

Long Beach Business Journal

October 2020

an edition of the Long Beach Post

lbbusinessjournal.com

'THE BRIDGE TO EVERYWHERE'

Inside:

- The full history of how we got here (Pg. 18)
- The new bridge by the numbers (Pg. 21)
- The economic impact of the new bridge (Pg. 20)

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Correction

The September 2020 issue of the Long Beach Business Journal contained an error in a story about the LBUSD Board of

Education District 2 race. In the March 3 primary election, Tonia Reyes Uranga received 42.61% of the vote, Erik Miller received 36.48% of the vote, and John Mathews received 20.92% of the vote.

Bake a pizza or do your laundry at Howard's Appliances' new Marina Pacifica store



Kathy Genovese, chief operating officer for Howard's, walks through the new appliance store in Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

By ALENA MASCHKE
Senior Reporter

The growing retail landscape of East Long Beach has been joined by a new member catering to an upscale clientele: Howard's Appliances.

After picking up groceries at Whole Foods or Gelson's, shoppers visiting the corner of 2nd and Pacific Coast Highway can now admire—and try out—smart fridges, barista-worthy coffee machines, the latest in washers and dryers and even a osteria-style pizza oven at the Southern California chain's newest location.

Once gatherings are safe and permitted again, the company hopes to use its built-out kitchen and entertainment environments for live events, for example inviting chefs to cook using the for-sale appliances.

Formerly located in Signal Hill, Howard's has moved its Long Beach area store to the Marina Pacifica shopping center, where it fills the spot left vacant by Sports Authority after the company's sale to Dick's Sporting Goods in 2016.

"We wanted something unique and different," Howard's CEO John Riddle said about the new store, which seeks to offer a hands-on shopping experience. "We thought this would be the perfect location to do that."

The pandemic has made the process of opening a new store more difficult, in part because of new safety requirements and delays at city hall, Howard's chief operating officer Kathy Genovese said.

As a result, the new store doesn't yet offer the full experience. A coffee bar featuring products by luxury appliance company Fisher & Paykel, for example, still sits idle near the entrance. But the location has performed surprisingly well since its Labor Day opening, Riddle said.

"In the first week, the store jumped up into our Top 5," the CEO noted.

Howard's has not spared any cost in setting up its new Long Beach location. According to Riddle, the company spent \$1.7 million on the 22,000 square-foot store. In return, the company expects annual revenues of \$10-\$15 million.

While the pandemic has created new hurdles for retailers, Riddle said being cooped up at home has led many to use their appliances more—and consider an upgrade or replacement.

"Our products are products that really serve an opportunity for a person to have a more pleasant experience in their house," he noted. "It's been an amazing growth opportunity for the home appliance industry."

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Record stores still spinning from pandemic but sales are trending up



Mike Colon, 43, right, a Redondo Beach resident, checks out the find of Ted Gomez, 48, a Los Angeles resident, at Third Eye Records on Retro Row in Long Beach. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

The must of thousands of slowly decaying record jackets hangs in the

air. If history has a smell, this is it. Music resonates throughout the store, washing over the bin-diving clientele. Masked and gloved, the audiophiles search row after row of vinyl, search-

ing for something—something—that catches their eye or perhaps a specific album they have sought for days, months, years.

“Records have always been experi-

ential. Growing up, there was always a communal aspect to listening to new records—you go to your friend’s house, you sit and listen together,” said Rand Foster, owner of Fingerprints Music in Downtown Long Beach. “And we’re an experience-based business.”

When coronavirus struck, the record store experience was muted. Many shops, Fingerprints included, quickly altered their business models and created online stores to make up for the loss of in-person shopping. But it is not the same as the search, the journey, Foster said.

From Jan. 1 through March 12, total album sales were down 6.7% over the same period last year, according to a midyear report from Nielsen Music and MRC Data. The decrease is due to a major decline in digital album sales—down nearly 25%. Physical album sales on the other hand were up 4.6%.

Enter COVID-19. From March 13 to July 2, total album sales plummeted more than 25%. As of July 2, year-to-date album sales were down just over 18%, with physical sales down more than 20%. While this trend has been a major hit to the music industry

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Audiophiles bin dive at Fingerprints Music in Downtown Long Beach. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



Kelli Drum, 46, left, and Ben Rehling, 46, a married couple from Garden Grove, browse the bins at Fingerprints Music in Downtown Long Beach. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

(Continued from Page 3)

as a whole, vinyl sales have actually increased 11.2%, from 8.3 million in 2019 to 9.2 million already sold in 2020.

For the first time since 1986—34 years—vinyl record sales are outpacing CD sales in the U.S. During the first six months of 2020, vinyl records accounted for \$232.1 million of music sales, whereas CDs brought in \$129.9 million, according to a report by the Recording Industry Association of America.

While the vinyl record world is booming, Foster said he has had a rough couple of years—caused in part by construction of Linden apartments next door—which had sales down 20-25%, and the onset of the pandemic did not help.

“We came into COVID very undercapitalized, very unprepared and without a whole lot of help,” he said. “So there was a lot of times when I thought, ‘Well, this might be the end of it.’”

Fingerprints celebrated its 20th anniversary in early July. It was closed for business.

Since reopening in July, Foster said business has been robust. He expects that, since record stores are as much about the shopping experience as they are about the product, that the pent up demand to bin dive was strong. Also, with people staying home more often,

new music is a must, he added.

Third Eye Records owner Gary Farley first opened his shop about a decade ago. He said that during his years in the vinyl game, he has never seen the amount of reissued records than he has the last several years. The plus side is a continuous stream

of brand new vinyl that supplements times when the stream of incoming used records slows; the downside is the amount of shelf space dedicated to reissues, meaning less space for used inventory, which has a higher profit margin for stores.

Like Fingerprints, Third Eye re-

tooled quickly and put up an online store to move records while the store was closed to the public.

“The pandemic forced us to rethink and, fortunately, we were able to adapt fairly quickly. It’s another stream of revenue to access when we’re not open,” Farley said. “That really saved



Ted Gomez, 48, a Los Angeles resident, peruses the record selection at Fingerprints Music in Downtown Long Beach. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

us. We were also doing local deliveries—it got me out of the house, not thinking about what was happening and having some interaction.”

Despite the pandemic, Farley said his sales this year are on track to surpass 2019, due to the addition of the online store and the fact that the business is running more efficiently than ever.

Justin “Dex” Dexter, owner of Dex Records, was a bit more nonchalant when the pandemic struck. He did not scramble to set up an online store, opting instead to let the chips fall where they may.

“We’re all in the same boat and there’s nothing we can do about it,” Dexter said. “My philosophy is [stuff] happens and you just gotta roll with it.”

That is not to say Dexter did not have very real concerns in the first few months of the pandemic. Fortunately, he was able to reach an understanding with his landlord that allowed him to make ends meet. Since reopening, Dexter said business has been booming but with the months he was closed, he’s not sure how his 2020 sales will compare to last year.

Dexter said his greatest challenge now is keeping his store stocked. He depends heavily on purchasing records, sometimes entire collections, from people at their homes or at the store, a practice that has become difficult in the era of COVID-19. All record stores receive their used inventory from the general public—estate sales, people bringing portions of or entire collections to the store—and pay bulk prices, which results in the higher profit margin for used vinyl.

Hector Waluyo is the latest addition to Long Beach’s bustling record store scene. He opened his shop, Twelves Records, almost one year ago, just months before the pandemic shut him down.

“The first year of business is always full of learning and trials and errors but this year took the cake—this is gonna be in the history books,” Waluyo said. “It’s like on steroids. I’ve learned things every day and need to adapt every week.”

About 90% of Twelve’s stock is used and the business model was centered on in-store shopping with no plans for an online presence outside of social media. During the months of forced closures, Waluyo altered his strategy by posting specific records for sale on Instagram, first-come, first-served, with free shipping and payments made digitally. He said the online shift allowed him to reach a customer base outside the city, even in other states.

When curbside pickup became an option for retailers, Waluyo opted to keep the store closed. Since retailers were allowed to open for in-store shopping, Waluyo shifted his business model again—the shop is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays by appointment only, limited to four customers at a time for one hour. For now, he said the model is working well.

“At first, everybody was very fearful because nobody knew what was going to happen. But we’re still alive and kicking, still buying records and ... able to pay the rent,” Waluyo said. “It’s really just thanks to the whole music community. It’s been awesome.” ■



Mike Colon, 43, a Redondo Beach resident, leaves Third Eye Records on Retro Row after purchasing an album. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

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‘Antonio’s mission’: Long Beach hairstylist uplifts women and children at local shelter



Antonio Francisco Gonzales, founder of social enterprise AFG Hair Studio, has partnered with 1736 Family Crisis Center to sponsor 31 children with clothing and other items. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

For about two decades, Antonio Francisco Gonzales has been in the business of hair, specializing in high-profile women’s cuts, color and styling. Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, he studied his craft in the San Fernando Valley in the late ’90s, honed his skills in New York City, took his talents to Miami Beach and finally ended up in Long Beach this year.

In New York, Gonzales, 48, found himself in salons catering to celebrities and celebrity-adjacent clients. He worked numerous fashion weeks and landed a gig at the Victoria’s Secret Fashion Show. He moved from New York to Miami Beach for a change of pace but the transition backfired and quickly led to what he described as a nervous breakdown.

“I was... living this lifestyle that was beyond my means. It quickly brought me to my knees—I started couch surfing,” Gonzales said. “I was unable to work and found myself just

sort of alone.”

The hardships he faced in Miami Beach, as it turns out, had a silver lining: Gonzales found a new passion—serving his community face-to-face, particularly the underserved, unhoused population.

“Someone suggested that I show up for someone else... and I started volunteering at a hospital, being there for people,” Gonzales said. “It allowed me to not think about myself. When you’re depressed, the only thing you think about is yourself—so much pain and loneliness.”

Gonzales quickly realized he could use his passion for hair to help women in need, including those with unstable living situations and survivors of domestic abuse and sex trafficking. He said that when it comes to assisting people who find themselves living in those circumstances, self-care such as haircuts often go by the wayside but that such care can go a long way in making people feel more like themselves—to feel seen.

Cutting the hair of those in need

was not Gonzales’ first foray into philanthropy. While in New York, he set himself up as a social enterprise, AFG Hair Studio, donating 3% of all

his revenue to shelters.

In February, Gonzales and his husband, Padrick Gleason, moved to Long Beach. He began renting chairs in local



Hairdresser Antonio Francisco Gonzales set up his business as a social enterprise and donates 3% of all revenue to local shelters such as the 1736 Family Crisis Center. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

salons and continued his social enterprise donations. But he wanted to continue his physical philanthropic work and connected with the 1736 Family Crisis Center in Torrance, a nonprofit shelter for domestic violence survivors, runaway and homeless youth, low-income people and those in crisis.

Gonzales made two trips to the center to give free haircuts before COVID-19 struck, after which he could no longer visit. Undeterred, he reached out to program coordinator Michele Nadeau to see how he could support the shelter from afar. Now, Gonzales is collecting donations of new clothes for 31 children and their mothers as well as noise-canceling headphones for children to use at the shelter during virtual learning.

“With school starting, that was a big driving factor in wanting to make sure our kids have what they need to be successful,” Nadeau said. “It was our increased need—a lot of times kids need clothes and things like that, so he’s been taking wishlists and passing those on. It’s been awesome.”

Gonzales received the name, age, clothing size and favorite color for each of the children at the shelter and is finding sponsors to purchase \$75-\$150 worth of items for them. He said he is still seeking sponsors for some children but that the overall response has been very positive.

Nadeau said the pandemic has added another layer of difficulty to providing services for people at the shelter, which requires a hefty amount of community outreach. She explained that Gonzales stepping up amid the chaos has heartened her.

Long Beach resident Angelina Nader said she has been friends with Gonzales for a long time and has served the LA County community by his side several times in the past. She has sponsored multiple children as part of his latest effort.

“In light of... everything that’s happening in the world, it’s important to make sure everybody has equal opportunity. There’s already this divide,” Nader said. “We can bridge that gap and I know that is Antonio’s mission.”

When the world returns to some semblance of normal and he has the funding, Gonzales said he hopes to open his own salon in Long Beach to continue his social enterprise work.

“I love living in Long Beach,” he said. “It’s an incredible community.”

While he plans to continue and expand his other philanthropic endeavors, Gonzales said he cannot wait until he is able to once again visit the shelter and reunite his two passions.

“Working with families, especially single mothers and children has been really impactful for me,” Gonzales said. “I am at my strongest and most fearless when I am in the shelter, talking to women, relating to them and connecting, helping them feel beautiful from the inside out. They are my heroes.” ■

Welcome back shoppers: Lakewood, Stonewood and Cerritos malls reopen

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
Senior Reporter

The Lakewood Center, the Stonewood Center in Downey and the Los Cerritos Center reopened their indoor spaces on Wednesday, Oct. 7, the owner and operator of the shopping centers announced.

Indoor malls, together with other businesses like nail salons and card rooms, have been allowed to reopen on a staggered timeline since Sept. 30.

Some outside-facing stores had al-

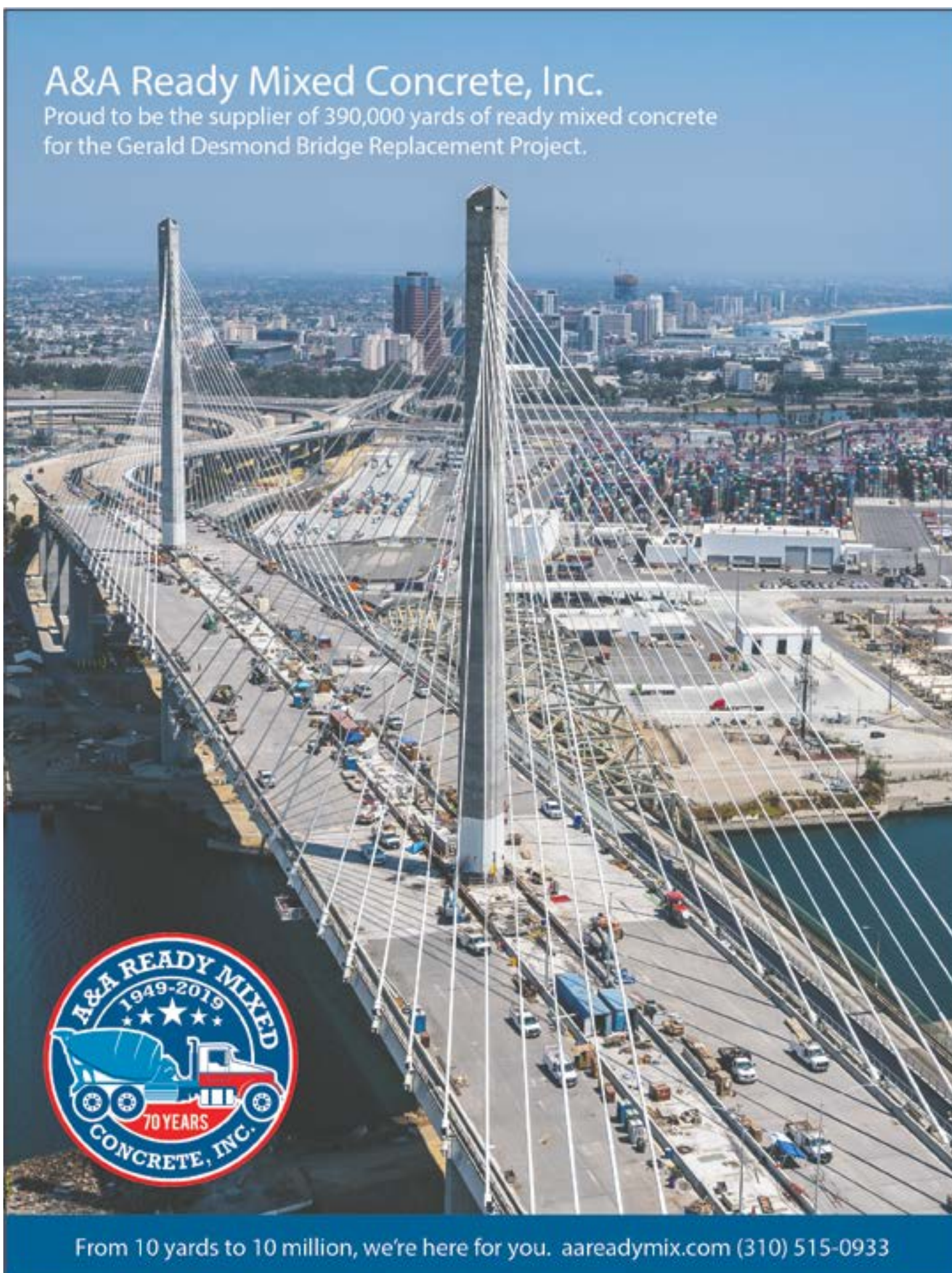
ready been allowed to reopen, in accordance with state health orders, while stores located inside the centers had been mandated to remain closed.

“We are looking forward to seeing our retail partners and welcoming local shoppers back,” a press release by owner and operator Macerich read. “More than ever, people are ready to safely get back to the places and activities they’ve been missing and we are excited to be a big part of this.”

Enhanced cleaning protocols, elec-

trostatic disinfectant sprayers and “hospital-grade filters” in the centers’ air-conditioning systems will be employed to “make sure guests and employees feel comfortable and at ease with the return to business,” according to the release.

Retailers expect holiday shopping activity to start early this year, the release stated further. “All of us are committed to ensuring our property can get back to making major contributions to our local economy through jobs, sales taxes and more.” ■



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‘This is not the end’: City pilot program provides experience and support for unhoused residents



Steffz Warren, 61, clears dry brush at Willow Springs Park as part of the city’s PACE program. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

For more than a decade, Steffz Warren has had an unstable living situation—bouncing from shared housing to shelter to

shelter to shelter. Warren, 61, a long-time Long Beach resident, found herself without a home after being terminated from her government job of 17 years because of another employee who she described as a bully. Over the



Blanca Diaz, left, Willow Springs Park manager with the Long Beach Office of Sustainability, explains to Steffz, a PACE program participant, which vegetation to remove. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

years, she has worked multiple jobs but her ever-changing circumstances, along with personal tragedies, have made maintaining a job difficult.

“You never know what someone is going through,” Warren said. “I don’t believe in saying ‘homeless’ because the general consensus is that you’re lazy, you’re nasty, you don’t work, you eat out of trash cans—there are a lot of people out there that are functioning. They’re not what society perceives ‘homeless’ to be.”

In fall 2019, Pacific Gateway was awarded \$300,000 from the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services to develop an employment program to assist those, like Warren, who find themselves unhoused and in need of assistance to get back on track. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the subsequent pilot program, dubbed Pathways Advancing to City Employment, or PACE, commenced this summer.

The pilot was designed to serve 30 people in need: 15 to work with city staff and 15 to be placed with private companies or non-profits. The level of each participant’s need determines which group they are placed.

“Perhaps the greatest challenge for individuals who have been unhoused for some time or are long-term unemployed is the opportunity to re-enter the workforce and build up job skills and even basic experience of the work environment,” said Erick Serrato, assistant executive director of Pacific Gateway. “This program takes a dignity-first approach.”

The program is meant to provide employment skills to participants and connect them to job opportunities with the city or in the general job market. About a dozen spots still available in the pilot are expected to be filled by Oct. 31, according to a city memo.

Each participant will work an average of 310 hours, earning \$15 per hour, for a total of \$4,650. In addition to providing participants with wages, the program supports transportation and food costs, insurance,

supportive services, staff supervision, tools and materials, case managers and job development staff, Serrato noted.

Warren was referred to the program by a staff member of the Long Beach Multi-Service Center. She was accepted into the pilot and has been working with her cohort and city staff at Willow Springs Park near Signal Hill, maintaining the wetlands.

“I’m being active. I’m doing something that’s productive,” Warren said. “This work may not be my background but sometimes it’s OK to step out of your comfort zone, see other things.”

While the program does not pay Warren enough to afford a stable living situation, she said it has solidified her determination to move forward and improve her situation.

The pilot is set to end Dec. 31, at which point Pacific Gateway staff will study the program’s effectiveness to determine whether it is sustainable.

“The ultimate indicators are retention: Were the individuals able to complete the work hours despite their challenges and why?” Serrato said. “And placement: After the program, are the participants work-ready and able to transition to other employment?”

If the pilot proves successful, Serrato said the expanded program would include additional worksites, such as Sunnyside Cemetery and Long Beach Animal Care Services. With additional sites, participants could be placed where the work experience would be most meaningful and gratifying, personalizing the program.

Once the pilot program is over, Warren said she hopes to enter the nonprofit sector to assist those in need. She said she is most passionate about feeding the hungry, seniors, literacy and, as a self-described Air Force brat, veterans.

“I really want to be involved in those types of things,” Warren said. “I want to continue to be able to let people see that this is not the end. Never give up and always be willing to try something new.” ■



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Tattoo shop owners sue governor and two state health officials for the right to open

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

Three Los Angeles County tattoo shop owners, including one in Long Beach, filed a lawsuit against Gov. Gavin Newsom and two state health officials over the ongoing closure mandate imposed on the industry.

“We feel like we’re being discriminated against,” said Tom Moser, owner of Port City Tattoo in Long Beach. “I’m under the impression that they’ve kind of put us to the side because we don’t have a big lobbying group in Sacramento. We don’t have enough people up there pressing them on the issue.”

Nail salons, card rooms and bars are the latest businesses to be permitted to reopen, as long as they follow strict guidelines such as limiting capacity.

A spokesperson for the Long Beach Health Department said the decision is not theirs to make, referring questions to the state, which has established a tiered system for reopening that depends on each county’s positivity rate and the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents. Los Angeles County remains in the most restrictive tier.

A lawyer representing the state in the lawsuit did not respond to a request for comment.

While the tattoo industry is hyper-focused on diseases that spread through the blood, such as Hepatitis and HIV, Moser said the protocols should be more than sufficient in the era of coronavirus.

Since the onset of COVID-19, Tiffany Mitchell, owner of Black Raven Tattoo in Torrance, said she has spent nearly \$10,000 to reconfigure, renovate and improve the technology in her shop. During the brief time tattoo shops were allowed to operate with additional health and safety guidelines, Mitchell said she completely altered shop operations to ensure the safety of artists and customers.

Similar to other personal service businesses such as hair and nail salons, tattoo shops are highly regulated, particularly when it comes to safety. The Safe Body Art Act outlines all requirements to operate a tattoo and piercing business.

At the best of times, sans pandemics, tattoo shops must adhere to stringent cleanliness protocols—personal protective equipment, single-use razors, approved disinfectant solutions and keeping a log of each sterilization cycle, among a slew of other specific requirements.

Outside of operational mandates, each tattoo artist is required to register with the local enforcement agency annually. Along with the registration application, each artist must show proof of completion of a county-approved blood borne pathogens exposure control training and vaccination documentation.

Moser’s second Port City location in Costa Mesa, meanwhile, has been allowed to reopen, as Orange County is in a less restrictive tier.

But LA County owners and artists have



Tom Moser, owner of Port City Tattoo, works on a customer at his Costa Mesa location. His Long Beach location has been closed most of the year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Courtesy photo.

grown increasingly more frustrated after being closed more than half of 2020. In August, Mikey Vigilante, owner of Paper Crane Studio in Long Beach, opened his shop for a day in protest of the state mandate—but no customers were tattooed.

Moser said he hopes the stigma often associated with tattoos and the people who sport them is not a cause for shops remaining shuttered. He said that when he asks Long Beach officials why he can’t open, he gets referred to the county, and when he asks the county he gets referred to Long Beach.

“Nobody’s been able to put me in touch with anybody that can give me any type of information,” Moser said. “I get these generic boilerplate COVID emails back.”

Attorney Robert Moest is representing Mitchell, Moser and Glenn West, owner of Palace Art Tattoo in Thousand Oaks, in the suit. Deputy Attorney General Maureen Onyeagbako is representing the state.

Moest said the state is infringing on the First Amendment rights of those wanting to tattoo and be tattooed.

A hearing date has not been set.

In the end, Moser and other shop owners—along with their artists—just want to be able to open for business and create art during a chaotic year.

“It’s a crazy time. Everybody is all worked up. People are depressed,” Moser said. “With tattooing, there is a cathartic feeling of the releasing of that pain. It helps mentally. It helps get people’s minds off of the day-to-day and ... the feeling that there’s never going to be any type of normalcy.” ■

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On the Job: The lonely mornings of a hotel barista



Jose Soto pours a cup of hot coffee for a guest at the Hyatt Centric in Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
Senior Reporter

It's a chilly Monday morning by Southern California standards, and José Soto, 32, waits behind the Hyatt Centric at the Pike in Downtown Long Beach in the

pre-dawn mist.

On a normal day, the hotel barista would simply swipe his card at the employee entrance and start preparing the dining area for the morning rush of guests demanding coffee, above all, along with bagels, croissants and the occasional or-

ange juice.

But working anywhere during a global pandemic feels far from normal, no less at a hotel that's lacking the one thing hotels are all about: guests.

So instead, Soto shuffles back and forth until finally the security guard on duty unlocks the gate, takes his temperature and allows him inside. On his way to his work station, a newly installed coffee bar adjacent to the hotel lobby, he passes through an empty kitchen, where refillable containers of cereal and miniature jars of jam wait for their time to shine once again.

For now, traditional breakfast service has been suspended. His coworkers—three other servers, a dishwasher and a chef—have been sent home, Soto said. The elegant, nautical-themed dining area is empty: no sit down service, no cereal dispensers, no salt and pepper shakers.

To kick off his shift, Soto wipes down every inch of counter space with disinfectant and dons a surgical mask provided by the hotel over his personal, cloth mask. "At least I know the one I have is clean. It's self-care—or something like that," he said.

Cleaning has become a bit of an obsession for him, Soto admits. At first, he would get frustrated with coworkers leaning on the counter. "How do I keep things clean when everyone's always touching everything?" he asked. Now, he's firm about asking his colleagues to keep a safe distance.

But being without his team has been difficult for Soto. "The hardest part is being here by myself every morning, not having anyone to talk to," he said. "There's days when I just stand here and no one passes me by."

On this early Monday morning, a few guests stop by to grab coffee. Soto greets them enthusiastically. "What can I get for you, brother?" he asks. "Do you like the hotel?"

Originally from the Mexican state of Jalisco, Soto grew up in Compton and South Gate, later moving to Long Beach where he now owns a home. One day, he hopes to open his own coffee shop or a little cart, from which to sell healthy meals to low-income families. Maybe both, he said.

For now, he's using his entrepreneur-





Jose Soto serves a hotel guest his morning cup of coffee at the Hyatt Centric in Downtown Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

ial spirit to breathe life into the somewhat ghostly atmosphere of the nearly empty hotel. “You have to create sales, you have to create that energy that’s not there,” Soto explained.

Having worked at the hotel for 11 years, before it was bought by the Hyatt chain, Soto has held every position imaginable. He went from dishwasher to room service, refilling now-abolished minibars, before finally settling into his position as a server. Over that decade-long career, change has been ever-present and he is confident that the company will make it through the pandemic as well.

But a die-hard union member, Soto has

also felt disillusioned with his employer’s response to the public health crisis, citing such issues as obtaining PPE at the beginning of the pandemic and the troubles faced by his colleagues who are currently out of work. To help them out, he has participated in several food drives organized by his union, Unite Here Local 11.

“We’re just trying to be there for each other,” he said. As one of the few hotel workers who still has a job to report to every day, Soto also expressed a sense of responsibility for keeping the business alive. “We have to keep this going so there’s something for people to do when they come back.” ■



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Inspired by iconic bird, new Long Beach apparel brand is making noise



Christopher Diaz is pictured in a shirt of his own design featuring a homage to Long Beach's feral parrots. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

The mitred parakeet is a staple of the Long Beach community, with flocks frequently spotted soaring over various neighborhoods. The bright green birds with red faces—and the ruckus they cause—pushed graphic designer Christopher Diaz to launch a new clothing company aptly named Squawk.

“The parakeets are famous in Long Beach. They’re kind of an icon. So I was inspired to create some cool shirts,” Diaz said. “I wanted an original design that I would wear myself and I knew my friends would want to wear, and it just kind of escalated from there.”

The vision for a clothing company began to take shape for Diaz last year. While the coronavirus pandemic has created new challenges for every facet of life, Diaz said it was the perfect opportunity to get his brand off the ground. He still holds his day job as a graphic designer with Costa Mesa-based EnGenius Technologies while creating designs and managing Squawk during his off hours.

Diaz has done work for several major apparel brands and retailers, including Billabong, Quicksilver, PacSun and Skechers. Having designed for such prominent companies, Diaz said he felt ready to take on the industry on his own.

In September, Diaz officially launched his website with five shirt designs, a hoodie,

a windbreaker, a pair of socks and, in true coronavirus-era fashion, a face mask.

Diaz purchases blank apparel from a company in LA, but he has his merchandise printed at Overcast Design and Print, a screen printing company located on Long Beach's Westside.

“I’m proud to be from Long Beach. I wanted to bring business to the city,” Diaz said. “This brand is about pride for Long Beach, so I wanted to keep it here.”

The screen printer is still working with Diaz to bring his favorite design to life: a denim Hawaiian-style shirt with a parakeet print. He said there are a couple other designs that have not yet been released.

Squawk has quickly become a family endeavor, with Diaz enlisting his mother, Arlene, and his sister Diane—who live together in a Long Beach house—to act as his warehouse and distribution team. His full stock is folded, packaged and stored in their spare bedroom, and they handle the shipping of orders.

Diaz said he is happy with his life's current trajectory and that he is optimistic about the future of his brand but noted it was a long road to get to this point.

“This November will be my fifth year of sobriety. I used to drink a lot and I’m just grateful to be alive,” Diaz said. “I’ve been through a lot. A lot of things have propelled me in this direction.”

Now 45 years old, Diaz was born and grew up in the Boyle Heights neighborhood

of East Los Angeles. When he was 5, his family—his mother and two older sisters—moved to Long Beach, where he has stayed except for a couple years while attending Otis College of Art and Design and a five-year stint in Orange County while working for Billabong.

Prior to attending Otis, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in graphic design, Diaz attended Long Beach City College. He has recently returned to the community college to take photography classes. Diaz was

also recently accepted to a master's program for integrated design, business and technology at USC.

Though juggling a full-time job, going back to school and operating a new business is a challenge, Diaz said he is confident in his product. It doesn't hurt that work and school are currently also online, he added.

“Clothing is tough but I’ve got some original ideas and I’ve got some original work,” Diaz said. “I think people are going to love it.” ■



Christopher Diaz is pictured in a shirt of his own design featuring a homage to Long Beach's feral parrots. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Pandemic slows city's efforts to prepare seismic safety database of buildings

■ By **KELLY PUENTE**
Staff Reporter

Long Beach is working to prepare a database that will catalog the seismic safety of roughly 3,000 buildings, but the effort has been slower this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, officials said.

The project comes as a 4.6 magnitude earthquake based in El Monte rattled the region Sept. 18 and was felt in Long Beach and as far as Catalina.

The initial effort, which launched last year, was estimated to take about two years to complete, but city officials, including Mayor Robert Garcia who, in a city council meeting in July 2019, had urged staffers to work faster.

In an interview this week, Development Services Director Oscar Orci said the city had planned this year to begin building an inventory that would log the potential vulnerability of thousands of structures in the event of an earthquake.

However, the process is still in the planning phase because the COVID-19 closures and health orders make it difficult for engineers to enter some buildings, he said.

But the good news, Orci said, is that the city is wrapping up the first phase of the project that includes a comprehensive report of what other cities and counties have done for similar databases. The City Council is expected to review the report later this year or early next year and then the city can start the inventory phase.

The project will take several months to complete and will include engineers mapping and inspecting up to 3,500 older buildings, including residential and commercial structures.

Orci said an extensive seismic

safety database will help the city decide how to move forward in retrofitting some of the most vulnerable buildings.

"Our approach has been very careful, very methodical and very thorough," he said.

Some California cities—including San Francisco, Santa Monica, Burbank, West Hollywood and Beverly Hills—have moved forward with mandatory retrofit ordinances. Los Angeles has had a mandatory retrofit ordinance since 2015 that covers more than 15,000 buildings.

Long Beach had a mandatory retrofit ordinance in the late 1990s that covered more than 600 residential structures built before 1934. The effort, however, was problematic as many property owners did not do the necessary repairs and were subsequently sued by the city.

Based on the database, Long Beach could consider a new type of mandatory ordinance or some type of incentive program, but that will be up to the City Council, Orci said.

Long Beach is the site of Southern California's deadliest earthquake, when in 1933 a 6.4 quake killed about 120 people and caused \$40 million damage.

Last year, a Harvard University study found that a fault line that runs deep under the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, called the Wilmington blind-thrust, is active and could potentially cause a large-scale quake.

The city offers several preparedness resources on its website, including an emergency planning guide and tips to develop a family communications plan.

Residents also are encouraged to sign-up for Alert Long Beach to receive emergency notifications. ■

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Long Beach zeroes in on hotel properties to convert into homeless housing

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
Senior Reporter

During the pandemic, the state of California has found creative ways to find shelter for its unhoused residents in an effort to curb the spread of the virus. Through the state’s Project Homekey program, one of those temporary solutions may become more permanent.

The city of Long Beach appears to have zeroed in on a hotel location to serve as long-term housing, according to a recent tweet by Mayor Robert Garcia.

As part of Project Homekey, the state will partner with Long Beach on creating 150 new housing units for people experiencing homelessness, Garcia tweeted. That total consists of two separate projects of 100 and 50 units each, according to the mayor.

An extension of Project Roomkey, a program that temporarily housed otherwise homeless residents in local hotels and motels across the state, Project Homekey provides partial funding for cities and counties to purchase hotel or motel properties and convert them into longer-term supportive and transitional housing.

Contracts are expected to last several years and involve on-site services and modifications to make the facilities more suitable for their new purpose. These changes include creating designated areas for supportive services and potential room modifications such as adding kitchenettes.

City leadership has long sought to address the issue of nuisance motels and hotels, with one proposal being a conversion to supportive and transitional housing.

“We have a number of hotels in the city, likely an oversupply of hotels in the city, but what we have an undersupply of is housing,” Christopher Koontz, deputy director for the City of Long Beach Development Services Department, told the council during a meeting in September.

According to Koontz, the city would need 20,000 additional units to resolve its housing shortage.



A car drives by the City Center Motel in the East Village Arts District of Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

In the meantime, “motels have become housing of last resort,” he said. Motels operating in the gray zone between housing visitors and offering semi-permanent residences often become a nuisance to the surrounding community, Koontz added.

Ninth District Councilman Rex Richardson, who first brought the issue of nuisance motels to council in 2017, encouraged fellow councilmembers to consider the current situation as an opportunity to address this long-standing issue.

“I think now is the perfect time, actually, to leverage some of the state programs and figure out how we can address some of the nuisance motels in our city by converting them,” Richardson said.

The city has yet to announce the properties selected for its collaboration with the state, but councilmembers reviewed a list of hotel and motel properties during a closed session on August 11.

Out of the seven properties included on that list, only the Best Western

of Long Beach, located at 1725 Long Beach Blvd., would offer the number of rooms cited by Garcia with regard to the 100-room project. The hotel was not identified as a nuisance property during a 2018 pilot program.

The deadline for cities and counties to acquire any properties to be supported by state funding under Project Homekey is Dec. 30. ■

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Strong tech sector, infrastructure investments will aid South Bay cities' economic recovery

■ By **ALENA MASCHKE**
Senior Reporter

In many ways, Cal State Dominguez Hills' 2020 South Bay Economic Forecast and Industry Outlook paints as grim a picture as any economic analysis of the current situation. Significant job losses, racial inequity among those suffering the harshest impacts of the economic slowdown—Los Angeles County, and by extension the South Bay, have been hit hard.

But there are glimmers of hope that have led the university's economic expert to feel more confident in the region's economic future than the projected 15.6% year-over-year increase in unemployment for the second quarter might suggest.

The tech industry, one of the largest employers in the region, has fared well during the pandemic, in part because companies and households have

become more tech-reliant while the outside world was continuously shut down.

"Our world's definitely become smaller and the economy is reflecting that," Fynnwin Prager, co-director of the South Bay Economics Institute at CSU Dominguez Hills, said at a recent virtual panel discussion on the report.

Telecommuting and food delivery are among the existing trends that have picked up speed in the pandemic. In the South Bay, the latter has led to a jump in the number of "ghost kitchens," cooking spaces that are designed to prep food for delivery only, no inside dining intended.

The Los Angeles-based startup Everytable, which aims to provide healthy food at fast food prices, was presented as one example of a company that has been able to increase sales during the pandemic.

According to the company's CEO, Sam Polk, the company now delivers 180,000 meals per week from its centralized kitchen to locations across LA County, marking a six-fold increase compared to pre-pandemic times.

To reach this impressive level of growth, Everytable has tapped into new opportunities like delivering meals to homeless residents housed in hotels as part of the state's Project Roomkey and more general trends like meal subscription services.

"It's been a fascinating acceleration of some of these trends that were already taking place," Prager noted.

Jose Martinez, fellow panelist and co-director of the institute, said he is expecting the South Bay to make a comparably swift recovery, especially because of the tech-heavy region's propensity for innovation.

"As hard of a challenge as our

current situation is, it also presents opportunities for some companies to bring new ideas, to innovate," Martinez said.

How quickly the region recovers will be in part a result of local governments' ability to adapt to changing business needs, Prager said. Investments in infrastructure that will help trade flow more smoothly through Southern California's ports of entry—both land and sea—will also play a role, he said.

On account of its weather, well-educated population and attractive natural environment, the South Bay will remain a popular destination for businesses, despite current predictions of urban drain, Prager said.

"In the long run, I don't think any of us have any concerns about the desirability of not just cities, but our region as a whole," he said. ■

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The bridges that spanned and grew with the port's history



The arched metal support structure for the Gerald Desmond Bridge nearing completion. Under the bridge, safety nets are in place. Photo courtesy of Long Beach Public Library.

■ By **TIM GROBATY**
Columnist

Bridges are how we've always gotten to the other side.

The inspiration goes back to days when a tree would fall across a creek, allowing people and other animals to safely traverse the obstacle of the water below.

And for millennia that's been a bridge's utility. Even as more sophisticated engineering was in its early stages, during the Roman Empire in the second century and on through the ages, they've been built to span increasingly daunting obstacles, deep canyons, roaring rivers, even vast expanses of the sea.

In Long Beach today, there are dozens of unheralded, relatively unremarkable bridges that motorists use without even thinking of them as bridges. Numerous streets that cross the Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers that bracket the city on the west and east. Bridges that span Coyote Creek and Alamitos Bay and the canals of Naples.

Those are the unsung and frequently unnamed heroes of bridges, but when it comes to mightier feats of engineering, the big-ticket, marquee name bridges have been found around the ports of LA and Long Beach, where the long, high spans have had to be designed not just to go over the water, but to accommodate the ships that travel beneath the structures.

The first major bridge in the port complex to serve the San Pedro area was the Vincent Thomas Bridge, "San Pedro's Golden Gate," named for a Biloxi, Mississippi boy whose father died of the Spanish Influenza shortly after moving the family to San Pedro in 1919. Vincent grew up on the streets, around the canneries and wharves of the town, working as a newsboy and a peddler of a massage ointment called, unabashedly, "snake's oil" before graduating from San Pedro High School.

Thomas eventually became an assem-

blyman representing San Pedro and the area around the ports. He was extraordinarily popular and was repeatedly re-elected to the Assembly, where he served 19 terms, during which he lobbied incessantly for the construction of a bridge or a tunnel to connect San Pedro with Terminal Island.

They decided to go with the bridge.

Thomas was in attendance at that bridge's dedication and opening on Nov. 15, 1963. The Vincent Thomas Bridge crossed the Main Channel of the LA harbor, connecting San Pedro with Terminal Island. But to complete the success of the LA./Long Beach port complex, a further link was needed to make passage easy between Terminal Island and Long Beach.

In the late 1880s and into the early days of the following century, a wooden trestle bridge was that link, a single railroad track built by the Salt Lake Railway. By 1908, it was clear that something more reliable was needed. That year the trestle was replaced by a 187-foot bascule drawbridge known as the "jackknife" bridge, because it opened and closed like a pocket knife.

In the mid-1930s, the jackknife bridge was removed after the Union Pacific stopped using it and for years, ferry boats were the only way to cross the back channel between Long Beach and Terminal Island. The boats typically transported workers and other motorists to the island and back.

In 1944, however, the Navy decided it needed something sturdier than a ferryboat to transport vehicles and other heavy equipment to its base on Terminal Island, so it built a temporary pontoon bridge to connect Long Beach with the island. And, not being known for flowery nomenclature, the Navy, and eventually everyone else, just called it the Pontoon Bridge.

It was a strange structure that floated on the water, so, depending on the tide, vehicles had to descend the road 17 to 25 feet below the level on the shore. When ships required the bridge to open, traffic

would be held up for 15 minutes or more before travelers could motor across where they were confronted with a similarly steep uphill climb.

The bridge would open as many as 100 times a day to allow ship traffic through, so long waits were the norm for drivers. Another norm, though not as frequent as long waits, was the fact that cars sometimes were launched into the water by drivers unfamiliar with the hazard of the steep decline and, tragically, not everyone survived. Most were rescued, but it is thought that seven people died when their cars went into the water.

Though it was meant to be in use for just six months, the Pontoon Bridge had staying power and remained in use for nearly 25 years until the completion of the Gerald Desmond Bridge in 1968.

About 100 people were in attendance on Oct. 18, 1968, including Desmond's family members, as workers sunk the first 120-foot pile for the Gerald Desmond Bridge using a new and revolutionary sonic pile driver, with a tap-in assist from Long Beach Harbor Commission President William Harrington, who ceremoniously drove the piling home with a silver-plated sledgehammer, while Gerald Desmond Jr., then 20, tightened a golden bolt on the structure.

The bridge was named with little fanfare or discussion, and certainly no input from the public that surely would have elicited hundreds of suggestions and weeks of debate.

In May 1965, just five months before that first piling was sunk, Commissioner Harrington moved to name the bridge after Gerald Desmond. The balance of the board had already discussed the name, a couple of members who weren't present phoned in their OK, the motion carried and the naming of the bridge was just one less thing to worry about.

Desmond was worthy of the bridge's name. Born in Long Beach in 1915, he attended Poly High School, Long Beach City College (where he met his future wife, Virginia), and Cal State Long Beach before transferring to UC Berkeley and Harvard Law.

In 1941 he enlisted in the Navy and was sent to Harvard Business School, though he mostly served stateside working in fraud investigation.

Following the war, Desmond returned to Long Beach where he opened a private law practice and became active in local politics, serving as 2nd District City Councilman in the 1950s before he was elected city attorney in 1960. During his tenure he was at the forefront of the city's fight against the state to retain tideland oil revenues, which were the chief source of funds in building the bridge.

Sadly, Desmond never learned of the honor of having a bridge named for him. He died of kidney cancer on January 31, 1964. He was 48.

At his funeral, City Manager John Mansell said of Desmond. "The personal loss I feel upon the death of Gerald Desmond is beyond description. He was one

of the most dedicated, courageous and able persons to serve this city."

The Gerald Desmond Bridge was a large-enough structure for its time—before containerization changed the face of shipping—as well as for its intended use, to give access to commuters between Long Beach and San Pedro.

Designed by the Long Beach firm Moffatt & Nichol, the structure would use 10,176 tons of steel fabricated and erected by Bethlehem Steel Corp., the prime contractor for the project, for approaches, ramps and the superstructure, and an additional 10,000 tons for the bridge's piers.

It took a little less than a brisk three years to build the \$12.7-million bridge that allowed for 154 feet of clearance beneath the 6,000-foot-long span. The construction proceeded with few delays, save for a couple of weeks toward the end after a crane hoisting the last beam to be installed collapsed, sending the 14-ton beam falling 100 feet to the ground, barely missing two workmen before crashing into a pair of oil wells.

The dedication on June 6, 1968 turned out to be a rather solemn affair. Presidential candidate Sen. Robert F. Kennedy had been assassinated in LA a day earlier, a tragedy that canceled a planned fireworks display at the bridge and brought a moment of silence prior to the speechifying of city, port and construction officials. In normal times, the opening of the bridge would have been a front-page story, but the news of the assassination shoved the bridge dedication story to Page 16 in the local newspaper.

The Gerald Desmond Bridge was a fine enough bridge for several years, providing a quick and easy way for cars to travel between Long Beach and Terminal Island. It was used chiefly by people going to and from the Naval Shipyard on the island.

But the port complex changed in the 1990s, with the closure in 1994 of the 928-acre Long Beach Naval Station and the closure in 1997 of the adjacent 563-acre Long Beach Naval Shipyard, both on Terminal Island.

The land was transferred to the port where it became home to a half-dozen container terminals and soon the Gerald Desmond Bridge was being taxed to the very limit of its ability, with truck traffic volume across the bridge skyrocketing, and cargo ships sailing below the bridge turning ever more gargantuan and sometimes having to wait for low tide, when they could clear the bridge by mere feet.

By the early 2000s, the bridge was being used by trucks rumbling to and from the port, carrying 10% to 15% of the entire nation's shipping cargo, as well as the daily rush of cars.

"It really has become the bridge to everywhere," Richard D. Steinke, then executive director of the Port of Long Beach, said, using a moniker for the span that would be recycled in 2020 to describe the bridge's replacement by current port director, Mario Cordero.

The brutal tonnage of all that cargo



The floating pontoon bridge was built by the Navy in 1944 as a temporary structure, but it remained in use until the Gerald Desmond Bridge opened in 1968. Photo courtesy of Long Beach Public Library.

traffic took a harsh toll on the Gerald Desmond. By 2004, the bridge was calving large chunks of concrete into the water before crews placed nylon nets called, with an absence of dignity, “diapers” beneath the span to catch the falling debris before it did real damage.

Discussions regarding a new bridge north of the Gerald Desmond began in earnest in 2002, with local lawmakers

and harbor commissioners lobbying the state and federal government for funding for what they reckoned would be a \$711-million project.

It would take seven years to complete the work on the Gerald Desmond Replacement Bridge, and the cost would skyrocket to \$1.46 billion in 2015 when Caltrans called for greater seismic safety features and the cost for demolition of the



Gerald Desmond, the man behind the bridge, was a Long Beach City Councilman and city attorney. He died in 1964 from kidney cancer. He was 48. Photo courtesy of Long Beach Public Library.

old bridge was greater than expected.

There were additional delays as the bridge’s completion neared, with COVID-19 lessening the workforce for a while and making it difficult for vendors to provide materials.

But the bridge, still without a name other than what port officials still call the “Bridge to Everywhere,” finally opened to traffic on Oct. 5.

And, again, the opening ceremony was originally planned to be much more celebratory than it was, but, like the tragedy that made the opening of the Gerald Desmond Bridge in 1968 more somber than it had been anticipated, this time the coronavirus has tamed the opening, make it less spectacular than what the new bridge, the newest wonder of Long Beach, deserves. ■



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Bridge, rail and terminal investments keep Long Beach port competitive in world market



The new Long Beach bridge is open to vehicular traffic. The Long Beach Container Terminal is pictured in the background. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

Remaining competitive in the world of goods movement is a never-ending quest for higher capacity and efficiency—while simultaneously reducing emissions—for port authorities around the world. To that end, among other ongoing projects, the Port of Long Beach celebrated the grand opening of the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project.

Over a decade in the making, the new bridge has a clearance of 205 feet, 50 feet higher than the 1968 Gerald Desmond Bridge. At nearly 2 miles long, the new structure has a more gradual gradient, which is easier on trucks hauling shipping containers. As with the outdated structure, about 15% of all imports into the U.S. will travel across the new bridge.

“Projects like the bridge, they’re investments not only to trade efficiency, but also to amplify productivity,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said. “The bridge allows us to make sure the cargo trucks of the era are able to navigate the corridor in a more efficient manner.”

The nearly \$1.5 billion bridge con-

sists of three lanes in both directions, an upgrade from the old bridge, which had three lanes in one direction and only two lanes in the other.

With no emergency lanes, if there was an accident or stalled vehicles on the old bridge, traffic would bottleneck and slow to a crawl. The new bridge has emergency lanes in both directions.

Aside from easing traffic across the bridge, the increased height further makes the Port of Long Beach “big-ship ready,” Cordero said. When the Gerald Desmond was constructed 52 years ago, container ships were carrying about 8,000 twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs. Today, ships have more than doubled in size, capable of carrying more than 21,000 TEUs.

Once the old bridge is removed, depending on configuration, vessels carrying up to around 16,000 TEUs will be able to travel into the back channel under the new structure. Being able to accommodate larger ships throughout the entire port makes it more appealing to shippers determining where to berth for unloading.

“There is a part two to this project: prudent work to widen the back channel to accommodate bigger vessels,” Cordero said, adding that officials hope

the increase in larger ships calling on the port will equate to more cargo moving through the complex annually.

The old Gerald Desmond was built with an expected lifespan of 50 years, while the new bridge was designed to last at least 100 years.

The next major project on the port’s docket is the Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility, the centerpiece of its \$1 billion rail program. As ships grow larger, Cordero said it’s important to remember that trains are getting longer and the port must be able to accommodate them.

While most trucks transport a single shipping container, rail can move hundreds at once. The expanded Pier B rail system would allow for the assembly of trains up to 10,000 feet long, which equates to nearly 1,000 TEUs per trip.

By allowing more containers to be transported by rail, Cordero said the project is going to have significant positive impacts, including reducing truck traffic on the 710 Freeway.

“The best environmental option for moving containers is by rail, as opposed to trucks on the freeway,” Cordero said. “[The project] will lower our footprint with regard to the envi-

ronmental impact of container movement.”

The project encompasses 171 acres south of 12th Street, north of Pier B Street and west of the 710 Freeway. The port will need to acquire some properties already occupied on the westside, which has caused some pushback from the business community.

The port is still in the design process and is navigating the National Environmental Policy Act process, during which the Environmental Protection Agency evaluates environmental impacts before the project can be approved. The local environmental impact report was approved by the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners in January 2018.

The estimated price tag for the rail project is \$870 million but if it’s anything like the bridge the cost could end up being over \$1 billion.

The project is not expected to be completed for over a decade, with the first arrival, departure and storage tracks expected to be completed in 2024, doubling the rail yard’s capacity. Additional tracks are expected to come online in 2030 and the full project is slated for completion in 2032.

The third lynchpin in the port’s

competitive future is its Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project. Construction of this \$1.5 billion terminal makeover began in 2011. The 10-year construction program consists of combining two operationally obsolete terminals into one of the world's most advanced.

Phase one of the Middle Harbor project was completed in 2016, the second phase opened in 2017 and the full project is expected to be completed next year.

Dubbed the Long Beach Container Terminal, upon completion, the site will have an annual capacity of 3.3 million TEUs. In addition to increased capacity, the terminal utilizes electric-powered equipment, making it one

of the world's cleanest container terminals, according to the port.

At 4,200 feet long, Middle Harbor can service three ships at once, all plugged into shoreside electricity at berth, thereby reducing emissions. The terminal has its own on-dock rail yard designed to handle 1.1 million TEUs per year, further reducing emissions from truck traffic.

"The Port of Long Beach is in a competitive arena ... because my colleagues on the East Coast and in the Gulf have done a good job investing in their ports," Cordero said. "Shippers have choices. But as our brand indicates, we'd like to see that we are the port of choice." ■

By the numbers: Quick facts about the Gerald Desmond Replacement Bridge

To meet the growing traffic volumes from the Port of Long Beach, the port and Caltrans have replaced the Gerald Desmond Bridge with a newer, higher and longer structure that remains unnamed, but it's being called the Bridge to Everywhere by port and city officials (though it's more frequently called the Gerald Desmond Replacement Bridge).

Here are some quick facts about the bridge, which opened to traffic on Oct. 5.

- Total length: Approximately 8,800 feet, including 2,000 feet for the cable-stayed span.
- Height of its two towers: 515 feet.
- Support columns: About 90 altogether for the east and west approach spans.
- Cables: 40 for each of the two columns. Each cable consists of 45 to 109 strands, depending on

the cable's location.

- Vertical clearance: 205 feet.
- Foundations: More than 350 below-ground pilings support the above-ground columns and go as deep as 175 feet (more than 17 stories) below the surface.
- Steel used in its construction: 18 million pounds of structural steel, 75 million pounds of rebar.
- Concrete used in its construction: Approximately 300,000 cubic yards.
- Cost: Approximately \$1.47 billion.
- Jobs generated throughout construction: About 3,000.
- Number of vehicles that cross the bridge per day: Approximately 68,000.
- Expected lifespan of the bridge: 100 years. ■

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New Gerald Desmond Bridge replacement bike-pedestrian path may not open until next year



A photo of the Mark Bixby Memorial Bicycle-Pedestrian Path from the approaches to the main span of the Gerald Desmond Bridge replacement. Photo courtesy of bridge project spokesperson Denis Wolcott.

■ By **ASIA MORRIS**
Staff Reporter

A bicycle and walk path planned as part of the new bridge project may not open immediately—and possibly as long as two years after the bridge opens to traffic.

Port officials initially said the Mark Bixby Memorial Bicycle-Pedestrian Path would open weeks after the new bridge, which opened to vehicular traffic on Oct. 5.

But officials now say they are weighing their options on whether to first construct a new connector bridge that would allow cyclists and pedestrians to access the path from Ocean Boulevard and the city's trail network. That could take anywhere from 18 months to two years to complete, according to a bridge project spokesperson.

The project for the connector bridge was recently bid out and port officials expect to award the contract around the first of the year, said Duane Kenagy, capital programs executive for the port.

While there's an entry point to the path at the Pico and Pier E Street intersection, officials say that entrance raises issues of safety due to lack of sidewalks and bicycle

lanes.

Tony Cruz, a former professional cyclist and U.S. Olympian who has served as the city's bicycle ambassador for just over a decade, said the port should wait.

"I look at it as, number one, from a safety standpoint, and then number two, I think the bridge is also going to be a really unique kind of cool, popular destination and I think the experience for riders and pedestrians should be taken into account," said Cruz, who currently serves as community programs specialist for the city's Public Works department.

Once the path is complete, pedestrians and bicyclists will be separated by a painted line, as is the case with Class 1 paths. The 12-foot-wide route will include clear markings for cyclists on one side, and pedestrians on the other. No motorized vehicles will be allowed, and the law against skateboards on sidewalks will likely apply to this path, according to a bridge project spokesperson.

The path is named after the late Mark Llewellyn Bixby, who was 44 when he died in a plane crash at Long Beach Airport on March 16, 2011. A longtime bicycling ad-

vocate, Bixby led the push in incorporating the bike and pedestrian path into the design of the new bridge.

Allan Crawford, a longtime cycling advocate who worked with Bixby through the Long Beach-based nonprofit and bicycling advocacy organization, Bikeable Communities, said he went with Bixby to one of the first presentations to the California Coastal Commission on incorporating the path into the design of the bridge.

"It was really all because Mark Bixby one day said, nope, we can't be a bike friendly city if there isn't a bike and ped path across that bridge, and it went from there," Crawford said.

Bixby, who hailed from one of the city's founding families, was also founding director of the Long Beach Bicycle Festival and a driving force in the creation of the city's Bicycle Master Plan, envisioning Long Beach as a city where, by 2040, "bicycling will be the easiest, most convenient way to run errands, get to work or school, or travel for recreation," according to a 2016 draft.

From early in the process, Crawford has said the question of how path users

would get to Downtown Long Beach from the end of the bridge has been a "sticking point," and that if building the connector bridge is the reason the port is still determining when to open the path, it's still "a huge stride forward."

"I applaud that effort, because that will make the bridge much, much more useful," Crawford said. "If it takes an extra year to get us there, it's sad, we should have done it five years ago, but we applaud their effort in getting it done today."

The port has to consider the demolition of the existing bridge, Tony Cruz said, citing the difficulty of having to ride a bike or walk through detours and a construction zone. He estimates the path won't open until sometime early next year, but they'll have a more accurate timeline once a schedule for the demolition is released.

The COVID-19 health pandemic is also a consideration, Cruz said.

"If this really does turn into a very popular riding destination, what do we do during COVID-19?" Cruz said. "We can't have hundreds of people all at once trying to ride up and down and walk up and down on the bridge." ■

Cargo volumes have boomed in recent months but ports still anticipating year-over-year declines



Ships sit at berth at the Port of Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

Despite several months of historic cargo volumes at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, both facilities are anticipating overall 2020 volumes to be less than 2019.

The year started off with a certain amount of uncertainty due to the ongoing trade dispute with China, Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said. January and February cargo volumes were down compared to the same months in 2019. Long Beach cargo volumes bottomed out in March, when the port moved 517,633 twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, the standard measure for shipping containers despite the fact that most are now 40 feet long.

Five out of the first nine months of the year, Port of Long Beach cargo volumes decreased compared to the same months in 2019. The sharpest decline—17.3%—came in April. May was the first month

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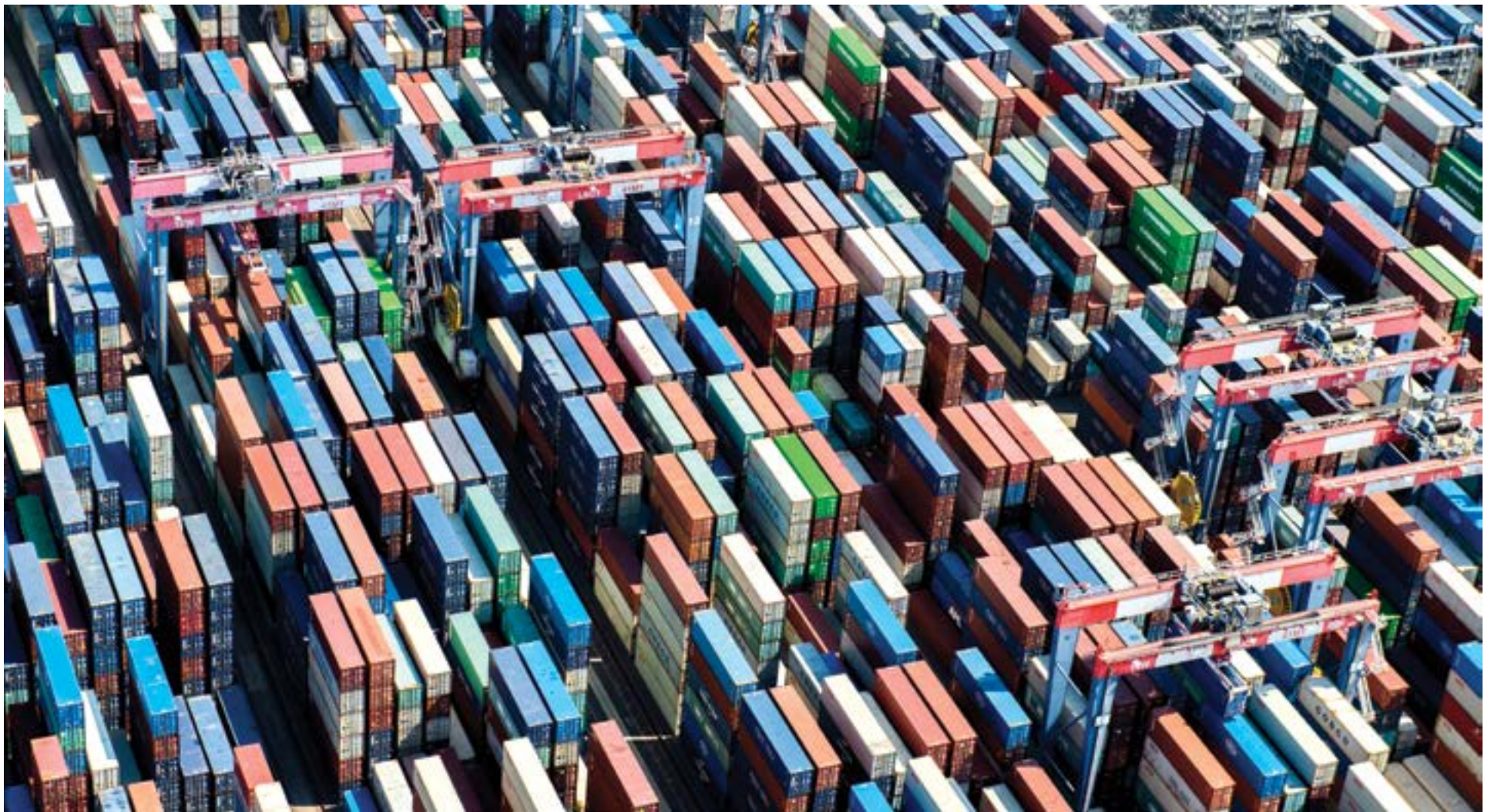
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Containers are stacked six high awaiting transport at the Port of Long Beach. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

(Continued from Page 23)

of the year to see an increase but June was again down 11.1%.

“Most of the American gateways were having challenges,” Cordero said, noting that the hit to Long Beach was less severe than every other U.S. port except for Houston.

In contrast, the second half of 2020, thus far, has been booming. Preliminary September data shows the Long Beach port moved 790,000 TEUs, a new monthly record—beating out the previous record of about 753,000 TEUs set just two months before in July. August cargo volumes were also up 9.3%, making it the best August in the port’s history.

In May, the Port of LA had its worst month since the height of the Great Recession over 10 years ago, according to Executive Director Gene Seroka. Throughout the month, the port processed 450,000 TEUs.

In Los Angeles, August was the port’s best month in its 114-year history, with nearly 962,000 TEUs processed. This is only the first month ever the port that has moved over 900,000 TEUs. The increase in cargo was driven by imports, with the port processing more than 500,000 TEUs for the first time in a one-month period.

“A word of caution: one month or even one quarter does not make a trend,” Seroka said during his monthly update in September. “Despite this import surge that we’re seeing, the U.S. economy and global trade face significant challenges.”

Historic months notwithstanding, the Port of LA’s 2020 cargo volume is down 12% through August compared to the same period last year. In May, the port forecasted total annual cargo volumes at 7.9 million TEUs, which would have been a 15% year-over-year decrease from 2019. With the boost from August, updated projections predict 8.5 million TEUs for a 9% year-over-year decrease.

Port of Long Beach staff are projecting about a 1% year-over-year decline.

September data for the Port of LA was not available at the time of publication but Seroka said estimates were that the port would surpass 900,000 TEUs, making it the first time in history a U.S. port surpasses 900,000 TEUs in consecutive months. The port is projecting a “solid” October, with TEU movement forecast in the high 700,000s, he added.

The surge of imports is the result of a couple factors, both port directors noted. Warehouses and distribution centers are frantically restocking inventories that became overly depleted as a result of shipping disruptions out of China due to the pandemic. Also, retailers across the nation are preparing for the holiday shopping season.

“The summer is the usual peak season here at the port anyway,” Cordero said. “Consumer demand by way of online shopping models certainly increased ... and, of course, small businesses were able to get back on their feet [after mandatory shutdowns].”

While imports continue to increase, driving the record numbers, Cordero

said exports are lagging at both ports as the trade imbalance with China continues to widen despite President Donald Trump’s ongoing attempts to negotiate with the Chinese government. In January, Trump and China’s Vice Premier Liu He signed phase one of a trade agreement, but hundreds of billions of dollars in tariffs from both countries persist.

Seroka said that for every five import containers received at the Port of LA, only one export container goes out. In the past, the trade imbalance ratio was closer to 3 to 1, he stated, noting that a high number of empty containers are being shipped back to China.

In addition to exacerbated trade imbalance, Jonathan Gold, vice president of supply chain and customs policy for the National Retail Federation, said U.S. businesses are being hurt by Trump’s tariffs as well as China’s retaliatory tariffs.

“We’ve always been opposed to the use of tariffs,” Gold said. “We certainly agree China has been a bad actor but we don’t agree that tariffs were the right way to go to get China to make changes.”

In September, a World Trade Organization panel ruled the Trump administration’s tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods are illegal. The decision marks the first time the Geneva-based trade organization has ruled against high-profile tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, according to an Associated Press report. Trump has

repeatedly claimed the trade body treats the U.S. unfairly.

The ruling will likely be appealed by the U.S.; however, the organization’s appeals court is currently not functioning because Washington has refused to accept new members for it, AP reports.

“For port authorities, [tariffs] have been problematic,” Cordero said, “particularly for ports like ourselves, where about 70% of imports ... are from China.”

Over the last two decades, West Coast ports have lost 20% of the shipping market share to East and Gulf coast ports, Seroka noted. The loss comes down to competitiveness, which is why the ports of Long Beach and LA have continued to invest in their facilities.

Federal dollars invested in East and Gulf coast ports over the last decade have outpaced federal monies going to West Coast ports 10 to one, Seroka added, stating West Coast ports need a stronger coalition to bring in more federal investment.

Despite the varied challenges faced by the nation’s ports, Seroka remains cautiously optimistic.

“I’m encouraged by the volume we’re moving at the Port of LA today but there is also reason for caution and concern,” Seroka said. “By no means are we out of the woods as a nation economically. We’re facing severe economic contraction. We’re in the midst of a national health crisis like we’ve never seen and trade tensions continue.” ■

State board approves stricter port environmental rules for at-berth vessels to reduce emissions

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Reporter

Air pollution out of the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles has been a point of contention for years, particularly for its impact on communities of color. Both ports have developed and redeveloped plans to reduce emissions.

However, the California Air Resources Board approved new rules in late August that will require the ports to reduce large amounts of pollutants from ships at berth by 2031.

The new regulation bolsters existing clean-air mandates by requiring more ships to physically connect to onshore electrical grids to meet the ship's energy needs, allowing auxiliary engines to be shut down and reduce emissions—a practice known as shore power.

Goods movement through the port accounts for nearly a third of California's economy but about half of the state's air pollution, according to state

and CARB data. The new regulation is expected to eliminate thousands of tons of pollutants.

The previous at-berth regulation was approved in 2007 and required cruise, container and refrigerated-cargo vessels to connect to shore power. Since then, shore power has been installed at 65 berths statewide and on more than 500 vessels, resulting in an 80% reduction in emissions from those ship classes as of this year.

Hector De La Torre, who made the motion to adopt the regulation, said oil tankers are the greatest polluter of the vessels currently not required to connect to shore power.

"We cannot look the other way on the emissions we're seeing from ... tankers," he said during a recent CARB meeting. De La Torre noted that the successes of the 2007 regulation proves the expanded regulation will be effective.

Other ships currently not required to connect to shore power are bulk

ships, which carry unpackaged cargo such as grains, coal and ore, and roll-on/roll-off vessels that transport wheeled vehicles such as cars, trucks, trailers and railroad cars.

The approved regulation sets timelines for compliance based on ship type: all container, refrigerated and cruise ships by 2023, roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) ships by 2025, and tankers by 2025 in Southern California and 2027 in Northern California.

The measure also includes the ability for companies to use CARB-approved innovative concepts as an alternative to shore power. Once berthed, ships have two hours to connect to approved emission control equipment.

Under the new regulation, nitrogen oxide emissions from ships are expected to be 46% less in 2031 compared to projections based on the 2007 regulations. Similarly, diesel particulate matter is expected to decrease 52%. At the ports of Long Beach and LA, by 2031 there is expected to be a

55% decrease in cancer risk associated with air pollution.

Additional benefits outlined by CARB include reduced mortality, hospitalizations and emergency room visits associated with poor air quality, the promotion of advances in research and development for cleaner marine technologies, and a reduction in diesel particulate matter, a known carcinogen linked to lung cancer.

"Keep in mind, these emissions reductions still won't kick in for another couple years," said Francis Yang, a Long Beach and South Los Angeles community organizer with the Sierra Club's My Generation campaign. "That's more time that ships get to continue to pollute our air. That's more time for the same frontline communities to have to wait to breathe."

Total net costs for the measure from 2021 to 2032 is estimated at \$2.23 billion, while the state would save \$2.32 billion by avoiding adverse

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A ship is offloaded at the Port of Long Beach's Pier J. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

(Continued from Page 25)

health impacts brought on by excessive air pollution, according to CARB. Anticipated costs per vessel are \$1.14 per 20-foot equivalent unit on container and refrigerated ships, \$4.65 per passenger on a cruise ship, \$7.66 per vehicle on ro-ros and less than one cent per gallon of finished product on an oil tanker.

Following the vote, the International Longshore and Warehouse

Union Local 94 and 29 released a joint statement saying the regulation puts California ports at a disadvantage.

“We are disappointed in the decision ... which has the potential to jeopardize hundreds of good-paying jobs,” the statement reads. “It is not feasible for ro-ro vessels to comply with CARB’s required technology by 2025, and even once the technology becomes available the cost will be out of reach for the ports.”

Rather than placing the burden solely on California ports, the union said elected leaders should push for national air quality and environmental standards to maintain a “level playing field.” Specifically, they argue that ro-ro vessels may now bypass California ports in favor of facilities without such requirements, including Houston, South Carolina and Mexico.

De La Torre was critical of the port of Long Beach and LA during the meeting, saying he is frustrated at recent decisions to delay environmental fee collections for trucks that do not meet environmental standards. He said the ports made the decision based on “economic uncertainty,” while the ports were experiencing high cargo volumes.

“They knew they had very high volumes in the month of July,” De La Torre said. “That, to me, is a complete lack of commitment to their Clean Air Action Plan. That container fee has to be part of the solution.”

The ports experienced an increase in cargo volumes because of a surge in online shopping amid the coronavirus pandemic, Lee Peterson, spokesman for the Port of Long Beach, said in an

email. He confirmed a proposal has been made to delay the trucking fee implementation to next year. Peterson went on to say the port is supportive of the new regulation.

“[We] will be working on developing the required Port Plan ... [that] will describe the actions the Harbor Department needs to take in order to ensure compliance,” Peterson said, adding that the plan is due to CARB on Dec. 1, 2021.

Port cities must be held accountable for air pollution that impacts surrounding communities, De La Torre said. At the same time, board member John Gioia said landlocked communities across the country also must do their part by accepting slight increases in consumer goods prices when costs are inevitably passed onto consumers.

“Fees are really small compared to the value of goods that are being transported,” Gioia said. “[Port] communities shouldn’t pay the price for providing the United States with consumer goods that are coming into our ports.”

CalMatters contributed to this story. ■

PUBLIC NOTICE

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME. CASE NUMBER: 205MCP00345 PETITION OF: Danny Farahmandian, Rene Farahmandian, Tyler Farahmandian, Ava Farahmandian, and Camille Farahmandian FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: 1. Petitioners: Danny Farahmandian, Rene Farahmandian, Tyler Farahmandian, Ava Farahmandian, and Camille Farahmandian filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Present names: Danny Farahmandian, Rene Farahmandian, Tyler Farahmandian, Ava Farahmandian, and Camille Farahmandian to Proposed names: Danny Farah, Rene Farah, Tyler Farah, Ava Farah, and Camille Farah 2. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING a. Date: 12/18/2020 Time: 8:30 am b. The address of the court is 1725 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401. 3. A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following publication of general circulation, printed in this county: The Long Beach Business Journal: October 2020 JUDGE LAWRENCE CHO, JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT Long Beach Business Journal October 2020.

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