilets](#)
- [Automated Data Processing Center \(Mainframe\)](#)
- [Automated Data Processing Center \(High PC\)](#)
- [General Storage Areas](#)
- [Outside Parking Areas \(Surface\)](#): referral, visitor, staff, and service parking areas should be separated.
- [Fitness Center](#)
- Dog Kennels: dogs are used to search vehicles and cargo.
- Impoundment Areas: for seized vehicles and other large items.
- [Light Industrial Areas](#)
- [Warehouse](#)
- Residences: federally-owned, permanent structures where the inspectors lives or for the overnight stay of inspectors.

B. Important Design Considerations

With an appreciation of the fundamental differences between large and small ports of entry and facilities located on the northern or southern border, typical features of Land Ports of Entry include the list of applicable design objectives elements as outlined below. For a complete list and definitions of the design objectives within the context of whole building design, click on the titles below.



U.S. Land Port of Entry, Calexico, CA

Photo Credit: Robert Reck

AESTHETICS

A Land Port of Entry should be:

- Welcoming, but formal
- Compatible with regional and local styles
- Integrated with GSA's Art-in-Architecture program
- Sensitive to existing historic structures
- Respectful of local landscape and climate considerations

FUNCTIONAL/OPERATIONAL

Be Planned, Designed, and Constructed with Scheduling and Phasing in Mind

- Ensure continuity of operations.
- Accommodate long-term development and growth.
- Anticipate time required to procure and install regionally uncommon materials and equipment.

Provide Clear Circulation Patterns

- Offer simple, direct movement of traffic and staff
- Locate service counters so that staff members are visible to the public
- Consider the visual impact of approach sequence
- Incorporate integrated signage

Accommodate Inspection of Four Basic Traffic Types

- Pedestrians, typically at southern land ports of entry
- Non-commercial vehicles, defined as traffic "not carrying materials for resale or use in

manufacturing"

- Commercial vehicles, defined as traffic "carrying goods and cargo for resale or use in manufacturing"
- Buses, normally bus passengers disembark for inspection, then the bus is inspected before the passengers board again

PRODUCTIVE

Accommodate Technology and Change

- Provide infrastructure necessary for current and future technology to be deployed at the port for inspection and security purposes.
- Provide flexible architecture and planning that accommodate changes in function and capacity. See also WBDG [Productive—Design for the Changing Workplace](#).

Afford Environmental and Workplace Quality

- Avoid harsh lighting contrasts to encourage site surveillance
- Consider acoustical problems associated with loud exhausts and canopies

SECURE/SAFE

Promote [Security](#), [Control](#), and [Safety](#)

- Incorporate the necessary passive and active security features necessary to protect the occupants and assets housed at the port. The security features should not create a "fortress," but rather impart confidence and respect by welcoming travelers entering the U.S.
- Minimize uncontrolled areas between the international border and the point of primary inspection.
- Provide visual backup with inspection activities positioned so that other staff can observe inspectors who may encounter problems.

SUSTAINABLE

Be [Energy Efficient](#) and [Environmentally Responsive](#)

- Meet emerging [energy performance standards](#). Because stations normally operate on a 24-hour basis, their energy usage will be greater than a typical office facility. However, for this reason increased investments in energy conservation are likely to be justified.
- Mitigate exhaust fumes, particulate pollution, and heat from vehicles idling at booths and canopies.
- Maximize [daylighting](#) and [natural ventilation](#).
- [Minimize water consumption](#).

EMERGING ISSUES

CBP—One Face at the Border—U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, is establishing a new frontline officer position, the CBP Officer, to serve at the Nation's ports of entry and provide the American public, travelers, and the international trade community with "one face at the border." The CBP Officer will unify and integrate the work of approximately 18,000 inspectors who came together from three different agencies (U.S. Customs Service [USCS], Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service [APHIS]) when CBP was formed on March 1, 2003.

Prototype Port—A prototype port design has been established for small ports, primarily located on the northern border. This small port design is intended to be site adapted at up to 50 small ports, significantly reducing the planning and design effort and project execution time for completing the construction program for small ports.

Updating Technologies—Modernizing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) automated systems and information technology is critical to the successful protection of the American people and the American economy in the 21st century. There are a number of programs utilizing technology to change inspection and enforcement processes. The following are current examples.

- **Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)**—will enhance border security and deliver efficiencies to the trade community and participating government agencies by providing interagency information sharing and real-time, cross-government access to more accurate trade information. By centralizing and integrating the collection and analysis of information, ACE will enhance our ability to target illicit cargo, illegal persons, and unsafe conveyances. Trade data will be analyzed prior to arrival of goods, allowing enhanced inter-agency assessment of risks and threats to determine which goods and people must be scrutinized.
- **Automated Manifest Systems (AMS)**—allows the advanced transmission of electronic cargo information to CBP as required by the Trade Act of 2002-Advance Electronic Information.
- **NEXUS**—This program is an alternative inspection program that allows pre-screened, low-risk travelers to be processed with little or no delay by United States and Canadian border officials. Approved applicants are issued a photo-identification/proximity card. Participants cross the border in a dedicated lane, where they present their membership identification and proximity card, and make a declaration. They are then released, unless chosen for a selective or random secondary referral. The NEXUS program will ultimately replace other frequent crosser programs such as the *Secure Electronic Network for Travelers' Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) Program*.
- **Container Security Initiative (CSI)**—High-risk maritime cargo containers are identified and examined for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) at foreign ports before they are shipped to the United States. CSI consists of four core elements: 1) Establish security criteria for identifying

high-risk containers based on advance information. 2) Pre-screen containers at the earliest possible point. 3) Use technology to quickly pre-screen high-risk containers. 4) Develop secure and "smart" containers. Under the CSI program, the screening for WMD in cargo containers is accomplished by teams of highly-skilled CBP officials deployed to work in concert with their equally proficient host nation counterparts.

- **FAST Driver Program**—Commercial truck drivers who transport goods across U.S./foreign border may apply for membership in the Free and Secure Trade (FAST) Commercial Driver program. This program will allow commercial drivers to use one application form to apply for expedited processing while transporting qualifying commercial shipments at the U.S./foreign border.
- **License Plate Reader System (LPR)**—Installed prior to the primary inspection booth, license plate readers detect and read license plates from vehicles entering and departing from the United States. The information is then compared electronically with the Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) databases for possible matches with potential criminal suspects. The license plate readers consist of infrared detectors, a compact strobe illuminator system, a video camera, processor, and a protocol converter that allows the LPR to interface with the TECS and NCIC databases.
- **Radiation Portal Monitors**—Every port of entry utilizes radiation sensing equipment to detect radioactive and nuclear material that may be smuggled into the United States for construction of a weapon of mass destruction. Radiation Portal Monitors are being placed at each primary lane, where vehicles passing through the monitor are scanned for radioactive materials.
- **Vehicle and Cargo Inspection Systems (VACIS)**—VACIS, a gamma ray imaging system, uses radiographic images to help Inspectors examine the contents of trucks, containers, cargo, and passenger vehicles for hidden compartments containing contraband.



Typical license plate reader installation



VACIS System for inspecting trucks

[North American Free Trade Agreement \(NAFTA\)](#)—has resulted in the need for highway expansions leading to and from the border, truck safety, and cargo search enforcement facilities which must be located on or near the land ports of entry.

Through the 1995 U.S./Canada Shared Border Accord, the U.S. and Canada have agreed to establish a joint approach to managing the common border. Former President Clinton's commitment to the accord changed the way land ports of entry are built along the U.S. / Canadian border.

RELEVANT CODES AND STANDARDS

All ports of entry must be designed in accordance with the *U.S. Land Port of Entry Design Guide (For Official Use Only)*.

GSA owned land ports of entry must be designed in accordance with GSA [PBS-P100 Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service](#).

All land ports of entry must conform with a building code, either one adopted by the local jurisdiction providing fire emergency services, or one adopted by GSA.

Land Ports of Entry must also conform to state highway regulations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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SPACE TYPES

[Auditorium](#), [Automated Data Processing: Mainframe](#), [Automated Data Processing: PC System](#), [Conference / Classroom](#), [Firing Range](#), [Food Service](#), [General Storage](#), [Joint Use Retail](#), [Laboratory \(Dry\)](#), [Laboratory \(Wet\)](#), [Library](#), [Light Industrial](#), [Office](#), [Parking: Basement](#), [Parking: Outside / Structured](#), [Parking: Surface](#), [Physical Fitness \(Exercise Room\)](#), [Private Toilet](#), [Warehouse](#)

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

[Accessible—Provide Equal Access and Flexibility](#), [Aesthetics—Understanding the Language and Elements of Design](#), [Functional / Operational—Account for Functional Needs](#), [Functional / Operational—Ensure Appropriate Product / Systems Integration](#), [Productive—Assure Reliable Systems and Spaces](#), [Productive—Provide Comfortable Environments](#), [Secure / Safe—Occupant Safety and Health](#), [Sustainable—Optimize Energy Use](#), [Sustainable—Protect and Conserve Water](#)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Select Appropriate Design Professionals

BUILDING COMMISSIONING

Building Commissioning

Organizations

- [General Services Administration Land Ports of Entry](#)

Publications

- [GSA LEED® Applications Guide](#)
- [GSA LEED® Cost Study](#)
- [GSA PBS-P100 Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service](#)
- [U.S. Land Port of Entry Design Guide \(For Official Use Only\)](#)

Participating Agencies



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and team approach to the project during the planning and programming phases.

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