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## New high-tech produce treatment facility in McAllen will use Pharr Bridge

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PHARR, Tx- Truck traffic at the Pharr International Bridge Friday, June 01,2016 Photo by Delcia Lopez [dlopez@themonitor.com](mailto:dlopez@themonitor.com)

PHARR — A new 100,000 square-foot high-tech produce treatment facility is coming to McAllen, but its trade partners will use the Pharr International Bridge.

Since Pharr is the only international bridge in the area with truck traffic flowing both northbound and southbound, Scantech will use the Pharr Bridge.

Several members of Scantech presented Thursday at Pharr's Bridge Connect, trade sessions the international bridge hosts every month at the Tierra Del Sol Golf Club. Scantech is an Atlanta-based company that designs, develops and builds Electronic Cold-Pasteurization treatment facilities for food sterilization solutions. ECP is a patented technology that accelerates electrons into an electron beam to be scanned across food on a high-speed conveyor belt.

The beams kill bacteria and pests. Scantech's top executives, Falconer and Chief Operating Officer Chip Starns are both nuclear engineers.

Here's where Scantech will work in the local produce trade process once its facility is complete in 2017: Once produce is harvested and dealt with in Mexico, it is repackaged and trucked off to the United States. As it stands now, pest control does not happen on this side of the border, Falconer said. For example, with mangos, there is a hot water treatment that "kills most of the bugs, but not really," Falconer said. Then, they are crossed over the border and go to distribution centers. Then, the produce is taken to a retailer somewhere in the U.S.

Scantech Chief Executive Officer Dolan Falconer said the company has not broken ground yet, but construction steps are underway while there are some final permit details to work out with the City of McAllen.

McAllen Economic Development Corporation President Keith Patridge said the agency has been talking with Scantech for about five years now. Patridge and Falconer both said Scantech will create 100 jobs and potentially up to 200 or more.

So instead of the pest control happening in Mexico, it will happen at Scantech. Trucks are registered with Scantech and will have a manifest to show U.S. Customs and Border Control, so there will be no produce pest treatment. Once they cross the Pharr Bridge, trucks will be in touch with Scantech, which will also geo-track the trucks. Falconer said there are many regulations in place to make sure the operation runs safely and smoothly.

Then, Scantech will conduct its treatment process and the trucks will take off to the distribution or cold storage facilities.

“It will only take 35 to 40 minutes per truck,” Falconer said.

This advanced process is to ensure food safety.

“If a food is recalled, you can trace it from your plate all the way through the chain back to where it was harvested,” Falconer said. “If something bad happens with food, you want to know what all happened. Of course, ultimately you don’t want anything bad to take place with your food. And we’re there to help make sure that doesn’t happen.”

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**Mitchell Ferman**

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