

LONG BEACH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

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IndyCar championship to be decided at Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach

Jim Michaelian, president and CEO of the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach stands on the track ahead of race weekend, the first since April 2019. Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Article on page 3



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In This Issue:

Grand Prix 3

‘Global Time Attack’ to debut at this year’s race 6

What you need to know about COVID-19 protocols 6

Long Beach Airport 10

Travel is slowly rising back at Long Beach Airport 11

Construction is underway on new ticketing and baggage areas at LGB..... 12

Newswatch 18

Hospitals are having a hard time hiring nurses 18

Long Beach will now require proof of vaccination at drinking establishments 21

Business Journal hires new editor, begins new chapter

I am thrilled to announce the hire of a new editor, Hayley Mungaia, who began leading coverage of the Long Beach Business Journal Monday, Sept. 20.

Hayley most recently worked as a reporter covering Long Beach city hall, business and politics for the Press-Telegram, a publication of Southern California News Group. She has won multiple state awards for her coverage, including first-place for land use reporting from the California Newspapers Publishers Association.

A native of Austin, Texas, she graduated from New York University and has worked at publications including the Jerusalem Post, The Week Magazine and FiveThirtyEight.

She has extensive knowledge about Long Beach and its diverse business community, as well as state and regional politics and trends that directly impact the local community.

The Long Beach Business

Journal, which has published biweekly editions since March 1987, begins a new chapter with Hayley’s arrival.

Since taking over ownership of the journal from George Economides in February 2020, parent company Pacific Community Media is investing new resources into the journal’s staff, which is working to refresh the look and feel of the publication—while also remaining true to its roots as a critical source of information for the local business community.

With that goal in mind, we are launching a survey of our readers, and we invite you to tell us what you think about the Long Beach Business Journal and what changes you’d like to see as we embark on this new chapter.

Visit this link to fill out our survey: <https://lbpo.st/SURVEY>.

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IndyCar driver Simon Pagenaud, who has won the race in the past, navigates the streets of Downtown Long Beach during the 2019 Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend. Pagenaud took fifth in the event. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

NTT IndyCar championship to be decided in Long Beach for the first time in series history

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

For the first time in 13 years, Long Beach will host the IndyCar championship race when the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach makes its triumphant return after being cancelled at the last minute in 2020.

In March of last year, race day was fast approaching, with construction of the barriers, grandstands and ancillary elements about 70% completed. When the state went into lockdown as the novel coronavirus spread rapidly, the Grand Prix Association of Long Beach was forced to cancel the longstanding race weekend for the first time since 1975.

“Then we were faced with the necessity of removing all those items and bringing them back to our storage,” association President and CEO Jim Michaelian said. “It was a considerable economic and financial hit for the company because we earned zero revenue and incurred a substantial expense.”

To soften its losses, the association approached its vendors and clients, offering them credits for the 2021 race in lieu of a refund. Some accepted, but others did not.

In any case, the association scored financial assistance through the federal Payment Protection Program, which kept it afloat, Michaelian said. The organization received two PPP loans totaling just over \$531,000, according to a Small Business Administration database.

As 2020 wore on and the pandemic began to worsen in the fall, the association was faced with another difficult decision: Host a highly modified event in April 2021—the usual slot for the Long Beach race—or finagle another path.

“We were not going to be able to run a full and complete grand prix in Long Beach,” Michaelian said. “There were going to be too many constraints. It was clear that that was not going to work.”

So Michaelian and his team went to work seeking an alternate date for the event—a tall order. To host the grand prix, the Long Beach Convention Center must be available, as do the city’s hotels. The various sanctioning bodies—IndyCar, Formula Drift, IMSA, Stadium Super Trucks and others—have to be available and within a reasonable distance from the city leading up to the race. And, of course, the city must

approve permits.

As it would turn out, the most convenient weekend for all involved parties would make the 2021 race one of the most historic for the city. The move to late September made Long Beach the final IndyCar race of the season, meaning the championship will be decided for the first time ever—and most likely the last time—on the streets of Downtown.

“The fact that we’re the season finale ... adds a whole new dimension to the interest level,” Michaelian said, noting that the interest is not relegated to race fans but also to teams and their sponsors.

“We’ve experienced a significant increase in terms of our hospitality because a lot of the teams and sponsors want to be here if their car wins the championship,” Michaelian said.

One of those teams is Chip Ganassi Racing, as one of its drivers currently tops the IndyCar leaderboard. Alex Palou, a 24-year-old driver from Spain, is slated to drive the No. 10 car in Long Beach, with the hopes of winning the championship.

Heading into a race weekend at Laguna Seca the week before the Long

Beach race, Palou had 477 points on the season, followed by drivers Pato O’Ward and Josef Newgarden, who have 452 and 443 points, respectively.

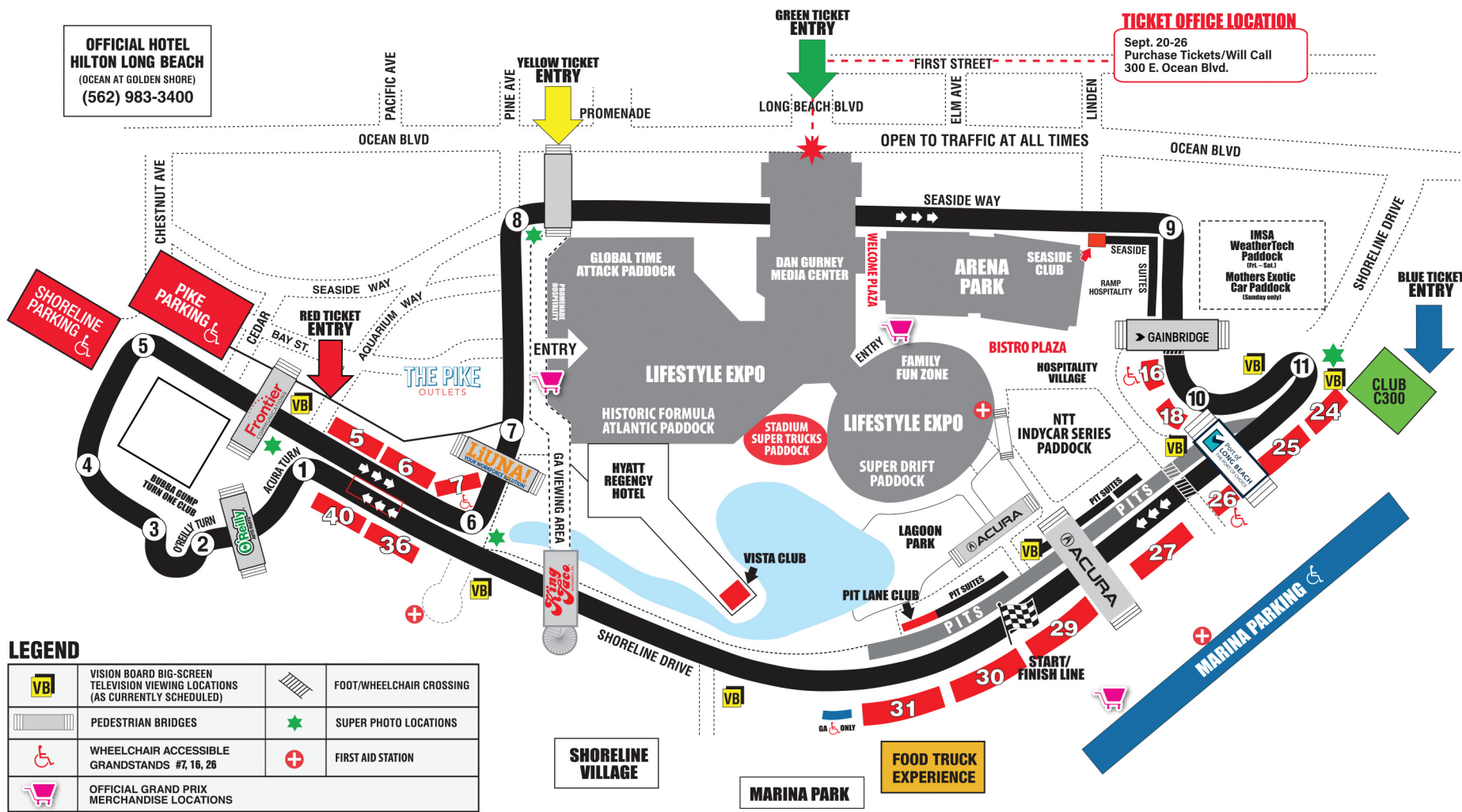
Palou’s first season with IndyCar was 2020, making it a strange adjustment from the year he spent racing Super Formula in Japan, he said.

“Last year was hard,” Palou said. “It was hard for me to get into the series—it was my first year racing in the U.S. and we had almost no testing and almost no practices because of COVID.”

Racing without fans also was not ideal, Palou said. Races are “99% about the fans,” who bring the atmosphere and energy to the track that drivers feed off of, he added.

Since the Long Beach race was cancelled last year, Palou has never driven the street course, a track type he said he does not have much experience with. Being a new track to him, Palou said it is not a “perfect scenario” for it to be the championship race while he is in contention for the top spot.

I would prefer to have had the opportunity to get some laps in before going to the race,” Palou said. “But



Friday, Sept. 24

7:30 AM	Spectator gates open
9-9:20 AM	Historic Formula Atlantic Challenge practice
9:45-10:45 AM	IMSA practice
11:10-11:30 AM	Stadium SUPER Trucks practice
12:35-1 PM	Global Time Attack practice
1:20-2:35 PM	IMSA practice #2
3-3:45 PM	IndyCar Series practice #1
4-4:20 PM	Historic Formula Atlantic Challenge qualifying
4:30-5:30 PM	NTT IndyCar Series all-driver autograph session (IndyCar Paddock – open to all spectators)
4:45-5:55 PM	IMSA qualifying
6:15-6:35 PM	Super Drift Challenge practice
6:45-8:15 PM	Formula D Super Drift Challenge competition #1

Saturday, Sept. 25

7:30 AM	Spectator gates open
9-9:45 AM	IndyCar practice #2
10:05-10:35 AM	Stadium Super Trucks race #1
10:40 AM	IMSA race pit set up
11:05-11:20 AM	Global Time Attack Competition #1
12:05-1:20 PM	IndyCar qualifying & Firestone Fast 6
1:30 PM	IMSA Pre-race ceremonies begin
2:06-3:46 PM	IMSA SportsCar Grand Prix of Long Beach (100 minutes)
4:30-4:50 PM	Historic Formula Atlantic Challenge race #1
5:30-5:50 PM	Super Drift Challenge practice
5:30-6:45 PM	Concert on Terrace Fountain Stage featuring Vince Neil
6-7:30 PM	Formula D Super Drift Challenge competition #2

Sunday, Sept. 26

7:30 AM	Spectator gates open
9-9:30 AM	IndyCar warm up
10:10-10:25 AM	Global Time Attack competition #2
10:45-11:05 AM	Historic Formula Atlantic Challenge race #2
11:10-11:20 AM	Acura NSX Hot Laps
11:25-11:40 AM	Mothers Exotic Car Parade
11:54 AM	IndyCar pre race ceremonies begin
12:38 PM	“Drivers, Start Your Engines!”
12:39 PM	IndyCar pace laps
12:45-3 PM	46th Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach (Season finale of the 2021 NTT IndyCar Series, 85 laps)
3:30-4 PM	Stadium Super Trucks race #2

*Time schedule subject to change without notice

Proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test no earlier than 72 hours prior to the event is required for entry to the circuit.



Car #2
JOSEF NEWGARDEN
Hometown: Nashville, Tennessee
Team: Team Penske
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #3
SCOTT MCLAUGHLIN
Hometown: Christchurch, New Zealand
Team: Team Penske
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #4
DALTON KELLETT
Hometown: Stouffville, Canada
Team: A.J. Foyt Enterprises
Engine: Chevrolet



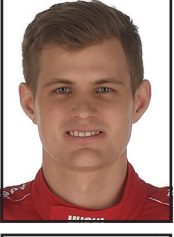
Car #5
PATO O'WARD
Hometown: Monterrey, Mexico
Team: Arrow McLaren SP
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #6
HELIO CASTRONEVES
Hometown: Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Team: Meyer Shank Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #7
FELIX ROSENQVIST
Hometown: Varnamo, Sweden
Team: Arrow McLaren SP
Engine: Chevrolet



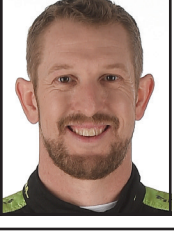
Car #8
MARCUS ERICSSON
Hometown: Kumla, Sweden
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #9
SCOTT DIXON
Hometown: Auckland, New Zealand
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #10
ALEX PALOU
Hometown: Barcelona, Spain
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #11
CHARLIE KIMBALL
Hometown: Camarillo
Team: A.J. Foyt Enterprises
Engine: Chevrolet



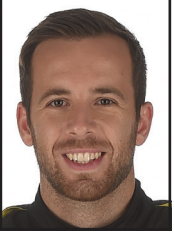
Car #12
WILL POWER
Hometown: Toowoomba, Australia
Team: Team Penske
Engine: Chevrolet



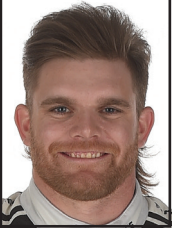
Car #14
SEBASTIEN BOURDAIS
Hometown: Le Mans, France
Team: A.J. Foyt Enterprises
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #15
GRAHAM RAHAL
Hometown: New Albany, Ohio
Team: Rahal Letterman Lanigan Rcg.
Engine: Honda



Car #18
ED JONES
Hometown: Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Team: Dale Coyne Racing with Vasser Sullivan
Engine: Honda



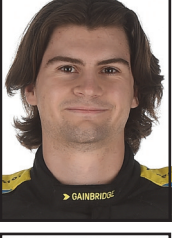
Car #20
CONOR DALY
Hometown: Noblesville, Indiana
Team: Ed Carpenter Racing
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #21
RINUS VEEKAY
Hometown: Hoofddorp, Netherlands
Team: Ed Carpenter Racing
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #22
SIMON PAGENAUD
Hometown: Montmorillon, France
Team: Team Penske
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #26
COLTON HERTA
Hometown: Valencia
Team: Andretti Autosport/Curb-Agajanian
Engine: Honda



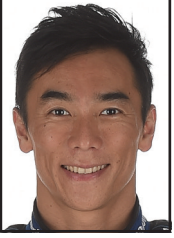
Car #27
ALEXANDER ROSSI
Hometown: Nevada City
Team: Andretti Autosport
Engine: Honda



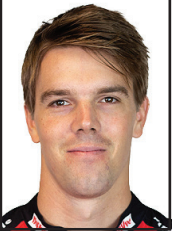
Car #28
RYAN HUNTER-REAY
Hometown: Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Team: Andretti Autosport
Engine: Honda



Car #29
JAMES HINCHCLIFFE
Hometown: Toronto, Canada
Team: Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport
Engine: Honda



Car #30
TAKUMA SATO
Hometown: Tokyo, Japan
Team: Rahal Letterman Lanigan Rcg.
Engine: Honda



Car #45
OLIVER ASKEW
Hometown: Jupiter, Florida
Team: Rahal Letterman Lanigan Rcg.
Engine: Honda



Car #48
JIMMIE JOHNSON
Hometown: El Cajon
Team: Chip Ganassi Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #51
ROMAIN GROSJEAN
Hometown: Geneva, Switzerland
Team: Dale Coyne Racing with RWR
Engine: Honda



Car #59
MAX CHILTON
Hometown: Reigate, England
Team: Carlin
Engine: Chevrolet



Car #60
JACK HARVEY
Hometown: Basingham, England
Team: Meyer Shank Racing
Engine: Honda



Car #77
CALLUM ILOTT
Hometown: Cambridge, England
Team: Juncos Hollinger Racing
Engine: Chevrolet



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A masked cameraman with Formula Drift driver Kazuya Taguchi's team prepares to film the driver sliding along the streets of Downtown Long Beach, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

New logistical challenge for race organizers this year: COVID-19

By MELISSA EVANS / Managing Editor

The city's largest event takes a massive amount of logistical planning, but this year's Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach brings a new challenge for organizers: navigating new regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Long Beach adopted a stricter health order in late August as cases of the virus, spurred by the delta variant, began to rise. The order requires face coverings at outdoor mega events, but also singled out the Grand Prix in also requiring proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test at least 72 hours in advance. Both the city and Los Angeles County

have since adopted the same rule for all mega events, including professional sports and theme parks. In hopes of avoiding long lines and confusion on race day—other events have suffered bad PR over this—race organizers are encouraging ticket holders to submit proof of vaccination ahead of time, or have proof handy and ready to present, with identification, on the first day they plan to attend the sporting event. “We can’t have people stretched out on Ocean Boulevard waiting in line,” said Jim Michaelian, president and CEO of the Grand Prix Association. Organizers are setting up a testing station in front of the Terrace Theater

from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. beginning on Tuesday, Sept. 21, which would be 72 hours before the race from Sept. 24-26. Rapid testing sites will also be set up over race weekend at major entrances to the event. Attendees will only need to show proof of vaccination or a negative test once, on the first day they attend; at that point they’ll receive a wristband indicating they are OK to enter. “We’re trying to make this as easy as possible,” Michaelian said, adding that, “We’ll have the safest mega event in the state of California.” The Grand Prix was initially the only outdoor mega event burdened with the vaccination or negative test requirement,

which city officials said in a statement was due to the fact that the Grand Prix is so large, and draws many people from out of state. But on Sept. 15, a new rule was adopted that will mandate this for all large mega events outdoors, beginning in October. The state and city are also mandating this requirement for indoor events over 1,000 people. The Grand Prix Association has had to bring on extra staff, at extra cost, though Michaelian declined to give specifics on finances for the race. This added expense comes a year after the race was canceled in mid-March 2020, when grandstands were already being assembled along Shoreline Boulevard. “We had to take everything down with no revenue,” Michaelian said. Organizers pushed the 2021 race as far into the IndyCar season as possible, hoping the prevalence of the virus would wane.

That appeared to be happening in mid-June, when the state lifted most of its COVID-19 restrictions and abandoned its color-coded system of determining what can open based on case rates and other indicators. But after June, COVID-19 cases again began to rise, with health officials blaming the prevalence of the more-contagious delta variant, the lifting of restrictions and the lag in vaccinations among eligible groups. When the city enacted its stricter health order on Aug. 18, the case rate had shot up to 35.5 per 100,000 residents, up from less than one case per 100,000 residents on June 15. That case rate has since edged downward, with officials hoping the recent spike has peaked and is waning. As of Wednesday, Sept. 15, the city’s case rate was 23.8. Race officials, meanwhile, have set up a webpage with detailed information on COVID-19 precautions, including how to show proof of vaccination, testing locations, and requirements for face coverings. Visit gplb.com/covid-19-info/. ■



A Formula Drift car slides around a turn in Downtown Long Beach during the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach press day, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



Sparks fly as driver Robby Gordon rides on a rim and skirts a jump while Stadium Super Truck driver Bill Hynes soars through the air during the 2019 Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Global Time Attack brings supercharged cars to Grand Prix to race against the clock

By ALENA MASCHKE / Reporter

When Cole Powelson came to the Long Beach Grand Prix for the first time as a mechanic on the Ferrari race team in the late aughts, he immediately fell in love. The atmosphere and the high-level race “just blew my mind,” Powelson said. “I knew I had to be a part of that, I had to be a driver.” A little over a decade later, Powelson will finally race the streets of Long Beach as a competitor in the Global Time Attack challenge, a new addition to the Grand Prix program, in which drivers compete for the fastest lap time over the course of the weekend. “This is such a big deal for us,”

said Global Time Attack Director Jason Dienhart, who has been working for years to bring the event to Long Beach. The time attack concept originated in 1990s Japan, where drivers first began competing in timed laps, driving mass produced cars—not vehicles made specifically for racing—on the Tsukuba circuit in the country’s Northeastern Kanto region. Super Street Magazine, an industry publication Dienhart worked for at the time, was the driving force behind bringing the concept to the U.S. in the early 2000s, in an effort to create more content for readers to follow. In 2004,

Continued on page 8

IndyCar

Continued from page 3

it’s a historical track, it’s an amazing course and it should be a good weekend for us. It’s going to be hard but it will make the championship fight a bit more interesting.” Long Beach has hosted a race in Downtown every year since 1975 but never a championship. The inaugural event was Formula 5000 on Sept. 28. The city hosted its first Formula One race in April 1976, a time slot the city has stuck with every year since. Formula One raced in Long Beach until 1984 when Championship Auto Racing Teams came to the city. CART ran until its final race in 2008, after which IndyCar took over. Over the years, the grand prix association has introduced new events and attractions to draw in a larger and more diverse crowd. The 2021 race weekend is bringing back many crowd favorites, including Robby Gordon’s Super Trucks, drifting, IMSA, a music concert, the family fun zone, the lifestyle expo and the exotic car show. This year, race weekend will include a Global Time Attack competition. The goal of GTA is to achieve the fastest single lap time over the course of the weekend. Drivers do not navigate the course wheel-to-wheel, instead starting laps one by one. “We’re always looking to provide a wide palette of racing activity,” Michaelian said. “We want a variety—different look, different sound, different visceral feel.” Looking ahead to the 2022 season, Long Beach will revert to its original slot with the race running April 8-10, according to Michaelian. This means the association will have a quick turnaround to prepare for next year, which Michaelian says is an advantage. “We’ll already be in operational mode. It gives us momentum coming out of this event,” he said. “We’ll be contacting our sponsors, clients and ticket buyers shortly after the race is over.” But before they can think about 2022, the organization has to get through the upcoming race, which is exceeding expectations, Michaelian said. Based on early ticket sales, he said projections put attendance only about 10% below previous year. Despite the coronavirus protocols in place, which include proof of vaccination or negative test, and masking, fans are hyped. “It’s a combination of things: Part of it is we’re witnessing a championship race,” Michaelian said, noting there will be two victory ceremonies—one for the race and one for the season. “But the other thing is a lot of people have not attended a motor race in Southern California for a long time.” “What we’re trying to achieve this year,” he added, “is to bring the Acura Grand Prix back to the streets of Long Beach in a manner that is very similar—maybe even better—than we had before both on and off the track.” ■



Global Time Attack Director Jason Dienhart gives driver Steven Chan and his Nissan R35 carrying Grand Prix Association of Long Beach's Chris Esslinger in the passenger seat the go-ahead to hit the course in Downtown during a press event, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Global Time Attack

Continued from page 6

the first time attack race was held at Buttonwillow Raceway Park, 28 miles outside of Bakersfield.

There were some changes made to the original Japanese rules, in part to allow American cars to compete, but the main provisions remained the same: mass produced cars, no restrictions on modifications increasing the vehicle’s power or aerodynamic properties and a setup designed to avoid wheel-to-wheel racing in favor of timed laps.

“What makes it special is it’s a real low-barrier entry,” Dienhart said.

Drivers don’t need a special license required for traditional wheel-to-wheel racing, which is expensive and takes time to complete. And, probably most importantly, mass produced cars make the race attainable to prospective drivers and fans alike—with some making the jump from one to the other.

“Even though some of them look like race cars, they’re not,” Dienhart said. “That’s part of the allure.”

The cars that hit the track in time attack races are much more affordable than those competing in other races, such as the Grand Prix’s IndyCar and IMSA competitions. While those cars start at \$250,000 (not counting tens of thousands of dollars worth of trackside support), entry level cars for the Global Time Attack competition start in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range and don’t require a professional trackside support team.

But that doesn’t mean that time attack cars don’t require support, though it often comes from friends, family members and partners, Dienhart said. “You rarely see a successful time attack program with just a driver—it’s usually a team effort.”

Over the years, the time attack racing community has grown and formed a supportive, if still competitive, network of drivers and race teams.

For Karla Pestotnik, another competitor in this year’s Global Time Attack event in Long Beach, participating in time attack racing was a way to heal after her father’s death left her struggling with her mental health for years.

“This was a way back into my normal self,” Pestonik said.

Part of the appeal was the opportunity to drive a Honda S2000, a car she owns and connects with some of the last memories of her father, and one that’s rarely seen in traditional races. “It’s always held that special place in my heart,” Pestonik said.

That doesn’t mean that the speed and power of cars competing in the Global Time Attack are any less impressive than those competing in the big ticket races—quite the contrary.

The Honda that Pestonik will compete in at this year’s event packs 550-580 horsepower, the final number is to be determined as the team continues to tune the car. With no power restrictions in place, some of the cars can be tuned up to 1,200 horsepower, far more than



Global Time Attack driver Amir Bentatou speeds his highly modified Acura NSX around the streets of Downtown Long Beach ahead of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend, Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

the average Indy or Formula 1 car.

“The cars are so different, they’re so fast—they’re wicked,” she said.

The Honda S2000 she will be driving at this year’s event, however, isn’t her own. It belongs to Kiet Le, the owner of Project Import, an Orange-based car performance parts retailer and tuning shop—who Pestonik met during another time attack event a few years ago.

It would take years for the collaboration to come together, with Pestonik acquiring her wheel-to-wheel racing licenses and successfully competing in a variety of races in the meantime, but the offer was a turning point for her.

“He was the first person to say: Here, drive my car,” she said.

The opportunity to compete in a race as a driver is one many in the industry hope to get, but few find possible to attain, said fellow driver Powelson. “It’s the only truly accessible form of motorsport still left in the U.S. where a working-class individual can build, prepare a car and take it to the national stage.”

After training as a car mechanic at age 16, using his time off at a dealership to work as a trackside mechanic for big races and eventually starting his own shop where he preps cars and drivers for competitions, Powelson was in disbelief when Dienhart told him that he would race in Long Beach this year.

“It’s come full circle, where this year I get to enter as a competitor, not just as a mechanic,” he said. “I get to drive a circuit that I fell in love with years ago.” ■



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A labor shortage, supply chain issues and vaccination requirements make Grand Prix race weekend a gamble for Downtown restaurants



A crew hangs signage along the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021. Restaurants along Shoreline Drive, normally easily accessible to Downtown visitors, are behind grandstands and fences during race weekend, accessible only using temporary bridges. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

By **ALENA MASCHKE** / Reporter

This isn’t Kurt Shoemaker’s first Grand Prix, but it may as well be.

As the general manager at Yard House, he has years of experience preparing the

Shoreline Village restaurant for Grand Prix weekend, but this year is different.

Staffing and supply chain issues have considerably affected his ability to prepare for the massive event.

“Logistically, everything is still

a challenge,” Shoemaker said. The restaurant is currently staffed at 75% and supplies are regularly unavailable or delayed, he said. “One week it could be paper products, next week it could be a food item.”

Conventions may have restarted last month, but the Grand Prix of Long Beach marks the return of one of the biggest events for restaurants and bars near the waterfront. For some businesses, the event, which drew 187,000 spectators when it was last held in 2019, is bigger than the 4th of July or Mother’s Day in terms of sales.

The impact of this year’s event, however, is hard to predict—between the state’s reopening process, new coronavirus variants, masking and vaccination requirements, sales have fluctuated in recent months, an employee of Outback Steakhouse on Shoreline Drive said.

At the steakhouse, preparing for Grand Prix weekend means ordering triple the volume of everything from produce to meats—but especially beer.

The steakhouse goes through an average of about two kegs in a normal week, according to the employee, who asked to be anonymous because they didn’t have corporate approval to speak to the media. Over the course of the upcoming weekend, staff are expecting to run dry seven to eight kegs.

While the Grand Prix remains an alcohol-heavy event, food items have gained popularity at his business in recent years, according to Shoemaker. “People were doing a lot more drinking than they were eating,” he said. “Over the years, it’s gotten more food heavy.”

Working her first Grand Prix this year, Karen Rosales, bar manager at Shenanigans Pub & Grill, said she’s not sure what to expect from the event after a two-year hiatus. Vaccination and masking requirements may affect attendance, she said, but that hasn’t curbed her enthusiasm.

“We’re just making sure that we keep our spirits up and not letting any of the regulations taint how we feel,” Rosales said. “You just gotta ride the wave, right?” ■

How some Long Beach residents race out of town during Grand Prix

By **TIM GROBATY** / Columnist

As difficult as it is to believe, not everyone in this city loves the musical lilt of screaming high-performance engines on Grand Prix weekend. There are those among us who turn up their noses at the sweet bouquet of an 85% ethanol fuel blend peppered with the perfume of burning rubber.

They have marked their calendars for Race Weekend not so much as to be prepared to don their orange Chip Ganassi Racing caps and get ready to scream for driver Scott Dixon, but, rather, to be on time for the shuttle bus to quietly sneak out of town for a day of shopping or art, beauty and tranquility.

It’s not a loudly advertised fact that during every Grand Prix Saturday and Sunday, the race organization, by agreement with the city, provides an escape by way of day trips to out-of-town attractions for certain residents of the city — those who reside in about a half-dozen older apartment buildings near the track that have been in existence since 1975, the event’s inaugural year of racket-making on the streets of Long Beach.

This year, track-dodgers will be shuttled to the Outlets in San Clemente on Saturday to shop at H&M, Lululemon, Nike, Cole Haan and more than 50 other shops and restaurants, and on Sunday, the shuttle goes to the Getty Villa Museum in Pacific Palisades,



Spectators watch as two Formula Drift drivers battle for position, creating plumes of smoke and the distinct smell of burnt rubber, during the 2019 Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach race weekend. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

where those abandoning the roar of the race will find peace, tranquility and beauty while roaming the museum’s gardens and colonnaded walkways enjoying Greek and Roman antiquities. If there’s such a thing as the opposite of Grand Prix racing, a day at the Getty Villas is probably it.

Every year, about 30 to 40 residents

avail themselves of the escape route, says Grand Prix spokesman Chris Esslinger.

The Grand Prix offices send notices of the getaway to the managers of the eligible buildings, which include such long-standing complexes as the Sovereign and Blackstone apartments on West Ocean Boulevard, and the Long Beach Towers and International Tower

on East Ocean. Residents can sign up and be informed of where the shuttle will pick them up at around 9 a.m. both days, with returns around 5:30 when things have simmered down a bit.

In addition to the free transportation, participants are given \$10 to handle their lunch expenses. ■

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Passengers board a Southwest Airlines plane at Long Beach Airport, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

More flights, more passengers: Long Beach Airport financially ‘strong,’ officials say

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON** / Reporter

With passenger volumes through Long Beach Airport continuing to recover after being decimated by the pandemic and airlines utilizing more

daily flight slots, officials say the small, municipal airfield is well-positioned for a solid 2022.

“Over the last several months, activity has gradually increased and remained strong over the summer,”

Claudia Lewis, bureau manager for finance and administration, said, adding that Long Beach Airport is currently operating at about 25% below pre-pandemic levels.

During August, 101,255 passengers

flew out of Long Beach Airport, according to recently released data. This is a slight decrease from about 115,000 in July, which was the airport’s best month since the onset of the pandemic, she said.

The August dip can be attributed to a softening in air travel demand as the peak summer season passes and the rise of the delta variant of the coronavirus, Lewis said. And Long Beach was not alone: National air travel declined from over 63.17 million passengers in July to fewer than 57.5 million in August, according to TSA data.

Two-thirds of the airport’s revenue comes from passenger fees assessed on each commercial airline ticket sale, according to Lewis. When the pandemic struck, that revenue stream all but dried up for several months and the ongoing return to “normal” has been slow.

Early in the pandemic, passenger traffic plummeted. April 2020 saw 97% fewer passengers than the same month the year before. In 2019, nearly 1.8 million traveled through Long Beach Airport—71% more than the roughly 520,000 in 2020.

Estimated at about 1.2 million passengers, projections for 2021 are more than double that of 2020. And 2022 is expected to be even better, with airport officials anticipating 1.35 million passengers to fly out of Long Beach.

Thanks to millions of dollars in relief grant funding throughout the pandemic, the airport is entering the 2022 fiscal year—which begins Oct. 1—with a “strong financial standing,” Lewis said. Thus far, the airport has received \$24.2 million from state and federal recovery efforts, Lewis said, with another \$15.1 million expected from the American Rescue Plan Act for fiscal year 2022.

The funding—along with cost

Continued on page 16

Airport concessions sales pick up as travelers return

By **ALENA MASCHKE** / Reporter

Neck pillows and water bottles, coffee to go or a glass of wine before boarding—as passengers return to Long Beach Airport, shops and restaurants supplying them with travel essentials and amenities are opening back up.

After months of nearly zero traffic, leading a majority of the shops and restaurants at the airport to completely close during the height of the pandemic, all but two have reopened. With hundreds of passengers boarding planes to Maui, the Bay Area and Vegas, a sense of normalcy is returning, but a labor shortage and Southwest’s takeover as the airport’s main airline spell some uncertainty for future months.

“We’re back on track,” said Kuldip Johal, general manager of dining operations at LGB with Paradies

Lagardère, which runs a majority of the airport’s stores and eateries.

While Johal declined to share specific numbers on the recovery of revenue, she said they were on track with the return of passenger volumes, which were at 71% of pre-pandemic levels, according to data released by the airport in August. Prior to the pandemic, terminal concessions brought in millions of dollars, according to a 2019 economic impact study that counted \$16.7 million in gross revenues in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Staff is returning as well. According to Johal, Paradies has been able to bring back 60-70% of its staff, with 55 employees currently working at its LGB businesses.

One of the biggest challenges for the restaurants managed by Paradies has been a shortage of workers, especially cooks, that has troubled the hospitality industry nationwide. To make up for

Continued on page 13



Masked shoppers purchase items ahead of their flight inside Long Beach Airport's south concourse, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Improvements

Continued from page 12

baggage claim and other projects is contingent on a reevaluation of the airport’s financial standing, according to Claudia Lewis, bureau manager for finance and administration.

“We continuously evaluate our ability to move forward and to pay for these projects,” Lewis said. “Additionally, we are evaluating the bond market to assess our ability to sell bonds in the future. But no decision has been made on that.”

The phase two program also includes renovations to the historic terminal building, which will become the rental car facility, and a meet-and-greet plaza with concessions available to the public. All these projects were originally expected to be completed by 2022. However, a new timeline has yet to be determined.

Other future projects under phase two include a rental car ready-return lot, a ground transportation center and terminal roadway improvements.

The overall project was initially projected to cost \$80 million. The

Long Beach City Council approved a budget increase in February 2020, bringing the total to \$110.24 million. However, increasing construction costs, including skyrocketing lumber and steel prices exacerbated by the pandemic, could mean a larger price tag in the end.

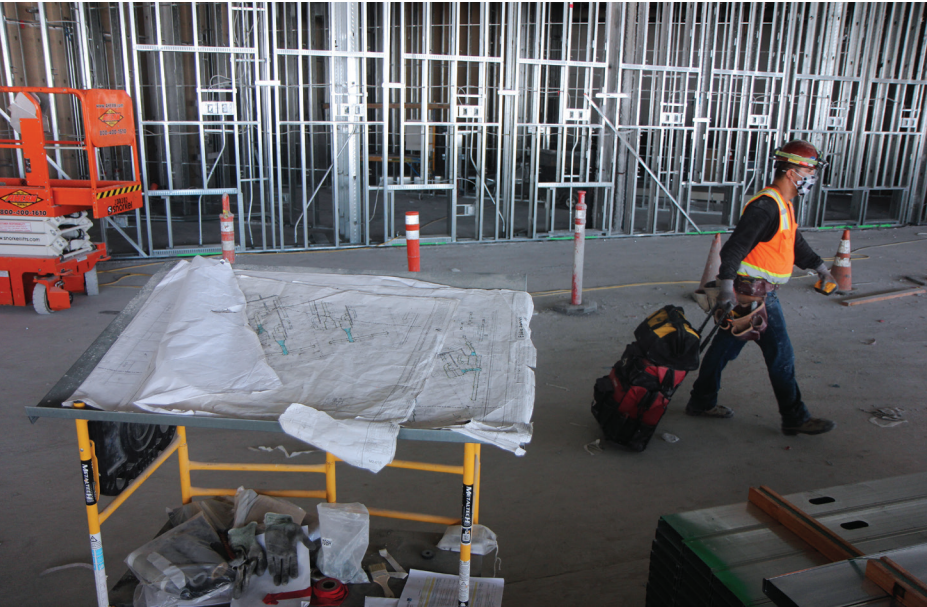
Reeves emphasized that the improvement projects do not equate to an expansion of the number of flights the airport offers. Long Beach Airport is regulated by a noise ordinance that only allowed 53 daily flights. More flights can be added based on annual noise reviews but that will not even be an option until the end of fiscal year 2021, according to airport staff.

Regardless, the improvements promise a bright future for the small airfield and especially those traveling through it, Reeves said.

“It’s incredible to see this from a long-term vision to something that is now going to benefit our passengers,” Reeves, who has worked at the airport for eight years, said. “We’re already known as the most convenient airport in the nation and this is going to make our experience even more convenient for our passengers.” ■



A construction worker cuts exposed rebar on the future site of Long Beach Airport’s new baggage claim area, Friday, Sept. 10, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



A construction worker walks past tattered plans of the new ticketing lobby at Long Beach Airport at the end of the work day, Friday, Sept. 10, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

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Less noise, fewer fines at Long Beach Airport
could lead to reduced services at city libraries



A small, private plane takes off from Long Beach Airport, Friday, Sept. 10, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Flight Schools

Continued from page 13

flight lessons.

“It was all over the news that flight crews were canceling flights because they didn’t have pilots,” said Bosco Chowdhury, a flight instructor at Airman. “They knew: Now is the time to start.”

Commercial pilots are highly sought after, as many current pilots are nearing the mandatory retirement age of 65. According to FAA data supplied by the Regional Airline Association, nearly half of today’s qualified pilots will reach mandatory retirement age within 15 years, and about 13% will be required to retire within five years.

The pandemic has exacerbated this shortage, with scores of pilots opting for early retirement. Roughly 5,000 pilots accepted early retirement offers when airlines severely reduced flights as a result of the pandemic, aviation consultant Kit Darby told industry publication Travel Weekly.

“[Airlines] had this huge problem all of a sudden: Yeah, there’s not many flights, but also their crew is vanishing,” Reynold, of Aces High Aviation, said.

Now, as passenger numbers pick up again, airlines are scrambling to staff up, offering aggressive financial incentives to attract recent graduates.

Cost is one of the major barriers for

prospective pilots looking to obtain their commercial licenses, with a sticker price of around \$80,000, plus licensing fees. And prices are only expected to go up, largely driven by an increase in insurance rates and the value of popular training aircraft like the Cessna 172.

“It’s getting pretty out of hand,” Reynolds said of the cost of training.

This is where airlines are jumping in. To combat the current shortage, they began offering a range of financial incentives, from five-figure tuition reimbursements to bonus packages of up to \$150,000, paid out over the span of a pilot’s career.

But cost is not the only barrier. The reduction in commercial flights during the pandemic has created a bottleneck for students looking to obtain the flight hours necessary to become certified as a commercial pilot.

“Looking at FAA’s database of the newly issued relevant pilot certificates, 2021 YTD production is way down compared with pre-covid years,” Faye Malarkey Black, president and CEO of the Regional Airline Association said in an email, calling the shortage a “big national issue that is poised to get worse without intervention.”

Commercial pilots need a minimum of 1,500 flight hours to become certified, which many complete as flight instructors. But the temporary freeze on airline hiring during the pandemic meant current flight



Flight student Trinidad Winters conducts a pre-flight check of the instruments aboard a single-engine aircraft, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021. Photo by Sebastian Echeverry.

instructors weren’t moving on to positions with regional or major airlines, leaving no room for students looking to complete their hours.

“There’s only so many planes,” Reynolds said. In recent months, resumes of students looking to become instructors have started stacking up, he added. “I have 30 resumes that I didn’t even get the time to look through.”

But despite the challenges, the current need for pilots is a win for flight schools and students alike, especially as airlines ramp up operations and passengers

By SEBASTIAN ECHEVERRY / Reporter

Long Beach libraries have recently purchased yearly subscriptions of multiple online programs from Spanish-language learning courses to homework help for kids, but those services could be reduced or even eliminated in the years to come now that a supplemental source of funding has departed from Long Beach’s airport.

Starting in 2003, the airline JetBlue had agreed to pay fines after continuously violating the city’s noise ordinance, which governs the airport’s noise decibel allotments and commercial flight activity between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

The settlement agreement meant that hundreds of thousands of dollars were sent every year to the Long Beach Public Library Foundation. The foundation then sent the money to Long Beach Library Services for it to purchase online programs and books for people to use.

Then the airline departed from the airport in October and expanded services at Los Angeles International Airport.

The airport’s June 2021 month

return to terminals.

August has been a record month for airline hiring, said Michael Arnold, director of marketing with ATP Flight School, which operates 69 schools nationwide, including one in Long Beach. In the past 30 days, 50-60 ATP graduates hired across the country were hired by regional airlines, a hiring rate exceeding pre-pandemic levels, according to Arnold.

“When we look at the pilot shortage, we see an opportunity for our students,” Arnold said. ■

Continued on page 16

Quieter Noise Level

Continued from page 15

noise report (the most recent one available at press time) showed zero funds in the “Consent Decree” line item. About \$2,100 outlined in the “Airport Surcharges” line item in the June report were fines paid by aircraft operators, including commercial flights, as a result of noise violations, LGB spokeswoman Kate Kuykendall said, adding that those funds are returned to the airport.

The loss of revenue has not yet led to a funding crunch in library services, said Glenda Williams, Long Beach Library Services director, because they’ve already paid off the annual costs for subscriptions for programs used at the libraries.

These programs include homework help for kids, job search engines and downloadable audio and e-books.

However, once those annual subscriptions come up for renewal, Williams said the library will have to be “more wise” in its decision-making to see what programs to keep and which to stop purchasing.

Following an audit of the library’s services, Williams said the library is focusing on increasing programs and books on different languages, such as Spanish, Khmer and Tagalog, to extend its language access.

Williams said services like the library’s new Spanish-language online VIP Learning program will most likely be kept. She added that officials understood that the JetBlue money wouldn’t last forever.

“We knew it was coming,” Williams said. The library’s current budget to purchase books and learning programs is \$677,000. Williams estimated that JetBlue’s fine money averaged between \$400,000 and \$600,000 annually.

In 2019, JetBlue’s fines generated \$532,000. In 2018 it brought in over \$1 million.

Kimberly Caballero, communications manager for the library foundation, said the money was used to purchase books and materials distributed equally across all 12 Long Beach public libraries.

“The Library Foundation and Library never budgeted for the fines accrued from JetBlue’s noise ordinance violations,” Caballero said in an email.

The libraries, which are critical for low-income communities and for individuals who use its services for job help, are facing greater strain now that fewer funds will be available.

Caballero said that residents accessed more than a million library resources in fiscal year 2020, “showing our community’s great need for free educational tools, especially now as many are working to get their lives and livelihoods back on track.”

“The Library Foundation Board of Directors strongly believes that the city should increase the Library’s structural budget so that it may better serve our community with more resources and greater accessibility,” she added. ■



A man waits for his luggage at Long Beach Airport's baggage claim area, Monday, Sept. 13, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

More Flights

Continued from page 11

containment efforts such as furloughs, a hiring freeze, delaying non-critical capital projects and deferring non-essential discretionary spending—allowed the facility to close out fiscal years 2020 and 2021 with no deficit while continuing major capital improvement projects, Lewis said. Throughout the pandemic, three critical airfield projects were completed and work continues on portions of the Phase 2 terminal improvement project.

The overall airport budget for 2022 is just over \$50 million for operations, debt services and capital improvements, according to the city’s recently approved budget. Revenue, meanwhile, is expected to be just over \$60.2 million for a nearly \$10.16 million windfall for the airport fund.

The airport’s proposed operating budget for 2022 is just over \$32 million. The facility is expected to close out the 2021 fiscal year with \$30-\$32 million in its reserve fund, meaning it could operate for between 330 and 352 days without incoming revenue, a metric called “days cash on hand,” according to Financial Services Officer Mony Chhey.

Flight Slots

Airlines that operate in Long Beach are allocated a certain number of daily flight slots, with a maximum number of flights out of the city limited to 53 based on the noise ordinance that regulates the facility. Long Beach carriers are required to fly each slot 85% annually or risk losing the slot.

The usage rule was suspended amid the pandemic, as carriers around the world grounded many planes for months. However, as of July, Long Beach carriers once again must follow usage guidelines, which has boosted daily flights, according to airport spokeswoman Kate Kuykendall.

While airlines are still ramping up services, generally speaking, Lewis said carriers are operating anywhere between

70% to 80% of their daily capacity. But as of Sept. 12, Southwest Airlines, the dominant carrier in Long Beach following JetBlue’s departure last year, is flying its full 34 daily slots, including new destinations such as Chicago Midway, St. Louis and Hawaii.

“This is the first that they’ve flown their full flight slot allocation ever, so it’s exciting for the airport,” Kuykendall said.

“Southwest has been a great business partner,” Lewis added.



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About 43 flights depart the airport every Sunday currently, Lewis said. And with an expected onslaught of holiday travelers, Lewis estimates the airport will see 44-46 daily flights every day in December.

Noise generated by airport operations is monitored and evaluated each year and the noise ordinance is sometimes updated with an increased number of flight slots if noise levels have decreased. While 2021 data will still be evaluated, it will not be used to make any decisions related to the ordinance, Lewis said. The reinstatement of the usage rule means 2022 data can once again be a valid metric for possible ordinance updates, she added.

As the airport continues to recover with increasing flights, the purse strings have loosened slightly. The hiring freeze has ended, with multiple positions being filled in recent months and more on the way, particularly in the operations division, Lewis said. The hiring is necessary as activity picks up, she added.

“I’m so proud of how ... our airport has weathered this incredibly challenging time,” Director Cynthia Guidry said. “Long Beach Airport has demonstrated our financial resiliency and will continue to adapt to whatever comes our way.” ■

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‘We don’t have beds staffed’: Local hospitals grapple with nationwide nurse shortage

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Long Beach nurses are being poached away by other hospitals with pay as high as \$2,500 per shift, with local officials scrambling to keep staff by offering signing bonuses and other perks.

This all comes amid a nationwide nurse shortage as coronavirus surges push some health systems to the limit. California has suffered from a nursing shortage for decades, which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic, and the poaching attempts from other cities and states have forced Long Beach facilities to offer incentives such as a per-shift bonus simply for showing up to work.

“Because we don’t have frontline nurses, we don’t have beds staffed,” Gwen Ocampo, chief clinical officer at Community Hospital Long Beach, said. “Patients are being held in the ER, waiting for a bed in the intensive care unit or medical-surgical unit or the telemetry unit.”

At any given time, Community Hospital, which reopened in January when COVID-19 cases were surging, is operating with anywhere between 30% to 60% supplemental nurses (freelance nurses who are sent by agencies upon request), Ocampo said. However, many agencies have new contracts requiring high wages as coronavirus surges continue in some areas of the state and across the country, Ocampo said.

Nurses are being paid premiums to work in areas where the virus is surging the worst, including Texas and Florida, Dr. Tom Sugarman, an emergency physician in the East Bay and senior director of government affairs for the physicians group Vituity, told CalMatters. Along with most Southern states, Texas and Florida are experiencing severe surges in new cases and deaths, according to CDC data.

The Southern states’ seven-day new case rate per 100,000 residents range from about 370 to 725. California’s rate, meanwhile, is 133.4 as of Sept. 6. However, due to the state’s large population, California has the second highest number of positions posted for nurses, exceeded only by Texas, Aya Healthcare Vice President of Account Management Sophia Morris told CalMatters.

Aya is only able to fill about 3,000 positions per week, despite around 50,000 temporary health care jobs being posted nationwide, Morris said.

To lure nurses to the state, the California Health Department of Public Health last year agreed to pay up to \$145 per hour for Aya intensive care unit nurses and more if the facility has a critical need through a \$1 billion contract. At Community Hospital, Ocampo’s nurses have received offers of \$2,500 per shift to work in San Diego, which could easily net them \$10,000 or more per week, she said.

“It’s just craziness,” Ocampo said. “Local nurses are being pulled out of their community. They will call off a shift they are scheduled for to go work



Nurses attend an orientation prior to the reopening of Community Hospital Long Leach, Saturday, April 4, 2020. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

for higher pay.”

Community Hospital recently put in place a program that includes a per-shift bonus to incentivize nurses to show up to their shifts, Ocampo said. Additionally, the hospital is offering signing bonuses, referral bonuses and retention bonuses, she added.

Ocampo declined to give the dollar amounts for these incentives.

St. Mary Medical Center and Long Beach Memorial officials confirmed they are also offering incentives such as signing, referral and shift bonuses, but declined to offer details about what those bonuses are or how many supplemental staff have been brought on.

Officials said they have sufficient staffing to meet demand.

Nurse recruitment and retention is critical as patient volumes have increased dramatically over the last few months, Ocampo said, noting a 30% increase at her hospital. Scripps Health, which has five hospitals and 28 outpatient clinics in the San Diego area, told CalMatters it is serving nearly 20% more patients than it did prior to the pandemic.

“Like hospitals across the country, patient volumes have increased,” Tony Garcia, chief nursing officer at Memorial, said in an email, noting the delta variant is a factor in the strain on staffing resources. “In addition to an increase in unvaccinated COVID patients, we are seeing a higher volume of patients with other conditions than we normally do this time of year.”

At St. Mary, patient volumes increased 5% during July and August, according to Gloria Carter, vice

Continued on page 21

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Funded through Measure A, the \$750,000 Traffic Circle revitalization project remains “in progress,” according to the city’s website. Friday, Sept. 17, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

With billions in backlogged work, Long Beach officials could look to bonds to fix city streets

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Long Beach has nearly \$4 billion in unfunded and underfunded projects, repairs and investments that need to be made in city streets, buildings and other assets and the focus is now on federal and state funding, or new bonds and taxes to help finance them.

The City Council held a study session Sept. 7 to learn about the funding gap and potential revenue sources it can pursue to slow the deterioration of city streets and buildings and complete legally mandated improvements to city sidewalks brought on by a settlement in an ADA lawsuit. The latter will require a total of 3,500 new ramps to be installed over the next 13 months, something that will be prioritized over sidewalk repairs.

Long Beach also owes billions in city employee pension contributions, tree maintenance, stormwater protection and the looming question of what to do with the Queen Mary.

But the focus at the study session was on one of the largest expenses the city has: street and alley repairs. Public Works Director Eric Lopez estimated the total needed to fix city streets at \$1.77 billion, which is the level of funding needed to bring the city’s average pavement condition index score to 85.

The index rates streets in the city on a scale of 1 to 100, with the highest score representing a street in excellent condition and the lowest being a street that has failed and needs to be

completely reconstructed, the most costly kind of street repair.

The cost to repair an excellent street is about \$2 per square foot while a poor or very poor street can range from \$17 to \$30 per square foot.

The citywide pavement condition score is 58 with just 13% of streets being considered “excellent” and 53% of the city’s streets being rated “fair to marginal” or worse.

Lopez said that the city needs to spend about \$58 million annually to maintain the current street conditions but the city has instead spent around \$33 million annually on street repairs and paving, leading to the city’s backlog of poor and very poor streets climbing to 26%.

“You definitely don’t want to be over 20%,” Lopez said.

The council could decide on whether to issue bonds to help speed up the rate of street repairs, something that was floated in November as a way to save taxpayers money by fixing more streets faster.

City Manager Tom Modica said that bonding can provide short-term benefits but could require the council to make cuts to other services to pay for the debt service. Modica said it’s something the council will look at early next year.

He also advised the council members to reduce their wish lists to a short list in anticipation of Measure A funding decreasing over the next five years.

Measure A will be cut by 25% starting in fiscal year 2023, so the city can pay its

share of a countywide tax that was levied to pay for services and housing for those experiencing homelessness.

The Measure A sales tax increase has regularly provided the city with about \$60 million to invest in city infrastructure and public safety. Modica said that figure could drop to \$38 million next year.

“There’s a lot of tough discussions we’re going to be having over the next year,” Modica said.

Modica also said that the city would prioritize future projects based on a several criteria like the number of residents they’ll impact, the urgency of the project, how many jobs it creates and how “shovel ready” they are.

He laid out scenarios ranging from six-month to 18-month completion times, adding that anything beyond that would not be considered shovel-ready. The city has about \$293 million in immediate facility repairs, according to the presentation.

Council members were mixed in their support for issuing bonds to pay for street repairs. Councilwoman Stacy Mungo Flanigan, who originally requested city management to look into the funding source last year, said that it could be an opportunity to save taxpayer money.

But Councilman Rex Richardson said he was hesitant to potentially put public safety services on the chopping block to divert Measure A funds toward street bonds.

Richardson referenced the restoration

Continued on page 22

Massive rail project at Port of Long Beach remains stalled as officials wait for federal approval

By CRYSTAL NIEBLA / Reporter

A massive rail project at Long Beach’s port complex on the Westside has fallen behind schedule, leaving some frustrated with the lag.

The Port of Long Beach is still waiting for the U.S. Maritime Administration to approve an Environmental Impact Statement for the \$870 million Pier B On-Dock Support Facility, which would reconfigure 171 acres of land southwest of Anaheim Street and the 710 Freeway to improve cargo movement.

It’s been a lengthy environmental review process with the Maritime Administration, known as MARAD,

Continued on page 20

Port of Long Beach records best August on record

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

As stores stock up ahead of the holiday shopping season, the Port of Long Beach recorded its strongest August on record in terms of container movement, port officials announced Sept. 9.

During August, the port moved 807,704 twenty-foot equivalent units—the standard measures for shipping containers—an 11.3% increase compared to August of last year. Imports were up 11.7% to 407,426 TUEs, while exports decreased 5.3% to 119,485.

“It’s peak season now but we’re likely to see continued cargo growth well into 2022,” Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement.

The port has broken cargo movement records in 13 of the last 14 months but the increased volume coupled with impacts of the pandemic have caused cargo delays and a backlog of ships off the coast. On Sept. 17, the ports of Long Beach and

Continued on page 20



Containers wait to be offloaded by ship-to-shore gantry cranes at the Long Beach Container Terminal at Middle Harbor, Friday, Aug. 20, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Port of Long Beach

Continued from page 19

Los Angeles set a record when 65 container ships were anchored off the coast waiting to enter the complex, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California.

“In order to stay on top of this cargo, ports will need to adapt,” Cordero said. “We will need to find the long-term solutions that will satisfy consumer demand, increase efficiency at the ports and reduce costs for our customers.”

High volumes of empty containers moved through the port continued, increasing 19.7% to 280,794 compared to the same month last year.

Although consumer demand softened in August compared to July, overall retail sales last month were about 18% above pre-pandemic levels, according to port officials. These sales bumps have been driving increased goods movement as retailers replace inventory.

Through August, the Port of Long Beach—the second-busiest seaport in the U.S.—has moved 6,346,377 TEUs this year, a 29.2% increase from the same eight-month period in 2020. ■

Rail Project

Continued from page 19

as it prepared the EIS, circulated the EIS for review and is now preparing the final EIS and record of decision on the project, Port of Long Beach Deputy Chief Harbor Engineer Mark Erickson said at a recent meeting.

The port needs federal approval because it is receiving about \$16 million through the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Erickson said in an email the project is eligible for future money from the federal government intended to pay for construction.

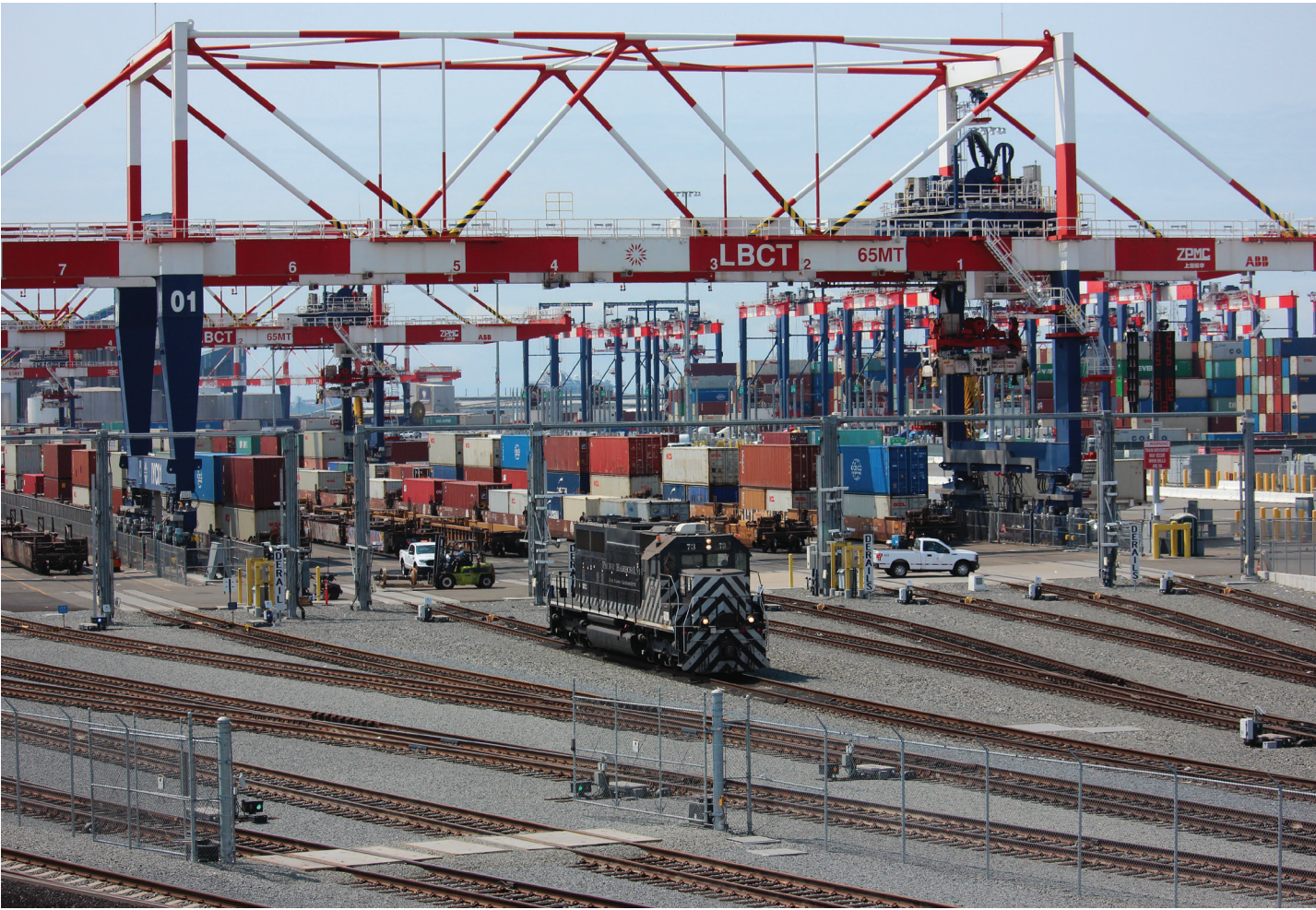
“We’ve lost, by my estimation, at least a year on what the original plan was, and that has cost us money. When we talked to MARAD, we made that apparent to them,” Erickson said. The port has asked if the federal agency could expedite their review.

MARAD did not respond to emails and calls requesting for comment.

The port in December 2016 first released its draft Environmental Impact Report to meet state requirements, followed by a final EIR approval by the Board of Harbor Commissioners in January 2018, according to the port.

The first arrival, departure and storage tracks were expected to be constructed by 2024, with final project completion estimated for 2032.

Meanwhile, 39 privately owned businesses that lease land from the ports are waiting for details of a relocation plan, which would include financial assistance. Some businesses and property owners are still concerned, expressing growing discontentment as the timeline drags out.



The on-dock rail yard at the Long Beach Container Terminal at Middle Harbor, Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

“Here we are still waiting, and as a property owner, the tenants—where are we in the process? Another 60 days out? Another 60 days, 90 days, 120 days, it keeps going out,” Chris Balden, a property owner, said during a recent meeting.

Lee Wilson, property owner of LAN Logistics, sympathizes with port officials as they also share the same

goals to “get it over with faster too.”

“We’d like to have it over sooner than later,” Wilson said in a phone interview.

The port plans to pay for the project using grants, possibly loans and money from the harbor department under the city’s Capital Improvement Program. Erickson said that the port would ask the Harbor Commission for more funding if and

when the EIS is approved.

Currently, 28% of cargo that passes through the port is via rail, and the project aims to increase that to 35%. The project would eliminate 750 truck trips for each full train, the port estimates, which would help reduce truck pollution. More tracks will begin operating in 2030, followed by project completion in 2032, according to the port. ■

Long Beach extends parklet program through June 2022



A man enjoys a beer sitting at the parklet in front of Shannon's on Pine, Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Restaurant parklets could remain on city streets until July 2022 after the Long Beach City Council agreed to extend the city’s Open Streets program that has allowed businesses to expand

seating capacities during the pandemic.

The city’s Public Works department proposed the extension, saying outdoor dining has not only helped businesses survive pandemic restrictions but has also become popular with customers.

The extension includes businesses

using parking lots for outdoor dining. The council’s previous extension of the program was set to expire at the start of October.

However, an amendment to the proposal could put some parklets on Second Street in jeopardy as a new protest process will be created for residents to report business owners who are not honoring the terms of their approval to operate outdoors.

A public meeting held in that community could serve to sort out those that are not being used as intended, being properly maintained or encroaching on other businesses’ parking spaces. Diko Melkonian, deputy director of Public Works, said those parklets could be reevaluated as needed.

Councilwoman Suzie Price, who represents Belmont Shore, said it’s important for residents to have an appeal process because there are some parklets in the area that need to be addressed. Price is expected to hold a meeting in the coming months with a plan for the parklets on Second Street to be heard by the full council by the

Continued on page 22



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Nurse Shortage

Continued from page 18

president and chief nursing officer at the hospital.

For staff who have worked throughout the pandemic, Ocampo said burnout is imminent if coronavirus hospitalizations remain elevated across the country, which would further worsen shortages. In Los Angeles County and Long Beach, at least, hospitalizations have begun to decrease following a spike that began after the June 15 reopening.

“Staff is tired. Most of them are working more than one job,” she said. “They’re working more than 48 hours per week and are on a guaranteed track to burnout.” ■

Long Beach to require vaccination at drinking establishments

By MELISSA EVANS / Managing Editor

Long Beach will align with Los Angeles County in now requiring proof of vaccination at indoor bars, wineries, breweries and distilleries that do not serve food.

The new ordinance will not affect restaurants, but the city “strongly recommends” they require vaccination, too.

Proof that an individual has received a first dose of vaccine will be required by Oct. 7, and a second dose by Nov. 4.

Drinking establishments are most often populated by people in their 20s and 30s, who are least likely to be vaccinated, the city said.

“Data show that those who are 18-34 years old are least likely to be vaccinated and are being infected at higher rates than other age groups,” the city Health Department said in a statement. “Indoor bars, breweries, wineries and distilleries are considered some of the most high-risk settings and have the highest instances of interaction without masks.”

Roughly 61% of those 18-34 are vaccinated, city data shows, compared to 99% of those over 65.

Similar to LA County, the city will also require organizers of “mega” outdoors events where more than 10,000 people are in attendance to require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours.

The city had already required this of its largest event, the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach taking place Sept. 24-26.

It’s not clear what other large events in Long Beach this would impact, but in Los Angeles County it will affect professional sporting events and popular theme parks like Universal Studios Hollywood and Six Flags Magic Mountain. ■

Parklet Program

Continued from page 21

end of the year.

“It’s the only business corridor that has numerous homes within just a few feet of businesses,” Price said. “The impacts are felt at a much deeper level.”

Residents from Belmont Shore lodged complaints that some parklets on Second Street were creating quality of life issues like people urinating in public and loud music and conversations disrupting their home lives.

They said they were happy to support restaurants during the pandemic when inside-dining bans crippled businesses, but “that time is over,” they said.

Several business owners along the corridor challenged that stance, stating

that many of their customers still prefer to eat outside for a variety of reasons, including COVID-19.

“We’re really not out of the woods yet,” said Ryan Hofman, who co-owns Saint & Second. “We hear there are indoor vaccine mandates coming in different areas and we’re very concerned about that and we have quite a bit invested into our parklets.”

Rebecca Hinderer, co-owner of Let’s Yolk About it, said she was appalled to hear that residents had suffered because of some of the parklets on the corridor but said that the pandemic is not over until masks are allowed to come off and everyone feels safe doing so.

“I had a very slow morning in our inside today, but there was a 15-minute wait for my parklet,” Hinderer said.

Jimmy Loizides, who owns George’s Greek Cafe, said that it’s not an exaggeration that the parklets saved his family’s business and asked for the council to support the extension.

“I’m in support of parklets for Belmont Shore but I’m also in favor of policing it,” Loizides said.

Businesses wanting to keep their parklets beyond the July 2022 deadline will have to apply to the city for permanent status. Doing that could require business owners to make structural improvements to their designs as well as secure insurance policies for them.

The city has previously said that some outdoor dining spaces would not be allowed to apply for permanent status because they pose traffic safety or accessibility issues for the public. ■



A rendering of townhomes from developers Brandywine Homes recently approved for a vacant lot near the Michelle Obama Library in North Long Beach. Rendering courtesy of the city of Long Beach.

Development of 84 townhomes in North Long Beach wins approval

By SEBASTIAN ECHEVERRY / Reporter

The Long Beach Planning Commission this month unanimously approved construction plans for 84 townhomes and retail space at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and South Street in North Long Beach.

A group of developers from Brandywine Homes and the LAB Holding is hoping to break ground for the mixed residential and commercial use project, called Rhythm Long Beach, in a vacant 3.2-acre lot in front of the Michelle Obama Library in March or April.

The buildings are designed to be three stories tall with 27 two-bedroom units and 57 three- to four-bedroom units with a two-car garage for each unit.

Alongside the residential homes, the project will also create 3,000 square feet of commercial space that will include a restaurant on the second floor with an outdoor patio near the Atlantic Avenue and South Street intersection as well as space for a coffee shop.

Developers hope the project will address the growing need for housing and create room for commercial growth

on Atlantic Avenue.

Shaheen Sadeghi, chief operating officer at LAB Holding, said they assisted Brandywine Homes with the project in order to help reactivate business along the Atlantic Avenue corridor between the 8th and 9th Council Districts that make up North Long Beach.

“This project is the beginning and the catalyst for revitalizing the corridor in the area,” Sadeghi said.

The 84 townhomes are expected to be priced at “market rate” value compared to other homes in the area, according to planning documents.

While the project mostly received comments in support, two public comments emailed to the planning commissioners expressed concerns with the development, particularly regarding parking.

The comments opposing the project said parking for residents already living near the construction site is already limited and bringing more units with a garage for only two cars would lead to more congestion.

Sergio Gutierrez, a project planner

with Long Beach, estimated that parking would be slightly reduced on Atlantic and Linden avenues. He added that 19 spaces for parking would be included in the project.

Preliminary drafts of the project design showed narrow sidewalks and diagonal parking on Atlantic Avenue. However, that design was removed to include full-width sidewalks, parallel parking on the right-of-way the front of the project, and curb extensions at the intersections that extend the sidewalk area and shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

As proposed, the project also calls for crews to clean up contaminated soil located at the southern end of the site. The vacant land was previously used as a gas station and a dry cleaners.

Brandywine Homes’ developers leading the project’s construction said the soil remediation is expected to be completed next year in March or April.

Brian Geis, vice president of development for Brandywine Homes, said the construction of the 84 townhomes will be phased in with crews expected to “move dirt” sometime in March or sooner. ■

Backlogged Work

Continued from page 19

of a Long Beach Fire Department rescue unit in North Long Beach. Funded by Measure A, the improved response times in his district brought about by the restoration are something he said he didn’t want to get cut.

“What I wouldn’t want to do is leave that to a future council if we make that decision here,” Richardson said.

Whether the council opts to go the bond route could depend on the level of outside funding the city gets.

The city has successfully lobbied for federal and state funding in the past, including the roughly \$250 million it received in COVID-19 aid that helped to balance this year’s budget and put off a projected \$30 million in cuts until next year.

It scored some state funding for park projects and could be in line for federal help to address some major corridors in the city but how future infrastructure funding could be handed down from the federal government is unclear.

Congress is currently debating a massive infrastructure bill, which could become law in the coming months, but funding could come in the form of grants that the city would need to apply for rather than the direct funding that it received over the past year and a half. ■

Little Coyote pizza officially opens in East Long Beach

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

The popular Retro Row pizza place, Little Coyote, opened its second location in East Long Beach Sept. 8, according to an announcement made on the business’s Instagram account.

Owners Jack Leahy and Jonathan Strader had hoped to open earlier this year, saying in April that they were targeting June 1 as their grand opening, but the later opening gives the business partners a much more symmetrical business anniversary.

“It is exactly 444 days after our opening on 4th Street,” the post said. “To look back on what we have accomplished and the support from the local community we are beyond grateful.”

The East Long Beach location at 3500 Los Coyotes Diagonal has a much larger footprint than the Retro Row location and is capable of seating about 80 customers on its patio. The 1,900 square-foot building also provides Leahy and Strader with a much larger kitchen.

“Hopefully, this new location will be a bit more community and family oriented, a bit more like an old-fashioned pizza parlor,” Strader told the Post in April, noting that the Fourth Street location, with little room for diners, is more of a “grab-a-pizza-and-go” place. ■



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