



CBP One Application: Evolution and Functionality

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In October 2020, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) launched [CBP One](#), a mobile application and portal for the public to interact with CBP. Its functions differ depending on user type (e.g., carrier, traveler), and its features have evolved since its inception. Cargo carriers use CBP One to schedule appointments for the inspection of perishable items, and international travelers use it to apply for and view current arrival/departure [I-94 forms](#). Previously, international organizations used it to [verify the enrollment](#) of individuals in Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP, or “Remain in Mexico”); for information on this earlier CBP One function, see CRS Insight IN11695, *Facial Recognition Technology for Certain Traveler and Noncitizen Identity Verification*).

In January 2023, the Biden Administration [announced](#) a new function of CBP One that allows undocumented individuals to schedule appointments with immigration officials before their arrival at certain southwest border ports of entry (POEs). This Insight provides information on the new function.

CBP One for Booking Appointments at Southwest Border Ports of Entry

Historically, [CBP has not received advance information](#) on undocumented individuals prior to their arrival at POEs. Now, CBP One users can submit advance biographic and biometric information to CBP and can subsequently schedule appointments with officials at certain southwest border POEs. The information users enter into the app is information CBP would otherwise collect during primary and/or secondary inspection at a POE: name, date of birth, nationality, etc. CBP claims having the advance information [reduces processing times](#) and increases capacity.

In addition to collecting information that users submit, the app accesses users’ phones’ [global positioning system \(GPS\)](#) location because individuals are required to be in [CBP-defined proximity](#) to the U.S. border (i.e., central or northern Mexico) when they submit their information via CBP One.

CBP One, Photographs, and Facial Recognition Technology

CBP One requires that users submit a photograph of the individual whose information is captured in the app. The app uses the photograph to determine [liveness](#) (a.k.a. “genuine presence confirmation”); this ensures that the photograph is of a *real*

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person and not a *picture* of a person. This may act as an antifraud security measure. The photographs submitted via CBP One are [stored in a gallery](#) in CBP's [Traveler Verification Service](#) (TVS).

While CBP One users are required to submit a photograph, the app currently does not utilize Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) for this function. (The app [previously used](#) FRT for the discontinued MPP function.) However, for all foreign nationals arriving at POEs, including individuals who have registered for appointments via CBP One, [CBP utilizes TVS](#) to biometrically verify travelers' identities at POEs. (For more information, see CRS Report R47541, *Immigration: The U.S. Entry-Exit System*.) TVS utilizes FRT to compare a traveler's live photograph (e.g., taken by a border official or gate agent) to a gallery of preexisting photographs maintained by CBP. TVS provides a match or no match result.

During Title 42

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention instituted a public health policy ([referred to as Title 42](#)) that allowed immigration officials to [restrict entry](#) into the United States of foreign nationals lacking "[proper travel documents](#)." Certain vulnerable individuals were exempt from this restriction. The CBP One app provided a means for these individuals to schedule appointments with immigration officials. When using the CBP app to schedule appointments at POEs, individuals needed to attest to a [vulnerability qualifying](#) them for Title 42 exemption.

Post-Title 42

On May 11, 2023, the federal COVID-19 public health emergency declaration [ended](#). The Biden Administration [ended Title 42 immigration processing](#) and shifted back to [processing all individuals](#) under [Title 8](#) of the U.S. Code. Post-Title 42, CBP One functionality for undocumented individuals booking appointments is virtually unchanged from that under the Title 42 policy, with one exception—individuals need not attest to a qualifying vulnerability to schedule appointments. Rather than arriving unannounced at southwest border land POEs (as was often the case prior to the public health emergency and Title 42), post-Title 42 individuals without visas or travel documents can schedule a time to arrive at a POE.

Critiques of CBP One

Since the launch of the CBP One feature allowing undocumented individuals to book appointments via the app, there have been numerous critiques of the app, and subsequent updates in response, including the following:

- As a mobile application, CBP One requires applicants to use a smartphone to make appointments, which some observers believe [disadvantages certain vulnerable migrants](#). Even those with access to smartphones may have varying access to cellular service and wireless internet. Those with resources to stay in locations with better Wi-Fi and [greater bandwidth](#) than some migrant shelters may more easily secure appointments. CBP is said to have "[enhanced \[the app's\] usability in low-bandwidth scenarios](#)" and addressed "[error messages due to bandwidth issues with a third-party software for liveness](#)."
- Some report issues with the app's geolocation function. Individuals in Mexico, but physically close to the U.S. border, could be rejected if the [app's location feature signals they are inside the United States](#). CBP has adjusted the boundaries and [improved the geolocation precision](#).
- Some have critiqued CBP One's use of photographs, citing [privacy concerns](#). Additionally, [darker-skinned applicants](#) and some young children have reportedly experienced difficulties having their photographs accepted by the system.

- Following complaints that families could not secure appointments jointly, CBP has updated the app to support family units, including allowing users to “[create only one profile for all family members to get appointments together.](#)”
- The app was criticized for [offering only English and Spanish language options](#). CBP has since added [Haitian Creole](#) as an option.
- Some observers state there are [insufficient appointments](#) available and that the app frequently [crashes due to high demand](#). CBP recently expanded the “[number of daily appointment allotments](#)” and time allowed to complete booking.

While CBP periodically [updates the app](#) to address criticisms, challenges [remain](#). Immigration advocates contend CBP One [impedes asylum seekers](#) with near mandatory usage, yet is not universally accessible; however, CBP notes [individuals may arrive](#) at POEs for processing [without using CBP One](#).

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