

City of Laredo – International Bridge Closure Policy

I. Purpose

The City of Laredo's international bridges are critical infrastructure for binational commerce, mobility, and cultural exchange. Closures must remain extraordinary, narrowly tailored, and justified only under specific conditions. This policy establishes a framework for authorizing, managing, and communicating closures in a transparent and coordinated manner.

II. Guiding Principles

1. **Continuity of Commerce** – Bridges remain open as the default; closures are exceptions.
2. **Binational Coordination** – As each bridge is shared infrastructure, closures require U.S.–Mexico cooperation.
3. **Transparency & Accountability** – All closures must be documented, communicated, and reviewed.
4. **Bridge-Specific Use** – Rules reflect the distinct roles of Laredo's four bridges.

III. Authority to Close

1. **Mayor's Emergency Authority**
 - Upon declaration of a local state of emergency, the Mayor may order immediate closure of one or more bridges to protect life, safety, or infrastructure.
 - Orders must be reported to Council within 24 hours and ratified within seven (7) days.
 - The order shall activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Unified Command with U.S. and Mexican counterparts.
2. **City Manager / Bridge Director Authority**
 - May order temporary closures for imminent hazards, safety threats, or at the request of federal agencies (CBP, DHS, ANAM, SICT).
3. **Council Authority for Special Events**
 - Only City Council, by majority vote and with binational concurrence, may authorize non-emergency ceremonial closures.
4. **Authority Limitations**
 - No individual councilmember, or any single elected official other than the Mayor under emergency authority, may unilaterally direct or request a bridge closure.
 - All requests must follow the established process.

IV. Closure Categories

1. **Emergency Closures**
 - Allowed only for imminent threats (natural disaster, structural hazard, terrorism, hazardous materials, or federal directive).

- Declared by the Mayor, City Manager, or Bridge Director as authorized above.

2. **Special Event Closures**

- Permissible only for **binationally significant events** (e.g., WBCA Abrazo Ceremony, International Women's Day).
- Require City Council approval, Mexican federal concurrence, and a security plan.
- **Duration limited (generally under 2 hours) and scheduled outside peak hours.**
- Applications must be submitted in advance (general rule: ~60 days), with bilingual public notice at least two weeks prior.

3. **Planned Maintenance Closures**

- Require a Transportation Management Plan (TMT) with detours, traffic control, and bilingual public information.
- Full closures permitted only if they shorten duration or improve safety compared to partial closures.

V. **Political Demonstrations**

International bridges will not be closed for political demonstrations, protests, or ideological statements of any kind.

Demonstrations may be held in designated public areas through the City's normal permitting process but may not impede bridge operations.

VI. **Bridge-Specific Rules**

- **Bridge 1 (Gateway – Downtown / Pedestrian focus)**
 - May host limited ceremonial closures with Council approval and binational concurrence.
- **Bridge 2 (Juarez–Lincoln – Mixed passenger focus)**
 - May host designated civic/diplomatic closures (e.g., WBCA Abrazo).
 - Limited in duration and scope.
- **Bridge 3 (Colombia – Commercial)**
 - No ceremonial closures permitted.
 - Closures only for emergencies, federal directives, or essential maintenance.
- **Bridge 4 (World Trade – Commercial)**
 - No ceremonial closures permitted.
 - Closures only for emergencies, federal directives, or essential maintenance.

VII. **Cost Recovery**

1. **Direct Costs**

- Event organizers are responsible for reimbursing the City for staffing, law enforcement, traffic management, communications, and any other direct costs associated with special event closures.

2. **Toll Revenues**

- Lost toll revenues may also be recovered from the event organizer unless the City elects to cover these costs.

3. **City Sponsorship**

- For civic events with binational, historic, or diplomatic value, City Council may authorize **City Sponsorship** of all or part of the costs.
- Sponsorship may include full cost coverage by the City, or partial coverage with the balance billed to the event organizer.

4. **Transparency**

- All costs, reimbursements, and City Sponsorship decisions must be documented in the post-event report to City Council.

VIII. **Communication Protocol**

1. **Immediate Notification** – All closures require bilingual notifications to U.S. and Mexican federal authorities, emergency services, and trade/community stakeholders.
2. **Public Information** – Bilingual advisories through City channels, CBP, ANAM, and local media.
3. **Update Cadence** – Status updates every 30 minutes during closures.
4. **Reopening** – Reopening's require binational confirmation and immediate public notification.

IX. **Documentation & Review**

- All closures exceeding 30 minutes must be logged with cause, duration, and impacts.
- **Closures longer than 2 hours require a full after-action review with stakeholders.**

X. **Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed every two (2) years, or sooner after a major closure, to maintain alignment with binational agreements, federal directives, and community needs.