



CITY OF SUNLAND PARK
NEW MEXICO
FIRE DEPARTMENT
1000 MCNUTT RD SUITE E SUNLAND PARK, NM 88063
PH. (575) 268-6224 | FAX (575) 589-1222



August 27, 2026

This memorandum is intended as a preliminary fire-service and emergency-access assessment and is not intended to constitute a traffic engineering study or quantified response time analysis. Its purpose is to identify emergency-access concerns warranting formal interagency review of the gates and bollards installed on public residential streets at the following locations:

- Boy Scout Ln. (4000 blk in El Paso; 2000 blk in Sunland Park)
- Hacienda Roja Dr. (4000 blk in El Paso. 2100 blk in Sunland Park)
- La Adelita and Frontera
- Gary Ln. on the state line

Based on available City records and field observations, these appear to be publicly owned and publicly maintained streets. These streets are part of the public roadway system and are used by emergency response vehicles, including apparatus responding from neighboring jurisdictions under mutual-aid agreements.

The concern is whether the continued operation of locked gates that can delay responding fire apparatus from traversing these public streets is consistent with the City's adopted 2021 International Fire Code (IFC), applicable municipal requirements, and the City's responsibility to provide and maintain safe and effective emergency access.

Section 503.5 does not expressly authorize unrestricted obstruction of public streets. Rather, the provision distinguishes between fire apparatus access roads and public streets for the purposes of the fire code official's authority to require gates or barricades. Accordingly, the installation and continued operation of gates on public streets should be evaluated in conjunction with the City's other adopted fire-code provisions, local amendments, Appendix D, and applicable municipal transportation requirements.

All four streets are part of both cities' transportation infrastructure and are available for public travel. When the City of El Paso placed locked gates and bollards across the streets, they effectively created a controlled access point on a public roadway. The concern is that the gates must not prevent or delay emergency apparatus from using a public street that constitutes part of the emergency response network.



**CITY OF SUNLAND PARK
NEW MEXICO
FIRE DEPARTMENT**
1000 MCNUTT RD SUITE E SUNLAND PARK, NM 88063
PH. (575) 268-6224 | FAX (575) 589-1222



The issue is not simply whether the City may place a gate on a public street. This issue is whether the gates comply with applicable legal and code requirements and whether their operation provides reliable, timely emergency access.

Mutual-Aid

When fire apparatus responding under a mutual-aid agreement encounters a gated public roadway, the apparatus must stop, unlock the gate, and then negotiate the apparatus through the controlled opening. At La Adelita and Frontera, emergency personnel must also remove the associated bollards before apparatus can proceed. These actions introduce an additional operational step into the emergency response route that would not exist on an unrestricted public roadway.

At Gary Lane, the configuration essentially creates a dead-end fire access road that would otherwise not be present on an unrestricted public roadway.

Both the El Paso and Sunland Park Fire Departments currently have the ability to operate the gates. The concern is not the inability of either department to obtain access, but the additional operational step, potential delay, and additional point of failure introduced into an otherwise unrestricted public roadway.

El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization

Although the MPO documents do not themselves prohibit gates on public streets, they establish regional transportation objectives that are relevant to evaluating whether permanent access-control devices are appropriate on public roadways used for emergency response.

In its Destino 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan the El Paso MPO identifies mobility as the ability for travelers to reach destinations quickly and efficiently. One of its specific guiding objectives is to “improve response time and clearance capabilities for first responders and emergency personnel.” (p. 46) If the regional transportation planning objective is to improve response time for first responders, why should permanent gates be installed across public streets when those gates introduce additional stopping, access and failure points into the emergency response network?

Destino 2045 also identified the need to increase street connections by stating that “Street connectivity is the ease by which people and goods can move to their desired destinations.



CITY OF SUNLAND PARK NEW MEXICO FIRE DEPARTMENT

1000 MCNUTT RD SUITE E SUNLAND PARK, NM 88063
PH. (575) 268-6224 | FAX (575) 589-1222



Connectivity relates not only to travel within the community, but also to external destinations – regional, national, and international.” (p. 7) The gates and bollards have changed previously unrestricted connections between El Paso and Sunland Park into controlled-access points, concentrating unrestricted cross-border movement onto major arterial routes such as Doniphan Drive and Sunland Park Drive.

The El Paso MPO’s own regional transportation planning and ITS architecture recognize the interconnected nature of the El Paso and Sunland Park transportation system and the importance of coordinated emergency response and the movement of emergency response vehicles. The installation of these gates and bollards changes previously unrestricted connections between El Paso and Sunland Park into controlled-access points and redirects unrestricted cross-border traffic toward other routes.

Summary

The gates and bollards introduce a controlled access point into a public roadway used for emergency response during mutual-aid incidents. This creates an additional step, delay and potential failure point for emergency apparatus. During a field inspection of the Boy Scout Lane gate, damaged/vandalized locking components were observed. This condition illustrates that the gate system introduces an additional physical security and maintenance component upon which emergency access depends.

The El Paso and Sunland Park Fire Departments have the ability to open and operate the gates. The concern is that permanent gates introduce controlled access points into publicly owned and maintained streets that are part of the regional transportation and emergency-response network.

The El Paso MPO identifies connectivity, accessibility and mobility as regional transportation objectives and expressly identifies improving response time and clearance capabilities for first responders as a transportation-system performance objective. Its regional ITS architecture specifically contemplates coordinated emergency response between El Paso and Sunland Park and the efficient movement of response vehicles during multi-jurisdictional emergencies.

Consequently, the relevant question is whether the continued installation and operation of these controlled-access points is necessary and consistent with applicable fire-code, transportation, engineering, and emergency response requirements.



**CITY OF SUNLAND PARK
NEW MEXICO
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**1000 MCNUTT RD SUITE E SUNLAND PARK, NM 88063
PH. (575) 268-6224 | FAX (575) 589-1222**



Given the role of these streets in the El Paso- Sunland Park transportation network and their use by emergency apparatus responding under mutual-aid agreements, the Sunland Park Fire Department recommends that the City formally evaluate the continued need for the gates and barricades and give consideration to removing the gates and barricades.

Daniel Medrano
Fire Chief
Sunland Park Fire Department