

# LONG BEACH BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Catalina Island is seen from the cranes of the Port of Long Beach from Signal Hill.

## Port of Long Beach to begin testing for cargo data platform

By Christian May-Suzuki

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic made a mess of the supply chain, the Port of Long Beach knew things had to get better for its shippers.

Data for shipping companies looking to use the Port of Long Beach was simply not available—and transit times were suffering because of it. Seeing this, port officials began work to implement a data infrastructure system—dubbed the Supply Chain Information Highway—to provide data visibility to operators at the port.

The system—whose initial

prototype is expected to begin testing at one port terminal this summer—was developed by St. Louis-based UNCOMN, which has a long history working with governmental entities like the Department of Defense on data and supply chain projects. As part of the project, UNCOMN is enlisting Amazon Web Services to provide the Supply Chain Information Highway with one of the most secure operating environments available.

The Supply Chain Information Highway accomplishes a very simple yet crucial task, according to Port of Long Beach Deputy Executive Director Noel Hacegaba.

By providing shippers a way to precisely track their packages as they move through the delivery process and providing specific details about shipping events, the system will give operators the ability to move containers in and out of the ports in a more efficient and timely manner.

“Our current goal is to get the data into the hands of the shippers,” Hacegaba said. “We want to liberate the data so that the shippers can take the data and use it to optimize their own operations.”

UNCOMN was a natural choice to tackle this problem because of its experience and portfolio. The firm was founded by retired Navy Lt. Commander Jason Carter and is located next to the Scott Air Force Base less than 20 miles outside of St. Louis.

“One of the reasons UNCOMN stood out for us in the process of determining who would be the right partner is they have a very strong record of security,” Hacegaba said. “Everything they build from a technical infrastructure standpoint is very secure.”

Port officials began reaching out to shipping companies in 2019 to gauge their feelings about the data

## San Pedro Bay ports have collected nearly \$8M so far from clean truck fee

By Christian May-Suzuki

The Port of Long Beach’s latest effort to secure a zero-emission future has gotten off to a smooth start, port officials say.

Among other updates presented at the Clean Air Action Plan stakeholder meeting on June 1, the San Pedro

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## JetBlue co-founder brings new airline to Long Beach Airport

By Brandon Richardson

Less than two years after the final departure of JetBlue out of Long Beach Airport, one of the co-founders of the company is set to bring a new airline concept to Long Beach, airport officials announced in a memo earlier this month.

Utah-based Breeze Airways is slated to begin flying out of the small municipal airport after acquiring one of two flight slots relinquished

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*Editor's note: The cover story "Museum shows COVID's harsh impacts on Pacific Islanders" in the May 31, 2022, edition incorrectly identified Indonesia's region and the objects found inside a wooden house in the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum. Indonesia is part of Southeast Asia, and the house contains stones, traditional cloths and other distinctive pieces.*

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# Long Beach Transit shelves plan to remove dozens of bus stops across the city—for now

By Brandon Richardson

After announcing it would remove up to 31 bus stops across the city, Long Beach Transit has put those plans on hold, with executives deciding more study is needed, officials confirmed to the Business Journal.

In early May, the transportation agency proposed eliminating 31 bus stops along routes 8, 40, 91, 93, 121, 173 and 191. The majority of the stops slated for removal were in North, West and Central Long Beach.

Transit disseminated a survey to its ridership through its website as well as physically at bus stops for public feedback on the proposed stop removals. Comments were slated to be received through Friday, but the survey was pulled when the plans were put on hiatus.

"Internally we decided we needed to do more research and really look at what that looked like holistically," LBT spokesperson Arantxa Chavarria told the Business Journal, "what that looks like in terms of

ridership and what it looks like for our customers."

"We want to take a deeper dive before we go out and start removing," she added.

For now, the agency is focused on its annual summer transition, which sees service reduced in anticipation of students not riding buses to school. The services will ramp back up in September.

Schedule changes to bus routes are common, Chavarria said last month. The removal of stops, however, is more rare. Chavarria said the postponed proposal is only the second time in the agency's recent history that this many removals have been proposed.

Long Beach Transit is, however, moving forward with its new route 141, which used to be run by LA Metro before the agency stopped servicing it. The route runs along the eastern portion of Artesia Boulevard in North Long Beach.

Long Beach Transit has conducted accessibility and safety assessments for the route, Chavarria said, adding



One of Long Beach Transit's low-emissions compressed natural gas buses drives down First Street in Downtown.

that the number of stops is going to remain the same.

"And we did a 30-day survey to get [customer] feedback," Chavarria said. "This was a route that was already in existence but we want to know what are some things we can

do to improve it."

Route 141 services are slated to begin again through Long Beach Transit on June 26.

For more information, contact Long Beach Transit at 562-591-2301 or visit [ridelbt.com/servicechanges](http://ridelbt.com/servicechanges). ■



A man with a mask walks past city buses while at the Long Beach Transit Mall.

## City extends masking requirement aboard transit, transportation hubs

By Fernando Haro

Long Beach is extending a requirement that all passengers use masks while aboard public transit and at indoor transportation hubs across the city in response to continued increasing COVID-19 cases and outbreaks across the county.

The growing levels of COVID-19 rates across Los Angeles County moved Long Beach from "low" to "medium" virus-

activity levels last month, prompting city officials to urge the public to once again use safety precautions such as wearing masks indoors and continuing to get vaccinated.

Long Beach began reporting a steady growth rate since the week of April 11. The city, which has its own Health Department, has reported significant spikes in recent weeks. Hospitalizations and deaths, however, have remained low with health officials attributing the

## Metro, county partner to provide mental health services on transit

*The program, part of a partnership between Metro and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, includes teams that will be deployed to "hotspots" that have been deemed in need of crisis response.*

By Laura Anaya-Morga

Teams of mental health professionals will soon be deployed at Metro stations and on trains and buses, with the goal of improving safety for transit riders and minimizing police intervention, officials recently announced.

The program, part of a partnership between Metro and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, includes teams that will be deployed to "hotspots" that have been deemed in need of crisis response. The individuals

suffering mental health episodes—including those who may need a 72-hour involuntary hospitalization—will be provided resources and transport to the appropriate facilities, according to Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn's office, who authored a motion that initiated talks between the agencies.

"Anyone who has taken Metro knows there is a mental health crisis on our transit system," Hahn said in a statement.

Up to 10 mobile crisis outreach teams will operate during Metro hours, seven days a week, to de-escalate situations, her office said. The program also includes a system of "ambassadors" to help link those in need with services, as well as intervention training for 30 Metro security officers.

It is not clear when the three-year pilot program will start. Officials said they will first conduct a study to determine the areas with the highest need.

The initiative aims to minimize the use of force, incarceration and justice system involvement.

"The agreement enables us to tap additional resources to respond quickly to those in crisis with

## Clean Truck Fee

Continued from cover

Bay ports—which consist of the Port of Long Beach and Port of Los Angeles—announced that just under \$8 million has been collected from the recently implemented clean truck fee.

The clean truck fee—which the ports began collecting starting April 1—is meant to encourage the transition to zero-emission goods movement. As it stands, cargo owners who use diesel trucks to transport their goods in and out of the port complex are charged \$10 per 20-foot-equivalent unit—the standard measure for cargo containers—and \$20 for every 40-foot-equivalent or larger unit.

These fees are issued to the cargo owners, and the Port of Long Beach received about half of the \$8 million total that has been collected from the fee over its first few months. For port officials, the number reflects a smooth start for the fee program.

“It is safe to say we are trending towards our \$90 million [per year] estimate for both ports,” Port of Los Angeles Environmental Affairs Officer Tim DeMoss said during the June 1 meeting.

Both the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles came together in 2006 to aim for a zero-emission future at the port. The result of this effort was the Clean Air Action Plan, whose current goal is to implement zero-emission infrastructure at the ports by 2030.

Incentivizing the transition away from diesel through the clean truck fee is just one of many programs associated with the plan. Most of the money the Port of Long Beach will receive from the first year of the fund will go into



Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, right, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti talk next to Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero and Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka at a press conference in the Port of Long Beach to launch the new Clean Truck Fund rate on Friday, April 1, 2022.

funding vouchers to help support the purchase of zero-emission trucks, with about 65% of funds allocated to those purchases.

This money will complement the Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP) run by the California Air Resources Board, which already gives point-of-sale vouchers to those interested in purchasing low- and zero-emission vehicles in the state.

The Port of Los Angeles already has an agreement with CARB to use the HVIP system to issue its own vouchers, and the Port of Long Beach is working on cementing a similar agreement, with vouchers expected to be issued in Long Beach later this year.

About a quarter of the money from the clean truck fee’s first year will be used to build charging

stations and hydrogen-fueling stations to ensure drivers can keep their vehicles well charged and maintained no matter their location.

Other programs are also in the works. About 10% of the revenue received from the fee will go toward zero-emission pilot project deployments and demonstrations. The port has several demonstrations—where zero-emission equipment is brought in and tested in limited service—to get a better understanding of the technology’s potential operational benefits, as well as any problems and bugs that need to be addressed.

For example, testing on electric battery trucks in Oakland—whose port is partnered with the San Pedro Bay ports—uncovered an issue with power supply. A fix was applied soon after, which patched up most of the

major issues with the vehicles.

“We focus on these demonstrations so that we can continue improving those technologies and move towards our goal,” Port of Long Beach Managing Director of Planning and Environmental Affairs Heather Tomley said.

Before all of these allocations are doled out, though, a flat amount of \$1 million will be taken from the fund to launch a “Kickstart Incentive Program,” which will promote the deployment of low-emission vehicles by providing money to co-fund the purchase of up to 10 low-emission drayage trucks.

And beyond these incentives, many drivers will soon be legally required to replace their vehicles. CARB’s Truck and Bus Regulation program will mandate that all heavy diesel vehicles on the road have a 2010 or later model engine by the start of 2023, which will phase out about 5,200 trucks across both ports.

The regulations are part of a larger effort to phase out older vehicles in preparation for a zero-emission fleet, a process that Port of Long Beach started in 2008 as part of its Clean Truck Program. The port says this gradual phasing out of older, more polluting trucks has helped reduce diesel emissions by 97% since 2005.

There is no established plan for spending the second year of funds from the clean truck fee, but the Port of Los Angeles has established five general buckets for the money: zero-emission truck vouchers, zero-emission infrastructure, small-fleet zero-emission truck deployment, technology advancement projects and unsolicited proposals. The Port of Long Beach, meanwhile, has not yet released any information on potential plans for clean truck fee revenue in the future. ■

## Data Platform

Continued from cover

currently available to them as they moved cargo. Most of the companies agreed on one thing: the lack of data available to shippers was interfering with a smooth shipping process.

“There are a number of operational decisions that a shipper needs to make, and not having certainty or even an idea of when that container is going to be available creates this domino effect of operational challenges for them,” Hacegaba said.

As things stand, there is no way to reliably keep track of a package as it moves from location to location because that data is not properly shared and made visible to operators.

Details like the exact time a shipment would arrive at the port, when containers would be discharged, when a shipment is ready for pick up and the dock where it would arrive are all examples of crucial pieces of information that Hacegaba says are not currently provided.

“If the carrier was sharing data with its upstream component partners, [they] would be able to

plan and have the right equipment available at the right time,” UNCOMN Chief Operating Officer Nick Powers said.

The port needed a system that would not only be able to display data, but also be able to accept data from the various platforms used by the over 200,000 shippers of various sizes that work with the Port of Long Beach on an annual basis.

“After a two-year long process, what we learned is that our customers want maximum flexibility,” Hacegaba said.

The Supply Chain Information Highway is not a system “with a lot of bells and whistles,” according to Powers. The system will relay container events in a “line item” format for simple viewing and will show carriers the history of a package as it moves through the shipping process.

“We’re gathering all that data, stripping away the stuff that makes it competitively sensitive, and boiling it down to, ‘This container with this booking number or bill of lading number is in this place,’” Powers said.

While this change was needed before the pandemic, the global restrictions caused by COVID-19 exacerbated previous issues and made the creation of a new system a priority for port officials.

Waters just off the coast were littered with more and more ships, and as the backlog at the port faced mounting pressure, the consequences of an inefficient system became more apparent.

UNCOMN was brought on and started developing the system in December 2021. The firm’s experience allowed it to craft a smooth and direct path in development, meaning only minor fixes were needed once data was entered into the system.

Powers said that while UNCOMN’s experience made the development process simple, getting people to trust in that experience was a far more difficult task. Data in the shipping world is sensitive, and Powers said that many shipping operators want control over who exactly can access the data.

“There’s a whole bunch of people and they all generate data, but they do it in different standards and they also are usually unwilling to share that data with other people in the pipeline,” Powers explained. “The technology is simple. The people are the hard part.”

With security in mind, UNCOMN enlisted the help of Amazon Web Services and its Amazon S3 cloud storage system.

While the port and Amazon only recently announced this partnership, UNCOMN had built a long relationship with AWS prior to this project, and the firm knew it would enlist the help of Amazon S3 for this project from the beginning.

“We have all the expertise in AWS ... and the port was already kind of having conversations with AWS,” Powers said. “So that I think everything aligned to make AWS the host of this environment.”

AWS’s primary role will be to store data in a secure and easily accessible manner. According to a company spokesperson, AWS will manage the basic systematic aspects like the host operating system for the Supply Chain Information Highway and provide security for the data by storing it on an exceptionally reliable cloud.

While this system is targeted at carriers and operators, the implementation of the Supply Chain Information Highway has clear benefits for the port itself.

“We all benefit from velocity, reliability and predictability,” Hacegaba said. “When the supply chain is humming along, everyone benefits because containers are moving through our ports at adequate levels.” ■

## Mental Health Services

Continued from page 3

field-based mental health services, which means law enforcement is not the first responder,” Metro CEO Stephanie N. Wiggins said in a statement. “We believe this is an important tactic in our strategy to create a more comprehensive community-oriented model for ensuring the safety and security of our transit riders.”

The program comes as Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva and county officials tussle over a new security contract for the Metro system. Currently Long Beach and the city of Los Angeles patrol parts of the system in their jurisdictions, but the sheriff has threatened to pull all of his deputies

out of Metro if he did not get a contract that gave him full authority over the entire system.

The sheriff has also announced a new plan called “Operation Safe Travel” in which he vowed to ramp up enforcement on homeless riders who commit crimes or harass other riders. The sheriff and the county have been at odds over how to handle violence on public transit, with Villanueva calling for tougher enforcement by police, while others—particularly in the wake of calls to defund police—advocate for a stronger social service network.

Metro, in a response to Villanueva’s announcement, released a statement saying it would evaluate all options to identify “the most effective path forward to create the safest and most comfortable environment possible for our customers and employees.” ■



A man walks along the A Line platform on First Street in Downtown Long Beach before boarding the train.

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## FROM THE EDITOR: HAYLEY MUNGUIA

# Port of Long Beach seeks to diversify its contracting pool—but the plan is light on details

The Port of Long Beach is aiming to set an example of inclusion to agencies across the country through a new initiative: the Equity in Infrastructure Project.

Together with four other organizations—the Chicago Transit Authority, the Denver International Airport, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority—the port signed onto the four-year project in December. Through the program, the five agencies have committed to creating more contracting opportunities for historically underutilized businesses, including those owned by women and people of color.

The goal of the project is to use these agencies' resources to help reduce the racial wealth gap by broadening the pool of businesses that are considered for major contracts.

"We're very excited about this proposition," Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero told me earlier this month, "and hope to move the needle with regard to furthering what we need to do under the concepts of equity and inclusion."

While the Port of Long Beach has touted its status as a "first mover" on this pledge, I was curious to learn more about what this will look like in practice—the port's announcement recognized the need to be more inclusive, but it lacked details on how the program would work and what success would look like.

To start, I asked Cordero whether there are any existing metrics on how many historically underutilized businesses the Port of Long Beach currently works with.

"We don't have any specific numbers or percentiles here," he told me. "I think what the pledge does do is: You exercise good faith and best practices to make sure people are aware and these

businesses are aware that we want to make sure that we address qualified contractors that are out there and of course give them the opportunity to work with us."

OK, but what do "good faith and best practices" look like? And more importantly, how does the port know those best practices will achieve the goal of a more diverse group of businesses working with the port?

Based on my conversation with Cordero, it seems that the port is approaching the project with a laudable goal in mind, but the agency doesn't definitively know whether the project will make a meaningful difference.

Still, it's worth a try. And with a decade-long, \$4 billion capital improvement program underway, the Port of Long Beach seems to be as good of a testing ground as any to figure out the best methods through this kind of project.

"The Port of Long Beach has invested, and continues to invest, in capital improvement projects," Cordero said. "So for this fiscal year, those monies are certainly considerable here, and in that regard, we want to make sure that as we move forward with the various opportunities that there are in procurement ... that we consider the fact that we need to make sure that we have equity and inclusion in every aspect of our operations."

As for what the port has done so far to live up to its pledge, Cordero told me that he's directed staff to put together a diversity procurement team, whose goal is to increase outreach to historically underutilized businesses and help them with the contracting process. He has also begun discussions with other agencies, including the Port of Los Angeles, to get them on board with the project.

"We've also signed on to bring on board other public agencies, so we've had those discussions about bringing in other port authorities to the conversation," Cordero said, "so that's taking place

as we speak."

I reached out to the folks at the Port of Los Angeles to get their take on the program. Phillip Sanfield, a spokesperson for POLA, told me he didn't have specific details on whether the port would join the project. But, he said, "we have a robust diversity program for contracts that has been in place for years."

Sanfield pointed to the Los Angeles port's Small Business Enterprise Program, which launched in 2007 as one way to help create "an environment that provides all individuals and businesses open access to the business opportunities at the Harbor Department in a manner that reflects the diversity of the City of Los Angeles," according to a port summary of the initiative.

Since its debut, Sanfield said, minority and women participants have doubled.

As for the Equity in Infrastructure Project, it's still early days for the Port of Long Beach. The implementation plan seems amorphous at the moment, but the port has until December 2025 to—hopefully—see the results of the endeavor.

When I asked Cordero how he would gauge those results, he said, "I think success would be measured by the opportunities we create for businesses who have never been able to partake in the various procurement contracts that we have here in Long Beach."

"We want to make sure that as we move forward, we continue to emphasize those contractors that historically have not had, for whatever reason, the opportunity to work within the port," Cordero added. "So I think once we look back a couple years from now, we'll say, 'You know, we were able to move the needle with some of these [historically underutilized businesses].'"

"I think that's how we'll measure success here in the years to come." ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

The Port of Long Beach with the view of Downtown Long Beach.

## New Airline

Continued from cover

by Delta. Southwest was also awarded the other slot.

Destinations for the two new flights have yet to be announced.

Out of Los Angeles International Airport, Breeze already flies to several locations, including New York and Rhode Island. The company also has operations in Florida, Connecticut and other East Coast and Midwest cities.

Long Beach currently has no direct flights to the East Coast.

"It's no secret—airlines and travelers know that Long Beach is the coolest and most convenient gateway to Southern California," said Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry. "Our airport is in a strong position to retain and attract airlines such as Breeze Airways that connect our great city to visitors and new, exciting destinations."

Breeze service is slated to begin this fall, according to airport officials.

This is the second time in six months Delta has relinquished flight slots at Long Beach Airport, which has a daily flight limit of 53. In February, Southwest and American Airlines were awarded one flight slot each after Delta surrendered them in December.

Southwest has further solidified itself as the leading carrier out of the airport, with 38 allocated flight slots. Delta still has seven flights out of the airport, while American has four, Hawaiian Airlines has two, and Breeze and UPS have one each.



A family of four walks by the #FlyLGB sign at Long Beach Airport.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

The airport maintains a waiting list for airlines hoping to acquire flight slots. Prior to the new allocation, the list included, in order: American, Hawaiian, Southwest, Canadian airline Swoop and Breeze, which requested to be added to the list on Feb. 28, airport spokesperson Kate Kuykendall told the Business Journal.

Southwest had requested both slots, while American, Hawaiian and Swoop declined a slot, the memo states. The waitlist now, in order, is: Swoop,

Breeze, American, Hawaiian and Southwest, according to the memo.

Breeze was co-founded by David Neeleman, who also co-founded JetBlue Airways in 1998. He left the company in 2007. The company focuses on direct, nonstop flights between smaller, "underserved routes" out of secondary airports such as Long Beach.

Neeleman has had a string of successful airline startups. He co-founded Morris Air in 1984,

which was acquired by Southwest Airlines for \$130 million in 1993. And while also CEO of an airline reservation and check-in-systems company, Neeleman co-founded Canada-based WestJet Airlines.

Since JetBlue, Neeleman co-founded Azul, a domestic carrier in Brazil established in 2013. Breeze was first announced in 2018 with the tentative name Moxy Airways. Its first flight took off in spring of last year. ■

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# Uptick in cargo revenue increases Port of Long Beach's 2022-23 budget by 10%

By Christian May-Suzuki

With a record-setting quarter just behind it, the Port of Long Beach is expecting to see a bump in its revenue.

The Board of Harbor Commissioners approved the Port of Long Beach's \$685.2 million budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, at its May 23 meeting. The number is a 10% increase from the previous year, which the port attributes in part to increased cargo revenue.

The budget is now headed to the City Council for final approval in late summer.

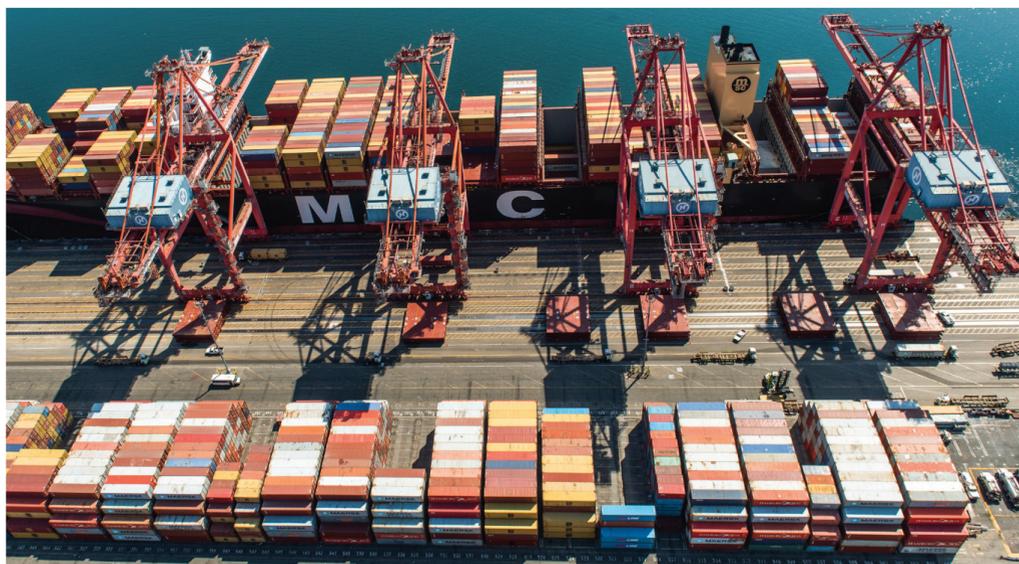
Operational revenue is expected to increase by over \$45 million, or 11% from the previous year. The port mainly attributes this boost to the stronger anticipated cargo volume in the wake of record cargo numbers over the first quarter of the year.

Over \$40 million in extra money is also expected to come in from the recently implemented clean truck fee, which charges cargo owners if they move their shipments without zero-emission or certain low-emission vehicles.

A large chunk of almost \$322 million—or 47% of the total budget—will be used to fund capital projects and improvements as part of an effort to invest nearly \$2.6 billion over the next 10 years in major projects centered around improving capacity and efficiency, bolstering existing public infrastructure and reducing environmental impacts.

Of that \$322 million, just over \$108 million will be directed to the Pier B On Dock Support Facility Program, which will be “under various stages of design and right of way acquisition” during the fiscal year.

Three of the projects that are being funded as part of the Pier B program—which is meant to increase the port's capacity to handle cargo traveling to and from its harbors by train—are expected to have designs finalized at the end of the quarter, but construction for the



Shipping containers are being loaded or unloaded at the Port of Long Beach.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

first projects is not expected to be completed until 2025.

The Gerald Desmond Bridge demolition project, meanwhile, is slated to receive \$24.5 million from the new budget after it was given \$53.2 million to work with last year. The demolition is already underway and is expected to be completed in the fiscal year's fourth quarter.

The second largest bucket in the budget is the costs of maintaining the equipment and “non-personnel” aspects of the port. Port officials are expecting a cost of \$131.2 million—almost a fifth of the budget—for technical services, utilities, construction contracts, insurances, and other expenses not directly related to employees.

On the flip side, around \$90.8 million is being budgeted for the personnel that run the port, including salaries and over \$38.5 million for employee fringe benefits.

Another notable expense comes in the form of a \$22.8 million transfer to

the Tidelands Operating fund, which is the highest ever for that transfer. The total—calculated annually at 5% of the estimated revenue for the previous fiscal year—comes out to approximately 11% of the budget.

Alongside profits from the city's oil properties and parking revenues in the Tidelands area, this transfer—which is part of the Harbor Department's agreement with Long Beach as outlined in the city's charter—for “operations, programs, maintenance and development of beaches and waterways, the Convention Center and capital projects in the Tidelands area,” is one of the fund's major revenue sources.

As part of the port's efforts to work toward sustainable goods movement, \$21.9 million of the budget is dedicated to reducing environmental impacts through several different programs. One of these is the Green Flag Initiative, which awarded \$5.2 million in dockage discounts in 2021 to vessel operators who slow down

to a particular speed threshold as they near the port, which reduces the emissions those ships produce.

Operators receive anywhere from 15% to 25% off of the dockage fees—which range from \$77 to over \$11,000 for every 24 hours spent at the dock, depending on the length of the vessel—depending on how far away from the entrance to the harbor the ship began slowing down.

At the meeting approving the budget, an amendment was made to increase the amount allocated to the port's Community Sponsorship program, which initially had \$1 million. The increase of \$250,000 comes in the wake of over \$700,000 being awarded in sponsorships this March.

“I really do feel like the sponsorships have really made the port a partner in our community,” Vice President of the Board of Harbor Commissioners Sharon Weissman said in her argument for the amendment, “and I feel that is critical for the work that we do.” ■

## Masking Requirement

Continued from page 3

results to the vaccine.

Mounting cases and a seven-day case rate that is more than triple what it was around April, have led officials to take necessary precautions.

“I'm not going to sugarcoat it: We are facing an uphill battle,” Health Department spokesperson Jennifer Rice Epstein said, adding

that the department canvases neighborhoods citywide almost every day offering shots. “But the data are not disputed: People who get vaccinated and boosted are far less likely to become hospitalized or die of COVID-19.”

In Long Beach, just under 70% of residents have been fully vaccinated against the virus, while 77% have received at least one dose.

Following the reassessment of the health order, people 2 years and older will be required to use

a mask in any indoor area that serves as a transportation hub, along with commuter trains, buses and ride shares—regardless of vaccination status.

The department will reevaluate the masking requirement every 30 days, if the seven-day case rates drop to below 50 per 100,000 or if the CDC announces people are no longer required to wear masks in transportation corridors—whichever comes first, according to the city.

“Until then, the City must

continue to require community-level prevention strategies, including masking on public transit and in transportation hubs, to protect the most vulnerable in high-risk settings and safeguard the health care system,” the city said in a statement. “Traveling on public conveyances increases a person's risk of getting and spreading COVID-19 by bringing people in close contact with people outside their households, often for prolonged periods, and often in crowded settings.” ■

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# AquaLink opens up to full capacity for 1st time since COVID pandemic's onset

By Christian May-Suzuki

One of Long Beach's most unique features is back in full service for the first time in over two years.

Long Beach's AquaLink service, which ferries passengers between Alamitos Bay and Rainbow Harbor, has returned for the first time in full capacity since COVID-19 sent most of the world into a shutdown. This is the first time since the service closed in March 2020 that AquaLink is able to serve customers at a pre-pandemic capacity.

While AquaLink kickstarted service again in May 2021, it reduced capacity from the boat's maximum of 70 passengers down to 45 until this past Memorial Day. Now, the service is once again welcoming 70 passengers as summer service returns, though masking requirements are still in place.

The easing of restrictions is a welcome change for the Long Beach Transit service, which the pandemic forced to close as



AquaLink cruises past the Queen Mary on its way the Alamitos Bay in Long Beach. *Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal*

ridership was growing.

"2019 was one of the best seasons we've had in recent history," Long Beach Transit spokesperson Arantxa Chavarria said.

That's largely thanks to a decision that year to expand the service, which had historically only been available from Memorial Day

through Labor Day. In March 2019, Long Beach Transit announced that it would continue to be available seven days a week during that peak season, but it would also run on weekends for the rest of the year.

Looking ahead, Long Beach Transit hopes 2022 will mark the start of higher ridership numbers. As

for what those numbers could look like, Chavarria said the roller coaster of the past three years makes it hard to predict.

In 2019, ridership began in March and lasted through the rest of that year, but the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant there was less than three months of ridership in 2020. And in 2021, a May start and limited capacity kept numbers artificially low, while the data from the first half of this year also reflects the capacity restrictions.

"We can't predict the trend on this because it has been so different, and we don't have even a full year's data," Chavarria said.

Still, the agency is hopeful riders will return in full force this summer—and that their momentum will continue into a solid year of ridership in 2023.

After all, Long Beach Transit knows it has a unique service with the AquaLink. Chavarria noted that AquaLink riders get two benefits from the service: a ride on the water and a way to travel across Downtown without worrying about traffic or parking.

And soon, the agency will also provide transportation to and from the AquaLink itself.

Long Beach Transit is in the process of implementing electric battery buses, which are shorter than traditional buses. While the older buses were too large to access Alamitos Bay, where one of AquaLink's stops resides, the newer, more compact vehicles will be able to stop there.

One stop, however, has been removed—and it seems unlikely to return in the near future. While the AquaLink used to stop at Alamitos Bay, Rainbow Harbor, and the Queen Mary, Long Beach Transit has removed the Queen Mary stop amid the ship's ongoing shutdown.

That removal aside, Chavarria said there have been discussions to potentially expand the AquaLink service, though there are no solid plans at the moment.

"Our hope is to expand service, because at the end of the day this is about moving people and connecting our community," she said.

That community, as Long Beach Transit sees it, goes well beyond Downtown Long Beach residents. Chavarria said the agency sees Long Beach as a "tourist city." At its core, she said, the unique experience AquaLink provides plays an important role in LBT's mission.

"Being able to provide an opportunity to transport people from one side of our waterfront to another," Chavarria said, "is really an incredible thing." ■

By Christian May-Suzuki

The Port of Long Beach has broken record after record when it comes to cargo-handling over the past couple of years. But the port has received less attention for another record it seems to keep breaking: the amount of money it gives to nonprofits through its Community Sponsorship Program.

The program, which doles out grants every March and September, gave out \$701,430 this spring. The amount of money, which was spread across 179 grants to 144 different organizations, surpassed the previous highest amount: \$500,675 in September.

And the trend is set to continue next fiscal year, thanks to a move by the Board of Harbor Commissioners to increase the budget for community sponsorships by \$250,000.

"The Port is proud to support so many community organizations through our sponsorship program," Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement.

Since 2007, over \$11 million has been distributed to nonprofit organizations through the program. The money gives nonprofits a much-needed financial boost, which is arguably now more urgent than ever in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As many nonprofit organizations reestablish themselves after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are happy to offer support through our sponsorship program," Harbor Commission President Steven Neal said in a statement.

The money goes directly to supporting events hosted by the nonprofits. Applications are judged based on how funds will be used to either support the Tideland trust and other "maritime-related initiatives" or to promote, educate, and inform the public about the Port of Long Beach.

Here are four of the nonprofits that are receiving money from this spring's allocation, which are each looking to improve their community in a different way.

### Long Beach Community Table

Long Beach Community Table received \$1,000 for a Homebound Food Distribution Program that helps bring food to those stuck in their homes. This program started during COVID-19 lockdowns, but seniors who are stuck at home due to mobility or other issues show how the service continues to be necessary, the organization's founder Kristen Cox said.

This program is one of several that Long Beach Community Table has that's focused on distributing food. Cox and her team are out almost every day, either picking up food from grocery stores and distributing it or giving food out of their pantry.

The team also gives out other

necessities like hygiene products, clothing and rain gear. While food is the focus, the overall goal is to lift people out of poverty by giving them what they need to function.

"We're kind of coming at it from every direction, with the main focus being on making people as sustainably food-secure as

possible," Cox said.

Even though Long Beach Community Table is run entirely off of donations and sponsorships like the one from the Port of Long Beach, Cox and her team have been able to expand the organization a great deal through community support.

*Continued on page 13*

## Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies Vessel Speed Reduction Incentive Program

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Photo by John Calambokidis

**Global shipping companies reduced speeds to 10 knots or less in 2021**

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**Gold Level:** Maersk - MOL ACE - Yang Ming - Hapag-Lloyd ONE - NYK - Wallenius Wilhelmsen - CMA CGM COSCO Shipping

**Blue Sky Level:** Evergreen - Hyundai GLOVIS - "K" Line - Wan Hai Lines Ltd.



Thanks to: Maersk, Yang Ming, Swire Shipping, Wallenius Wilhelmsen, ONE, and COSCO Shipping for declining their financial awards to support continuation of the program!

The 2022 program runs May 1 through December 15, 2022. For more information, visit [bluewhalesblueskies.org](http://bluewhalesblueskies.org)



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# As Metro kills widening project, Long Beach will move forward with 710 improvements



A sea of semi-trucks carrying shipping containers congests the northbound 710 Freeway leaving the Port of Long Beach.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

By Brandon Richardson

After nearly two decades and \$60 million worth of studying and planning, the Metro Board of Directors voted late last month to officially kill the proposal to widen 19 miles of the 710 Freeway.

The congestion and safety issues the \$6 billion project were meant to alleviate, however, remain in Long Beach, and city officials intend to push forward with their own projects to address them.

Most impacted by the demise of the 710 Freeway widening project were a series of improvements to multiple interchanges, particularly at Pacific Coast Highway, Artesia Boulevard and Anaheim and Willow streets, according to Public Works Director Eric Lopez.

"There are still critical improvements that are necessary," Lopez said. "The on-ramps and off-ramps are a big part of those required improvements but also some of the bridges."

These projects would have been part of the freeway widening effort but could not move forward before the fate of the full project was finalized. Now that it's been shelved, city traffic engineers will work with CalTrans to determine the full need and scope of those improvements, Lopez said.

Those discussions have not started, but Lopez said he fully expects some of the freeway entrances and exits to be reconfigured.

"There are improved standards—design elements that are safer and more efficient," Lopez said. "So some of these ramps will require some modernization."

As for the bridges, similar to the on- and off-ramps, Lopez said the main focus will be on implementing modern design standards to increase

pedestrian and vehicular safety, including protected bike lanes, in some cases, such as those already on the Artesia Boulevard Bridge, which will remain after street improvements along the corridor.

Landscaping and hardscaping also will be a top priority in these projects, Lopez said.

"These medians, for example, that have grass, we don't have the water or rainfall to support that type of landscaping," Lopez said. "So as we look at some of our improvements to on- and off-ramps and our major corridors, landscaping and hardscaping is really important."

The price tag for the list of interchange improvements is just under half a billion dollars, according to city documents. Funding from regional, state and federal infrastructure spending, however, is expected to pay for most of the projects, Lopez said.

The Metro Board of Directors voted to allocate \$750 million to smaller municipal projects in lieu of the freeway widening. Metro staff is expected to report back to the board this month with a new project plan and objectives for the finding. Staff also will draft an investment plan with short-, mid- and long-term initiatives.

Heading into Downtown Long Beach at the end of the 710 Freeway, the city is moving forward with its plans to replace the Shoemaker Bridge, which includes realigning Shoreline Drive to better connect existing park space.

As it is, the exit from the 710 Freeway into Downtown runs along the Los Angeles River, while the entrance to the freeway runs directly through park space, making large sections inaccessible unless a person crosses multiple lanes that have no speed or safety mitigating measures. The realignment effort would see

the entrance moved west to run congruent with the exit lanes.

The bridge itself, which connects Downtown to the 710 Freeway, has reached the end of its lifecycle, Lopez said. Entitlements have been secured by the city for the project, which is well into the fully funded design phase.

Combined, the bridge and realignment projects are estimated to run about \$350 million, which is also expected to be funded in large part with regional, state and federal money.

The city is hopeful the interchange projects as well as the bridge-realignment effort will be completed before the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, Lopez said.

"We're going to have a lot of eyes on Long Beach," Lopez said. "[These projects] are going to be a huge benefit to the region."

"We really hope that we can leverage the momentum that the 2028 Olympics are going to create so we can get these major improvements done," he added.

These projects would not have a drastic impact on the congestion often associated with the 710 Freeway, especially once drivers near the Port of Long Beach, which can see lines of semi-trucks backed up for miles during peak hours. The Harbor Department's \$1.5 billion Pier-B On-Dock Rail Support Facility

project, however, aims to eliminate thousands of truck trips per day—roughly 7 million per year.

The rail project is decades in the making and will add 36 tracks to the Pier B rail yard, increasing capacity by at least 600,000 20-foot equivalent units (the standard measure of a shipping container) by 2035. The project is on track with a groundbreaking expected next year, according to port Executive Director Mario Cordero.

"We're moving forward with land acquisitions," Cordero said.

The first phase is expected to come online by 2025, Cordero said, adding that he hopes the full project will be completed by 2031, though the official timeline has completion in 2032.

The port supported the 710 Freeway widening project specifically due to the inclusion of lanes dedicated to containerized truck movement, Cordero said. But the killing of the project will not have any negative impact on port operations or its capital improvement projects, including the Pier B rail.

"In fact, the canceling of the project encourages us to move forward in the way we are: moving these containers by rail at a greater percentage," Cordero said. "It's not only a better environmental footprint, but it avoids the congestion on our commuter corridors." ■



Plans to replace the Shoemaker Bridge include realigning Shoreline Drive to better connect existing park space.

Courtesy Long Beach Public Works

## Sponsorship Program

Continued from page 11

One of the most significant changes is the donation of a warehouse that the nonprofit received and uses to store food. Cox had initially been using her own home and a minivan as the food storage hubs at first, which she said had been essential in housing the roughly 30,000 pounds of food that Long Beach Community Table delivers in a given week.

"We would be nothing without that warehouse, comparatively speaking," Cox said. "Part of what makes a community is when everybody is pulling together to try to help each other."

### Action Sports Kids

Another organization that received money is Action Sports Kids, which promotes the well-being of at-risk youth through skateboarding.

The group received \$5,000 toward its effort to reimagine the Silverado Skate Park.

In addition to being the only skate park in West Long Beach, it is also one of the only skate parks in the world made from recycled material. Former Long Beach City Councilmember Mike Donelon, who runs the group, said the park is in dire need of a revamp after years of use.

The park is "really beat up, and the kids in the neighborhood had been complaining about it," Donelon said. "So I thought it'd be a great project for the kids to get involved with, to actually design and develop and reimagine a skate park."

Donelon helped gather over 150 comments from kids through social media and design meetings hosted at the park to come up with a final design that ASK is ready to present.

With the plans done, money is the next obstacle. Donelon noted it was particularly important for the port to support West Long Beach because of its impact.

"I thought it would be a really good idea for the port to step up and do something to benefit many, many, many kids in West Long Beach that the port pollution has a tremendous negative impact on," he said.

The money falls far short of the \$137,600 estimate that ASK received for its final design of the park, but Donelon said that this contribution is key because of the credibility the port brings.

"The port money gives us ... a 'bold black line' on our resume when we go out to the community and lobby to raise money," Donelon said. "To have support from the port is going to be big."

### Music Is The Remedy

The Port of Long Beach is also



Music Is The Remedy received money from the Port of Long Beach for its efforts to bring veterans together through music during the pandemic. The group recently held its first in-person event in over two years for Memorial Day.

Courtesy Music Is The Remedy

supporting work aimed at another demographic: military veterans. Music Is The Remedy, which helps veterans adjust to civilian life and escape stress by learning how to play music, received \$5,000 from the port this spring for the group's Quarantine Singing Circle.

Organization founder Frank McIlquham comes from a family of veterans, and while he didn't serve himself, he felt a deep connection to the community and a strong desire to help. This led him to found Music Is The Remedy in 2010.

As for the Quarantine Singing Circle project, it sends a series of videos of songs to military veterans in the group so they can sing along as a way to "provide them some level of normality during this crisis," McIlquham said.

Prior to the pandemic, McIlquham's nonprofit would host veterans twice a week for four-hour sessions, where veterans and coaches came together and simply played music for themselves and whoever was there to listen.

"We teach them how to play, and we bring them back into an environment [with camaraderie] and a safe location," McIlquham said. "They just feel like they're part of something again, that's really what it is in a nutshell."

COVID made hosting these meetings unfeasible, so Music Is The Remedy came up with Quarantine Singing Circle as a way to interact during the pandemic.

Port support was a key component to making the project—whose 218 videos are viewable on the Music Is The Remedy website—possible. McIlquham said that without that funding, the project was very much in jeopardy.

"We definitely would not have done the Quarantine Singing Circles without them," he said.

### Project Womangood

Project Womangood—a nonprofit founded in August 2020 that helps women escape abusive relationships and households—is receiving

\$1,000 from the port for an upcoming fundraising event called Re-Loved Market Sip and Shop.

Founder Julie Schwarz envisions the event, which is being hosted in August, as a cocktail meet-and-greet that will also serve as a fundraiser for her organization, whose origins stem from Schwarz's own difficulties trying to escape her previous relationship in 2016.

"The idea is to kind of make it sort of a cocktail party, or Ladies

Night Out kind of concept, just to share the story," Schwarz said. "This event gets my face out into the public."

One of her biggest issues was the lack of resources out there, so she created Project Womangood as a place for abused spouses to seek help.

"I just felt that there had to be more options than staying or going to a shelter, which is how I ended up creating this," Schwarz said.

One of the main services she offers is to create escape plans and educate people on what is needed to get out of an abusive relationship. This manifests in a variety of services, from helping set up a forwarding address to simply getting advice from someone who lived a similar experience.

"Sometimes you have to hide all this from your partner," Schwarz said. "[I teach] the sneaky things that we have to do in order to get out from under [these relationships]."

Like other smaller nonprofits, having the port's name behind Project Womangood is a key piece to establishing itself.

"I would say that's a huge step forward for us," Schwarz said of the port's sponsorship. "Having something like this, something super tangible with the logo has been a really great asset." ■

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Stephen Carr / Business Journal

Long Beach Mayor and candidate for the 42nd Congressional District Robert Garcia arrives at his election night party at the Maya Hotel in Long Beach on Tuesday, June 7, 2022.



Briscoe campaign Instagram

John Briscoe, a Republican candidate for the 42nd Congressional District, is headed to a runoff election on Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2022.

## Robert Garcia, John Briscoe frontrunners in race for 42nd Congressional District

By Anthony Pignataro

Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and businessman John Briscoe are leading the June 7 race for the 42nd Congressional District, according to early returns.

As of Friday, Robert Garcia claimed 46% of the vote while Briscoe had 28%. As for other candidates, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia had 13%, Peter Mathews had 4%, Nicole Lopez had 3%, William Summerville had 2%, Joaquin Beltran had 2% and Julio Flores also had 2%.

The votes counted so far include vote by mail ballots, as well as the in-person votes cast during the early voting period and some cast on Election Day.

Garcia, speaking at his Election Day watch party on a Hotel Maya patio, said it was a “good night for our city and a good night for the country.”

If elected to Congress this fall, Garcia said he plans to tackle major issues including immigration, gun laws, reproductive rights and climate change.

Garcia, in an interview with the Business Journal, said his first focus would be on the current threat to democracy.

“The single biggest issue right now in front of us is making sure that we actually have democracy in our country for the foreseeable future,” he said. “There’s extreme forces trying to destroy voting rights, trying to make sure people don’t have access to vote. These are things that we have to take on immediately.”

Even if he goes to Washington, Garcia said he’ll remain dedicated to helping Long Beach and surrounding cities in his district on issues such as air quality and infrastructure.

“Long Beach is my city, I’m not going anywhere,” he said. “I live here and I’m going to continue to make sure this city is well-represented and also make sure the other cities north of us have equal and good representation.”

Robert Garcia’s campaign raised about \$1.04 million—which is more than the other six candidates in the race combined, according to OpenSecrets. The money came

Ocean View School District trustee, raised a little more than \$252,000, virtually all of it from his own funds. Briscoe previously ran for Congress in 2018 and 2020 against Rep. Lowenthal, losing each time by nearly 30 percentage points.

The other candidates raised comparatively small sums of campaign funds. Summerville, a reverend, brought in about \$35,000,

lined up a huge array of endorsements from major political figures, including Gov. Gavin Newsom, U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, representatives Alan Lowenthal and Nanette Barragán, state Sen. Lena Gonzalez and seven Long Beach City Councilmembers, including mayoral frontrunners Suzie Price and Rex Richardson.

Cristina Garcia countered by leaning heavily on hometown support and her liberal credentials, which include a long list of legislative victories in environmental cleanup, good government and gender equity. Her endorsements included a long list of Southeast L.A. County officials as well as famed political organizer Dolores Huerta.

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon had endorsed Cristina Garcia back in January but suddenly endorsed Robert Garcia on June 5 for unclear reasons.

In the race for the 44th Congressional District seat, meanwhile, incumbent Democrat Nanette Diaz Barragán is leading over her challengers Morris Falls Griffin, a Democrat and maintenance technician, and Paul Jones, a Republican minister.

As of Friday, Barragán has claimed 67% of the vote, or 35,165 votes, while Jones has 26% (13,743 votes) and Griffin has 7% (3,950 votes).

Barragán, who was first elected in 2016, was widely expected to win reelection this year.

Redistricting changed the borders of the 44th District, giving it a larger share of Long Beach. The district now includes parts of the city west of Signal Hill and north of Pacific Coast Highway to the city’s boundaries in North Long Beach.

Staff writer Kelly Puente contributed to this story. ■

*“Long Beach is my city, I’m not going anywhere. I live here and I’m going to continue to make sure this city is well-represented and also make sure the other cities north of us have equal and good representation.”*

- Robert Garcia, Long Beach Mayor

from a wide range of interests, including real estate (\$80,800), law firms (\$30,346) and construction (\$25,980), according to OpenSecrets.

Long Beach’s mayor also benefitted from more than \$2.3 million in spending from super PACs, of which \$1.6 million was spent for him and the remaining \$769,000 went toward negative ads and mailings against Cristina Garcia, according to OpenSecrets.

Briscoe, a real estate broker and

mostly from small donors, according to OpenSecrets. Beltran, an engineer and community organizer, raised just \$14,000, while Mathews, a professor of American government, raised about \$5,000, according to OpenSecrets. Campaign finance data for Lopez, who works for a nonprofit organization, and Flores, an education administrator running as a Green candidate, is unavailable.

Widely seen as the choice of the political establishment, Robert Garcia

## Results show decisive City Council victory, multiple runoffs in November

By Jason Ruiz

Councilmember Roberto Uranga appears to have won a third term representing the 7th District on the City Council, and incumbent Downtown Councilmember Mary Zendejas is hovering near the 50% needed to avoid a runoff in November, according to election results updated Friday.

Early returns show Uranga with a commanding 61% of early votes in the West Long Beach district. Long Beach's primary only requires that a candidate earn over 50% of votes to avoid a runoff election.

As of Friday, Zendejas had 50.7% of the vote, though that number is not final; her nearest competitor is Mariela Salgado with 28%.

In the 5th District, LBUSD Board of Education member Megan Kerr had 48%, with her nearest competitor, Ian Patton, at 32%.

The city's 3rd District race, which includes Belmont Shore, Naples and some neighborhoods south of the Traffic Circle, had the largest candidate field outside of the mayor's race. The two candidates who emerged with the most votes so far were Kristina Duggan (23%), Greg Magnuson and Nima Novin, who both had approximately 19% of the early vote. As of Friday, Novin had just 86 more votes than Magnuson.

North Long Beach's 9th District is currently a two-person race with Jonie Ricks-Oddie (46%) and Ginny Gonzales (26%) leading the field of three active candidates. Gus Orozco, an Army veteran, dropped out of the race after the ballots were finalized. Despite endorsing Ricks-Oddie, he still garnered 16% of the early vote.

If she prevails, Ricks-Oddie would replace Councilmember Rex Richardson, who is running for mayor.

In Downtown's 1st District, which saw some of the biggest changes after the city's redistricting process, incumbent Zendejas is trying to fend off a challenge from city commissioner and community activist Mariela Salgado, who received 28% of the vote.

In the 5th District in East Long Beach, Kerr is likely to compete in November against Patton, a political consultant and frequent critic of City Hall. The incumbent in that district, Stacy Mungo, was drawn out of the new district boundaries and was ineligible to run.

The composition of the City Council going forward will hinge on the Nov. 8 runoff results. Candidates backed by the political establishment, including Zendejas and Kerr, could help solidify a more progressive voting block on the council.

Their opponents, Salgado and Patton, would shake up the dynamic



Councilmember Roberto Uranga in Long Beach.

of the council going forward. Both Patton and Salgado are pushing for change within City Hall and could tilt the council in a more moderate direction and upend a majority that has been in place since 2020.

Things could get even more interesting for the future of the City Council if Councilmember Al Austin remains in contention for the November runoff for the 69th State Assembly race. An Austin victory in November would require a special election to be held to fill his seat for the remainder of his term, which is set to expire in December 2024.

As of Friday, Austin holds 26% of the vote with Josh Lowenthal, son of longtime Congressman Alan Lowenthal, leading with 46%.

A Cal State Long Beach poll released ahead of Election Day

showed a number of concerns were on the minds of voters, with homelessness and crime topping the list. Those issues and how the remaining candidates propose to address them could be big factors in determining winners in November.

So could larger voter turnout. Long Beach and other cities were required to align their elections with the state after the 2018 elections meaning the November vote will be aligned with statewide ballot measures and a potentially more focused effort to turn out voters tied to an expected Supreme Court decision on Roe v. Wade.

Election results are expected to be updated on a rolling basis on Mondays and Fridays until Los Angeles County Election officials certify the election, likely in the first week of July. ■

## Richardson, Price head to runoff in Long Beach mayoral race



Rex Richardson poses for photos with supporters at his election night party at Lupe's De La Mar in Long Beach on Tuesday, June 7, 2022.

By Jason Ruiz

With the Long Beach mayoral race heading to a November runoff election, an unlikely group of voters could have a larger voice in picking the city's next mayor: Republicans.

Two Democrats landed in the top spots, Councilmembers Rex Richardson and Suzie Price. But the lone Republican, Josh Rodriguez, finished third with 9% of the vote. Rodriguez, a police officer, had virtually no name recognition and almost no fundraising.

Rodriguez said Price, widely seen as the more moderate Democrat, has already contacted him and they're expected to meet soon. If they can find a common ground, he'll endorse her and encourage his supporters to back her in November.

In the June 7 primary, Richardson, who was backed by most Democratic groups and labor, came out on top with 43% and Price finished with 39%. Richardson noted that he bested Price even with very low turnout in his home district in North Long Beach, compared to the city's highest turnout in Price's southeast Long Beach district.

Detailed information on who voters chose for mayor in each council district is not yet available.

Richardson declined to comment last week on how Republican voters might affect the outcome of the general election.

"I'm going to work hard to be mayor for everyone, but I'm proud to be a lifelong Democrat who stands up for issues that are important for Long Beach like ensuring our economy gets back on track and works for everyone," he said.

Orrin Evans, a spokesperson for Price's campaign, said that Price's platform of public safety, housing and homelessness is not partisan; it appeals to all voters. He said the campaign was excited to continue work for voters'

trust heading into November.

"Votes don't migrate; votes are earned," Evans said. "Suzie is going to continue to work for every vote and listen to every neighbor in every neighborhood across Long Beach."

### The numbers

Long Beach is a solid Democratic stronghold. A map of the 2020 presidential election results exemplifies that saying; just two voting precincts in the city (each with only one vote apiece) cast more ballots for Donald Trump than Joe Biden.

Richardson is viewed as the establishment party pick and a nonstarter for some Republicans, while Price, an Orange County prosecutor, is seen as more police-friendly, tougher on crime, and—likely—a more palatable choice for right-leaning voters.

"Even though she's not a Republican, she's as close as we're going to get as far as being pro-police, pro-business and pro-trying to clean up the homeless issue," said Ben Goldberg, chairperson of the Long Beach Area Republicans.

Republicans account for about 17% of the total electorate in Long Beach, but they tend to show up to the polls in higher numbers than Democrats (who make up 54% of registered voters, with the rest independent or other parties). On Election Day, total turnout was 17%, but 22% of Republicans voted.

### Turnout may be key

Turnout is expected to be higher in November among all groups—but with no significant races at the statewide or federal level, how much higher is a matter of debate.

Statewide ballot measures that could legalize sports gambling and a new tax to discourage the production of single-use plastics could draw voters, who will also decide the Los Angeles County Sheriff's race, which will feature former Long Beach Police

## Josh Lowenthal leads in 69th Assembly District election



Courtesy Lowenthal campaign

Small business owner Josh Lowenthal.

By Anthony Pignataro

Early election returns in the 69th Assembly District race showed that small business owner Josh Lowenthal took the lead over challengers

Al Austin, a Long Beach City Councilmember, Merry Taheri, a nurse practitioner and Long Beach citizen police commissioner, and Janet Denise Foster, a health care administrator.

As of Friday, Lowenthal claimed 46% of the vote, or 18,665 votes,

while Austin had 26% (10,629 votes), Foster had 19% and Taheri had 9%.

All four candidates in this open seat are Democrats. After redistricting, the 69th now includes virtually all of Long Beach as well as Signal Hill and portions of Carson.

Both Austin and Lowenthal, the front-runners in the race, talked about many of the same issues during the campaign, including reducing homelessness, creating good jobs and reducing gun violence.

Lowenthal, the son of longtime Congressman Alan Lowenthal, raised nearly \$685,000 this year in campaign contributions, more than four times that of Austin, who brought in a little more than \$161,000, according to the California Secretary of State's office. Foster raised about \$10,000 in contributions and Taheri disclosed no contributions, according to the Secretary of State.

Though Austin has worked as a labor organizer for most of his career, he raised far less money from union

political action committees than Lowenthal. In fact, Lowenthal brought in about \$100,000 from nearly 20 labor PACs, far in excess of the \$30,000 or so Austin raised from labor PACs, according to the Secretary of State.

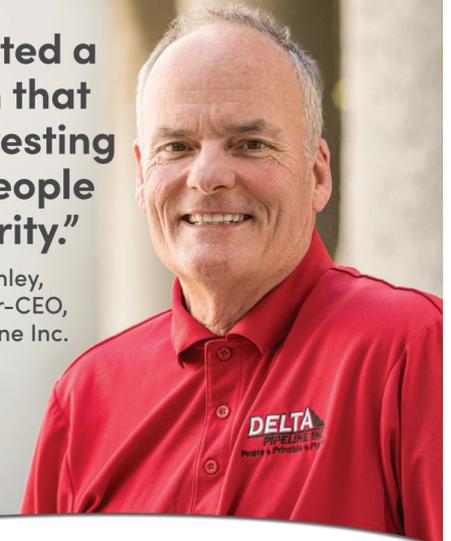
At least one labor PAC, the Long Beach Police Officers Association, donated to both Austin and Lowenthal, though in different amounts. Campaign finance records show the PAC gave Austin \$9,800, but just \$2,500 to Lowenthal.

Retiring Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell, who currently represents Long Beach in the state Assembly, endorsed Lowenthal, as did Rep. Lowenthal, state Sen. Lena Gonzalez, Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia and Long Beach city councilmembers Cindy Allen, Roberto Uranga and Mary Zendejas, among others.

Long Beach City Councilmember Stacy Mungo endorsed Austin, as did a variety of Carson officials, including Mayor Lulu Davis-Holmes, and longtime Signal Hill Councilmember Edward Wilson. ■

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# Former LBPD chief heads to November runoff in LA County sheriff's race

By Melissa Evans

Former Long Beach Police Chief Robert Luna appears headed to a runoff in his bid to become Los Angeles County sheriff.

While incumbent Sheriff Alex Villanueva claimed 33% of the vote as of Friday, Luna came in second with 26%.

The results in the June 7 election come after four years of controversy associated with the county's top law enforcement officer. While Villanueva campaigned in 2018 as a progressive reformer and defeated former Long Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell in an upset, Villanueva has since clashed with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors repeatedly, along with other politicians and news organizations. He has shifted his stances sharply to the right, advocating rougher law-and-order policies.

Luna, who entered the race in December, had a strong showing despite a crowded field

of challengers hoping to unseat Villanueva.

Luna had announced in September that he was retiring from the LBPD at the end of 2021 after over 36 years of service in Long Beach, including seven years as chief of police.

This is Luna's first political run. If he prevails, he would manage over 12 times the amount of sworn officers as he did in Long Beach. L.A. County's second-largest city has just over 800 sworn officers and about 1,200 total employees, while the Sheriff's Department has nearly 11,000 deputies and about 18,000 employees.

Luna entered law enforcement as a reserve officer in 1985 and spent his entire career in Long Beach. He has a master's degree in public administration from Cal State Long Beach.

Unlike Villanueva's relationship with the Board of Supervisors, Luna has avoided public clashes with the Long Beach City Council and has received wide support



Long Beach Police Chief Robert Luna holds a press conference in Long Beach. *Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal*

during his tenure.

In December, Luna said he entered the race in part because he wasn't ready to give up the life of a public servant. He also accused

Villanueva of creating "dysfunction and chaos" that has put public safety at risk.

"We can do much better," Luna said at the time. ■

## Mayoral Runoff

*Continued from page 17*

Department Chief Robert Luna, as well as the 42nd Congressional District, which features Mayor Robert Garcia as the likely winner after he advanced to the runoff.

Garcia will face a Republican, John Briscoe, and Luna will be up against incumbent LA County Sheriff Alex Villanueva, who has spoken out against "woke culture" and has veered to the right despite running as a progressive in 2018.

A pre-Election Day poll showed Price leading among Republicans by about 35 percentage points when voters were asked to choose between her and Richardson.

Goldberg's group recommended Price in the primary, and he said it would continue to support her over the next five months. While it would be against the group's charter to endorse a Democrat, Goldberg said Republicans must come together to keep Richardson out of office.

"We're trying to keep DC liberal politics out of Long Beach and we must elect Suzie," Goldberg said.

Goldberg is confident that Republicans will be able to mobilize and at least double the estimated ballots cast by registered Republicans.

A first-time candidate, Rodriguez used the campaign trail to rail against anti-police sentiment as well

as a city-imposed vaccine mandate for its employees that he said threatened the jobs of hundreds of Long Beach police officers.

"All I can do is push for what's right in the city," Rodriguez said of who he'll support in the runoff.

Both Price and Richardson expressed gratitude the night of the election for the voters who helped them advance to the general election and acknowledged there's a lot of work to be done ahead of Nov. 8, when the race will be decided.

Price delivered an impassioned speech to the crowd gathered inside The Gaslamp near Second Street and Pacific Coast Highway, where she celebrated her outsider status among the Democratic establishment and labor.

"There are very strong forces that want to make sure that we don't have an independent voice, that we don't have someone who will stand up when things don't make sense for our city and someone whose going to return a lot of political favors in the office of the mayor," Price said.

Richardson told supporters that his campaign would continue to build on the momentum he hopes will pave the way to victory and provide him with an opportunity to create a policy to address the rising cost of housing, homelessness and public safety issues that exist across the city.

"I think in November we'll have a choice between the two differing visions for our city," Richardson said. ■

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# Incumbents, newcomer with institutional backing claim victory in 3 City Hall elections



Laura Doud



Dawn McIntosh



Doug Haubert

By Kelly Puente, Jason Ruiz and Anthony Pignataro

Races for three positions in Long Beach City Hall appear to have been decided last week, with incumbents or newcomers with institutional backing claiming victory.

To avoid a runoff in November,

a candidate must win more than 50% of the vote—and based on early results, it appears that candidates for city auditor, city prosecutor and city attorney have all done so.

Longtime City Auditor Laura Doud, for her part, appeared headed for a win over challenger Dan Miles as of Friday, with roughly 62% of the vote compared to Miles with 38%.

Doud, who was first elected in 2006, is one of just a handful of independently elected city auditors in California. A Long Beach native, she is running for a fifth term.

Miles is also a Long Beach native who has been a Certified Public Accountant for more than 35 years.

In a statement after early results came in on June 7, Doud said she's honored to continue to serve as city auditor.

"I have never taken that honor for granted nor will I ever," she said. "This campaign has given me the chance to hear directly from so many residents and has energized me to continue our efforts to work hard and ensure our city is the best it can be."

Early returns also showed incumbent City Prosecutor Doug Haubert defeating challengers Nicholas Liddi and George Moyer.

As of Friday, Haubert claimed 59% of the vote while Liddi had 22% and Moyer had 19%.

Haubert was first elected city prosecutor in 2010 and said he's long focused the office around innovation and community. Liddi, a prosecutor at the L.A. County district attorney's office, said he wants to modernize the office with a renewed focus on ethics, while Moyer, a L.A. County public defender, said he wants a tighter focus on economic justice and has vowed to end cash bail.

In the city attorney race—the only one of the three without an incumbent—it appears that Assistant City Attorney Dawn McIntosh, who won institutional backing, defeated former Councilmember Gerrie Schipske, a frequent critic of City Hall, to become the next city attorney.

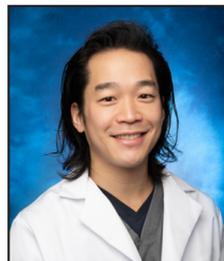
As of Friday, McIntosh had 56% of the vote, compared to 44% for Schipske.

City Attorney Charlie Parkin announced in October he would retire, opening the seat up to a newcomer. Parkin, along with a majority of the City Council, endorsed McIntosh.

After leaving elected office in 2014 following two terms as a City Councilmember, Schipske has been one of the loudest critics of City Hall and had sued the city to block a transfer from the water department to the general fund, which the courts declared unconstitutional earlier this year.

Losing the suit cost the city \$31 million and will reduce the general fund by millions annually going forward.

Schipske initially filed to run for mayor, but bowed out before the filing deadline to challenge McIntosh, who was running unopposed. The position of city attorney is highly influential, charged with reviewing and drafting city laws and contracts and advising city leaders on a range of legal matters, from ethics and personnel issues to changing state and federal laws. ■



Dr. Kwak  
Dermatologist and Mohs surgeon

training at Houston Methodist Hospital, where he trained under Dr. Leonard H. Goldberg and Dr. Arash Kimyai-Asadi.

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# State says Community Hospital property exempt from affordable housing law

By Kelly Puente

Long Beach could be one step closer to transferring ownership of the Community Hospital property after the state ruled earlier this month that the land is exempt from a California law that would have required the property to be offered on the open market for affordable housing developers.

The law, called the Surplus Land Act, was a major hurdle in the city's plan to pay back significant losses to the hospital's operator, Molina Wu Network (MWN), by transferring ownership of the 8.7-acre property in East Long Beach.

MWN closed the struggling hospital for good in December due to the mounting costs for seismic retrofit. The company has said it plans to turn the property into a mental health and wellness campus, but that proposal was sidelined this year when the state initially ruled that the city, which owns the land, must declare it as surplus and offer it up for bidding to affordable housing developers.

The city appealed the state's decision, and in a June 2 letter, the California Department of Housing and Community Development determined the property qualifies for exemption from the Surplus Land Act because the city and MWN entered into exclusive lease negotiations prior to the law being signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in October 2019.

The property, however, must be sold or transferred by Dec. 31, 2022, to qualify for the exemption, the state said.

The city has also applied for broader state exemptions due to the fact that the property is on a major earthquake fault line.

The December closure was not the first time the facility shut down because of seismic concerns. After nearly a century in Long Beach, Community Hospital shuttered in 2018 when then-operator MemorialCare opted not to spend tens of millions of dollars on seismic repairs mandated by the state.

Residents and stakeholders launched a campaign to save the hospital, and the city in response inked a deal with newly formed health care group MWN that was intended to allow the group to keep the hospital open and pay for the tens of millions of dollars in seismic retrofits needed to save the emergency and acute-care services.

It was an uncommon deal in that the city, which owns the property, included a provision in its lease agreement with MWN that required



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Long Beach could be one step closer to transferring ownership of the Community Hospital property.

the city to reimburse the group for operational losses if the 45-year lease was terminated early by either party.

City leaders at the time conceded the risk but said they were concerned about health risks to the community and a potential jump in emergency response and transport times if East

Long Beach lost the hospital.

Community officially reopened for transfer patients on Jan. 5, 2021, with its emergency room following in May 2021 after being closed for nearly three years.

But in the midst of a pandemic-enhanced nursing shortage, the

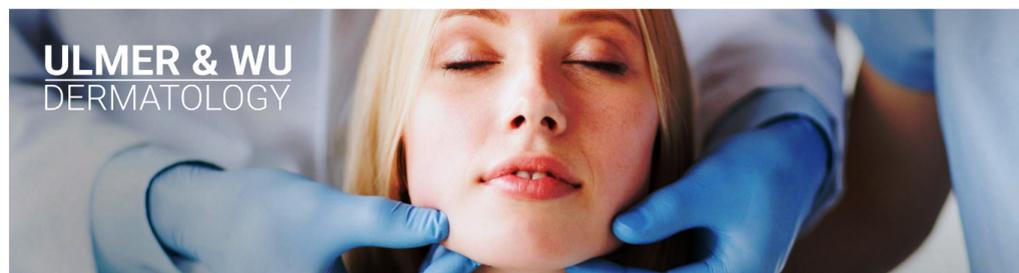
hospital struggled to find staffing and was saddled with mounting costs for seismic retrofits. By November 2021, MWN announced the hospital would close once again, with the company claiming losses upward of \$30 million.

Long Beach is now on the hook to reimburse MWN, in a transaction that will likely result in the city "selling" the 8.7-acre site to the group for \$0 to fulfill the lease obligation.

It is unclear if MWN plans to move forward with a wellness campus in light of the state decision. A representative for MWN was not available for comment.

Co-founder John Molina has said in past interviews with the Business Journal that he is committed to transforming the property into a campus focused on community health needs and mental health care services for the city's growing homeless population.

*Editor's note: In addition to being co-founder of MWN, John Molina is also the primary investor in the parent company that owns the Business Journal. ■*



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An Atlanta, GA native, Dr. Kwak is one of three sons of South Korean immigrants who arrived in the United States in the 1970s. He has come to us through Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and Southern California. His education involves the University of Georgia, Medical College of Georgia, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Houston Methodist Hospital. He also underwent additional training experiences at UCSD and UCSF. Dr. Kwak completed Mohs Micrographic Surgery and Reconstructive surgery

training at Houston Methodist Hospital, where he trained under Dr. Leonard H. Goldberg and Dr. Arash Kimyai-Asadi.

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COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

Now 2-bed, 1-bath homes are cresting the \$1M mark in Long Beach

Your basic American Dream house is one with three bedrooms and more than one bathroom. Those are the models that have been flying off the shelves for the past few years to the point where prices in Long Beach are so high that if you slap a million-dollar bill on the seller's counter you'll be lucky to get a few quarters and nickels back in change.

If you take a step back, though, things aren't much better, because two-bedroom, one-bath houses are catching up with the larger models, because they're finding a sweet spot in the real estate market as well, between aging baby boomers downsizing and young couples or singles buying their first home.

Boomers are the fat cats, having purchased their homes 30 or 40 years ago in the extraordinarily low six figures, or even high five figures and are now sitting on million-dollar properties with an extra room or two vacated by their grown children. They can sell their current place and buy a smaller one and use the remaining profit on lavish travel or even a vacation condo.

Or not. Yes, you can downsize and make some money, though in some cases, you might end up taking a loss if you're planning on, say, moving up in class from pretty-nice Los Altos to highly desirable Belmont Shore or Belmont Heights. As for people just entering the market: There are no "starter homes" in the high-dollar parts of town.

Consider a two-plus-one at 250 Grand Ave. at Vista Street in a beautiful part of Belmont Heights, just a short walk to the Shore and the beach.

It's a fairly spacious mid-modern home at 1,020 square feet, with hardwood floors, crown molding, recessed lighting and interior doors with frosted glass panels.

Landscaping is nice-looking and easy to care for with drought-resistant ornamental grass.

The kitchen is upgraded and includes a breakfast bar. The price for the home in this area

is merely fair: \$1.2 million. That's pretty rugged for starters and not easily doable for many downsizers without merely breaking even with their old home sale.

Head north on Grand Avenue up to 10th Street, which the listing generously describes as still being in Belmont Heights, and you'll find a place at 1016 Grand Ave., right across the street from the Armstrong Garden Center, making landscaping convenient, as is evidenced by the nicely landscaped grounds of this 1,117-square-foot Spanish-style home. Built in 1920 on a large, nearly 5,000-square-foot lot (plenty of room for more trees from Armstrong), the home is move-in ready and has an upgraded kitchen with some fairly spectacular tilework, plus a dining room with built-in storage.

It's a good-enough location, though three or four blocks north of what's commonly considered to be Belmont Heights. Its listing price is \$1.15 million. Kind of a lot, but there's nothing surprising about Long Beach home prices these days.

Those two examples are on the high end of the local market. And there are plenty of two-plus-ones to choose from in the \$700,000 to \$800,000 range, but what if you only want to spend \$500,000 for a two-bed, one-bath home?

I don't have good news for you. It's been a few years since a half-million dollars was a lot of money in Long Beach. For that price today, you can get a 560-square-foot house on St. Louis Avenue that's pretty much the polar opposite of turn-key. It's apparently a home in mid-flip, which leaves you with the fun opportunity to roll up your sleeves and get to dry-walling, plumbing and electrical as well as a lot of good old-fashioned yard work. It's listed at an even half-million dollars. Starters might have the energy to tackle it, but for those of us of a certain age who might be considering downsizing, it just makes us tired. ■



This Belmont Heights two-bedroom, one-bath home is listed at \$1.2 million.



This home on Grand Avenue near Armstrong Garden Center at \$1.15 million.

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# Long Beach workers are prepared prepared for mass shooting event but hope it never comes

By Brandon Richardson

In the wake of several mass shootings across the country in recent weeks, hundreds of health professionals and first responders gathered outside Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach earlier this month for a rally against gun violence.

One of the most recent high-profile mass shootings occurred at a Tulsa, Oklahoma medical facility in which four people were killed, including two doctors.

"It hit home," Dr. Graham Tse, chief medical officer at Miller, told the Business Journal. "There's always disgruntled patients and families, but I worry there is an individual out there that is going to not know how to express their dissatisfaction."

Tse said the United States is at a moment in time where people do not know how to express themselves in a healthy manner, instead turning to violence. The Tulsa shooter had recently been treated for back pain following a surgery at Saint Francis Health System campus.

Schools have been the site of many mass shootings, including a shooting in Uvalde, Texas, that left 19 elementary school students and two teachers dead. Before that, a shooting occurred at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store on May 14 in which 10 people were killed.

Students at local high schools also rallied on June 3 against gun violence.

Memorial and St. Mary Medical Center have both reported an increased number of trauma patients suffering gunshot wounds. Over the past three years, Memorial has seen an increase of just over



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Donna Litwinski, executive director of lean resources at Long Beach Memorial, wears an orange medical mask that reads "end gun violence" during a rally outside the hospital Friday, June 3, 2022.

50%, according to hospital data. St. Mary, meanwhile, has seen a 47% jump, Gloria Carter, chief nursing executive at the hospital, said during the event.

"We should not have to live in fear," Carter said of the community at large.

At the Long Beach Medical Center campus, staff is prepared for mass shooting events—both internally and out in the community. At least twice a year, hospital staff participate in an active shooter drill to ensure team members are aware of procedures and best practices, Tse said.

The hospital also conducts drills for community mass-casualty events, which includes the activation of a command center.

Los Angeles County, and Long Beach specifically, is well prepared for such events, Stephanie Garcia, director of trauma and acute

care surgery at Memorial, said. Countywide, there are 15 trauma centers ready for mass shootings and other mass-casualty events such as earthquakes.

In Long Beach, both Memorial and St. Mary are county-designated trauma centers. Memorial is one of seven that can accept pediatric patients, while St. Mary can admit adults during such events.

"We all have the ability to maintain and take the influx of patients," Garcia said, adding that the difference between a trauma center and a standard emergency room is the ability to admit patients more quickly.

Each trauma center is stocked with additional supplies, including stockpiles of various blood types to ensure patients do not bleed out from gunshot or other wounds. Trauma centers also work with surrounding hospitals in emergencies. During a mass casualty event, trauma centers can transfer less critical patients to other hospitals—in Long Beach those would be Lakewood Regional and Los Alamitos medical centers—to free up space and personnel for the new, critical patients.

"Our hope, however, is to not ever have to do this," Garcia said. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012 that killed 26 people, including 20 children who were 6 or 7 years old, Memorial and St. Mary partnered with local schools in a campaign called "Stop the Bleed."

Health professionals will go to schools to educate teachers, staff and students how to stop a person from bleeding, including the use of a tourniquet, Garcia said. After the Sandy Hook shooting, Garcia added, it was determined that some of the victims could have survived had civilians on the scene known how to stop or slow bleeding.

Garcia said she brought her young children to the June 3 event because it's important for her to create a safe environment for children moving forward. "Despite our best efforts, we're not able to save everybody and having to look at the parents—it's just devastating," Garcia said. "And dropping my kid off at preschool the day after [Uvalde], it was hard. I want to create a safe environment for them, and all children, to grow up in."

"This is not a political issue; this is a public health issue," Garcia added. "We had the ability to stop children from dying in car accidents. We made car seat laws and helmet laws to protect our children. We should treat gun violence like that." ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Graham Tse, chief medical officer at Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, greets another health professional at a rally against gun violence at the MemorialCare campus Friday, June 3, 2022.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Hundreds of health care professionals and first responders gathered at Long Beach Memorial for a gun violence awareness rally Friday, June 3, 2022.



Courtesy Long Beach Community Design Center

Since its founding two years ago, Long Beach Community Design Center has focused its efforts on developing a workforce development center for Centro CHA, a Long Beach-based nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of the Latino community.

## Long Beach Community Design Center hopes to uplift underserved communities

*Founder and executive director David Salazar has gathered a network of experts from architecture, engineering and urban planning fields to volunteer their services.*

By Tess Kazenoff

By providing pro bono design services to organizations in need, the Long Beach Community Design Center hopes to uplift Long Beach's underserved communities.

Established following his retirement and based off a design concept from the 1960s, founder and executive director David Salazar gathered a network of experts from architecture, engineering and urban planning fields to volunteer their services.

While conceptual design makes up about 10% of the overall design process, it's a process that many nonprofits and community groups can rarely afford, explained Salazar, who spent his career in urban planning.

"The opportunity for them to access whatever they need on the urban planning and architectural side is really important, and at a level that is more than community-focused, but engaged with them in terms of how to articulate their vision and what they want to accomplish and not have there be a financial barrier for them to pursue that vision," Salazar said.

The qualifications a nonprofit must meet to receive services from

the center are simple: The project has to directly impact underserved communities in a positive and meaningful way.

"Because of my ethnic background and my socio-economic background, the political side has always been important to me and understanding what it means to be underprivileged and what it means to live in these communities," said Salazar. "That was a big driver for me on a personal level."

Since the center's founding two years ago, its first project has focused on assisting Centro CHA, a Long Beach-based nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of the city's Latino community.

Currently in its final stages of gaining the necessary permits from the city before moving on to construction, board member Eduardo Perez hopes that not only will the design of the workforce development center allow the organization to better meet the needs of the community, but it will serve as a catalyst for urban renewal in the area.

"Architecture can't cure anything, but it's definitely part of a solution in some respect," Perez said.

Developed in partnership with Long Beach-based firm Studio One Eleven, the plans include an immigration legal services center, a kitchen for culinary training, a multifunctional center with computers and digital technology, and potentially a hub for celebratory community events.

However, at Long Beach Community Design Center, its project-focused work is only one part of the equation.

Apart from developing its projects, "investing and engaging youth around urban planning and architecture" is a primary goal, said Salazar.

This past spring, the organization hosted a series of urban planning workshops for teens, in partnership with Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, and Cal Poly Pomona students.

"I want to get students excited and understanding how it works, so they can look into the community and can say, 'We need to improve pedestrian safety, or affordable housing or cleaner streets,' and make that connection between urban planning and those kinds of improvements," said Salazar.

Salazar hopes to work further with the city and continue offering workshops once or twice a year.

"The student part means a lot to me," he said. "It creates this pipeline among young people about the discipline, giving them that exposure that they probably wouldn't get."

At the Design Center, design and social justice intertwine, and including students who can relate to the community and understand its needs is key.

For Perez, who has taught at Cal State Long Beach since 2007, including students in the Centro CHA project was an immensely rewarding experience, as students understood the community center's goals as well as its challenges.

"Long Beach is just such a

beautiful and diversified city, but we know that ultimately there are some areas that are underrepresented, and ultimately they needed to have voices such as ours that have been around the neighborhood a little bit here and there," said Perez.

As students developed unique solutions to problems in the community, there were some underlying parallels, said Perez.

"It was very heartfelt," he said. "There was intellect and creativity and purpose for the community."

Through passing on knowledge from his career and from his professors and mentors before him, Perez hopes his students will be driven to create positive change in Long Beach and beyond.

"These students are the ones that are going to be shaping the world," said Perez. "Through my profession . . . I do feel that I've been able to change some things for the better. And I'm hoping that they can do it even better than I did. I'm a huge proponent of thinking provocatively about ideas that may seem kind of like fantasy today—because they're tomorrow's realities."

Nonprofits interested in receiving services from Long Beach Community Design Center can reach out at [longbeachcommunitydesigncenter.org/contact.html](http://longbeachcommunitydesigncenter.org/contact.html). ■

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Transportation Mobility Supplies-Delineators	ITB PW22-076	06/16/2022
Davenport Park Phase II - Park Expansion	3004020020	06/16/2022
Safety Switches & Breaker Equipment	ITB PW22-059	06/17/2022
Control & Monitoring System for Bilge Pumps	ITB PW22-058	06/17/2022
Engine Generator Set Equipment Purchase	ITB PW22-063	06/21/2022
Bilge System Pump	ITB PW22-056	06/21/2022
Debt Collection System	RFP FM22-036	06/30/2022
On-Call Construction Services for Wells/Pumps Repair & Rehabilitation	WD-53-22	06/30/2022
Equipping of Water Wells North Long Beach 13 & North Long Beach 14	WD-13-21	07/05/2022
Engineering Consulting Services on Storm Water Pump Stations & Storm Drain Projects	RFP PW21-105	07/08/2022
Engineering Consulting Services on Pump Station Recovery Mitigation Project	RFP PW22-069	07/14/2022

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# Equity commission recommends ban on some police surveillance technologies

By Anthony Pignataro

A city commission tasked with promoting understanding and respect among Long Beach residents voted earlier this month to recommend a ban on a variety of surveillance technologies used by local police, including facial recognition software and automated license plate readers.

In a draft letter released May 31, the day before the vote, the Equity and Human Relations Commission said technologies currently being used by the Long Beach Police Department “pose significant civil liberties and racial justice concerns” and were “largely deployed without any public policy discussions.” They should be “banned from use” by the city, according to the draft letter, which is addressed to Mayor Robert Garcia and the City Council and was largely written by Commission Chair Alyssa Gutierrez.

“While some cities have attempted to reform the technology, it is the opinion of the [commission]

that racist technology cannot be reformed, it must be banned altogether,” the draft states.

The commission largely approved the language of the draft letter on June 1, with some minor edits and a major change to the language of the final recommendation, which called for an oversight commission after a half dozen members of the public expressed significant reservations about the effectiveness of such a body. The commission’s recommendations do not carry any legal weight but could influence the Police Department to change its policies or the City Council to enact ordinances restricting surveillance.

The draft letter recommends the city ban the LBPD’s use of automated license plate readers, facial recognition technology and other biometric technology.

Specifically, the letter points to the LBPD’s use of the Los Angeles County Regional Identification System, known as LACRIS, which is a facial recognition system based on a countywide database of mugshots. To use the system, which is run by the

L.A. County Sheriff’s Department, LBPD investigators submit an image of someone they’re trying to identify and LACRIS compares it against the database of 9 million mugshots, which critics point out is disproportionately filled with people of color.

Similarly, automated license plate readers give the LBPD the capability of creating “an intimate and invasive record of residents’ daily activities,” allowing the department to “target sensitive locations such as immigration clinics, abortion clinics, places of worship, union halls and political headquarters,” according to the draft letter. The letter also notes that the LBPD has shared license plate data with certain divisions within Immigration Customs Enforcement since 2020.

The draft letter also asks the city to “redirect” the \$7.3 million it currently spends on surveillance to “investments that are proven to prevent crime and promote safe communities,” like youth development programs, workforce training and access to stable, affordable housing.

The letter’s final recommendation, to establish a Community Oversight Commission on Surveillance Technologies that would set rules about how to vet and oversee the use of surveillance technology in the future, was simplified, with details on its proposed duties removed and a call for the community to help shape what meaningful and effective oversight would look like added.

The commission’s recommendations were based on testimony from the public, a presentation from the immigrant rights group Just Futures Law, as well as research and findings from the city’s Technology and Innovation Commission, which studied facial recognition tech for over a year, according to the letter.

The Equity and Human Relations Commission began looking at the issue of facial recognition technology in October after the city’s Technology and Innovation Commission asked it to review its research and recommendations through a “racial equity lens,” according to Gutierrez’s draft letter.

Doing so requires centering the experiences and needs of those most impacted by the surveillance technologies, the draft letter says.

Because 72% of Long Beach’s population is made up of people of color, “an overwhelming majority of our residents have the potential to be negatively impacted by the use of this technology,” the draft says.

In testimony before the City Council last summer, LBPD Chief Wally Hebeish said the department

does not use facial recognition to conduct “mass surveillance.” The department’s policies only let investigators use LACRIS when trying to identify specific people while investigating a crime. LACRIS documents state that the database only “assists in the identification process” of suspects.

While the technology has been used to prevent sex trafficking and locate missing persons, civil rights activists have noted that “algorithmic bias” has led to false identifications and wrongful arrests of people of color, the Technology and Innovation Commission noted in a July 2021 meeting.

That year, the ACLU called for a complete ban on all federal government use of facial recognition tech. The civil rights organization said the technology was dangerous because it both “disproportionately misidentifies and misclassifies people of color, trans people, women, and other marginalized groups” and enables “governments to track the public movements, habits, and associations of all people, at all times.”

The Long Beach Technology and Innovation Commission ultimately approved three recommendations in March, including a moratorium on the use of facial recognition technology and the creation of an independent commission “that possess authority and oversight” over surveillance tech. It also recommended the city adopt a vetting framework for monitoring new forms of surveillance but stopped short of calling for an outright ban. The commission has not yet formally transmitted its recommendations to the mayor and City Council, so it’s unclear yet what, if any, effect they will have on policymakers.

Thirteen members of the public spoke at the June 1 meeting. All were supportive of the draft letter’s call for a ban on the LBPD’s current and future use of surveillance technologies.

Long Beach resident Gaby Segovia, speaking Spanish, denounced the surveillance tech, saying “we don’t want this technology to exist,” according to the meeting’s translator.

Jamilet Ochoa of the Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition expressed gratitude to the commission for taking on the issue, saying, “this is what I call a step towards building trust.”

But Ochoa and others said they opposed any sort of oversight committee, both because current oversight bodies are rarely effective and may actually end up legitimizing the existence of surveillance technology. ■

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