

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2017

Secretary John Kelly
Department Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528

Acting Commissioner Kevin McAleenan
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Kelly and Acting Commissioner McAleenan:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is a vital agency in the continued fight to protect our homeland, and the important job of your Agents and Officers cannot be understated. CBP Officers and Agents monitor over 140,000 vehicles that cross our Northern border every single day. Last year, nearly six million trucks transported nearly half a trillion dollars' worth of goods traded annually between the U.S. and Canada.

In all sectors of government we should strive for continuous improvement, and as we take measures to increase our national security, we must also work to streamline our processes. In 2011, the *Beyond the Border Action Plan* was released as a joint declaration between the United States and Canada promoting coordination between the two nations to address security at and near our Northern border, while also expediting trade and travel. In an effort to reduce commercial wait times, a Cargo Pre-Inspection Pilot Program was implemented at the Peace Bridge Land Port of Entry in Buffalo, NY. CBP requested an evaluation of this program by Regal Decision Systems to determine efficiencies within this pilot program. This evaluation, named the *BorderWizard* Simulation Study, highlighted two protocols that would reduce processing times at all Land Port of Entries.

One method to reducing wait times suggested by this study included requiring all empty trucks to report via e-manifest. E-manifests have been a requirement of carrier trucks crossing our borders since 2007, but enforcement of this requirement does not extend to trucks with empty containers. Empty trucks that have not filed an e-manifest are required to wait at the border while a CBP Officer manually files the manifest data, adding an additional 75 seconds to processing time per truck.

Of the nearly six million trucks that crossed the Northern border at a Land Port of Entry in 2016, over one million of those trucks contained empty containers, resulting in significant impacts and delays and unnecessarily tying up CBP officers on non-mission critical tasks. Requiring all trucks, regardless of the container's occupied status, to file an e-manifest is a commonsense way to reduce unnecessary delays at the border. This logical step has already been taken by the Canada Border Services Agency which implemented their e-manifest program in 2012 and requires all commercial trucks to submit an e-manifest.

An additional suggestion highlighted in this study included modernizing the collection of the \$13.05 port of entry fee by ceasing all cash and credit card payments at the ports of entry, and instead requiring this exchange be conducted via a transponder or by pre-paying before they cross the border. I understand that the CBP has already implemented a pre-pay single crossing fee program to benefit smaller commercial operators that cross the border infrequently. Over 90 percent of all trucks crossing the Peace Bridge currently use the transponder system. The remaining percentage of trucks paying in cash or credit creates avoidable impacts and delays, adding almost 90 seconds of processing time per instance of cash or credit-payment.

By addressing the causes of commercial delays at the land border, CBP also facilitates the more efficient flow of commuter and tourism traffic, which is vital to the economic well-being of border regions like western New York.

As we continue to look for common-sense ways to streamline our government, I ask that CBP take into consideration and act quickly to implement these recommendations offered in the *Border Wizard* Simulation Study. I also request that CBP continues to search for ways to lessen travel delays along our Northern border so the U.S. and Canada can continue to share a robust economy.

Sincerely,



CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress