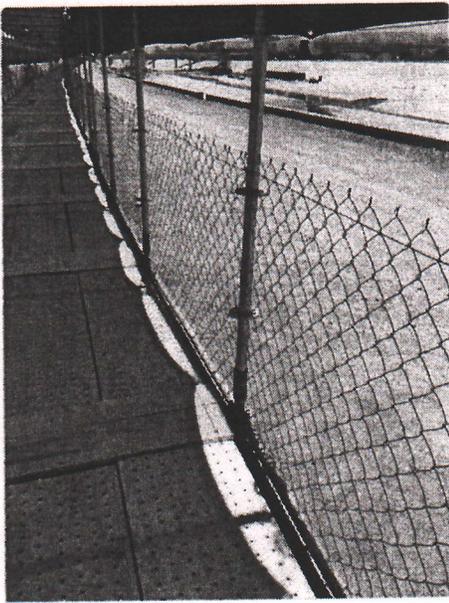




San Diego, Tijuana Officials Question Safety Of New Pedestrian Crossing

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By Jean Guerrero



San Diego and Tijuana officials are questioning the safety of a temporary ramp leading to a new pedestrian border crossing called PedWest.

Tijuana Mayor Jorge Astiazarán said the structure, which is on the Mexican side of the border, appears unstable. He urged the elderly and people with physical disabilities to avoid using it because the floor is uneven, with protruding parts, and the structure shakes and sways under the weight of pedestrians.

"We don't want accidents," Astiazarán told Tijuana Press. "We don't want an international incident — we can't block access — but the first priority is the safety of Tijuana residents."

The ramp was meant to provide temporary access to PedWest until December, when the Mexican government is scheduled to finish the permanent structure. Astiazarán has asked Mexico's federal government to expedite the construction of the permanent structure or to make improvements to the temporary one as soon as possible.

Astiazarán said otherwise Tijuana would consider funding the installation of carpet and other materials to smoothen the passage.

Meanwhile, the South County Economic Development Council in Chula Vista has also expressed concern about the ramp. Cindy Gompper Graves, president of the council, has asked the U.S. and Mexico consul generals in both cities to get the ramp inspected.

"More important than commerce, more important than the economy, more important than reducing wait times is public safety. That's always number one," she said. "And all we're asking them to do is to make sure that the people using it are safe today and the entire time they're expected to use it."

The situation has inspired the making of Facebook memes poking fun at the ramp.

Pedestrians can use PedWest to cross into the U.S. Processing for southbound pedestrians into Mexico will begin at a later date. The facility is expected to decrease lengthy border wait times in San Ysidro.