Port of Long Beach to begin testing for cargo data platform

By Christian May-Suzuki

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic made a mess of the supply chain, the Port of Long Beach knew things had to get better for its shippers. Data for shipping companies looking to use the Port of Long Beach was simply not available—and transit times were suffering because of it. Seeing this, port officials began work to implement a data infrastructure system—dubbed the Supply Chain Information Highway—to provide data visibility to operators at the port.

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

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

“By providing shippers a way to precisely track their packages as they move through the delivery process and providing specific details about shipping events, the system will give operators the ability to move containers in and out of the ports in a more efficient and timely manner,” Hacegaba said. “Our current goal is to get the data into the hands of the shippers.”

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

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

Port officials began reaching out to shipping companies in 2019 to gauge their feelings about the data
Long Beach Transit shelves plan to remove dozens of bus stops across the city—for now

By Brandon Richardson

After announcing it would remove up to 80 bus stops across the city, Long Beach Transit has put those plans on hold, with new research showing more study is needed, officials confirmed to the Business Journal.

In early May, the transportation agency proposed eliminating 15 bus stops along routes 8, 40, 91, 122, 137 and 161. The majority of the stops slated for removal were in North, West and Central Long Beach.

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

“Internally we decided we needed to do more research and really look at what that looks like holistically,” Long Beach Transit spokesperson Chavarría told the Business Journal, what that looks like in terms of ridership and what it looks like for our customers.”

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

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

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

Long Beach Transit is, however, moving forward with its new route 14A, which is to be used by the LA Metro before the agency stopped servicing it. The route runs along the eastern portion of Artesia Boulevard in North Long Beach.

Chavarría said Long Beach Transit has conducted accessibility and safety assessments for the route, Chavarría said, adding that the number of stops is going to remain the same.

“And we did a 30-day survey to get (customer) feedback,” Chavarría said. “This is a route that was already in existence but we want to know what are some things we can do to improve it.”

Route 141 services are slated to begin again through Long Beach Transit on June 26. For more information, contact Long Beach Transit at 562-591-2301 or lbbtransit.com/servicerec/hour.

Metro, county partner to provide mental health services on transit

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

By Laura Anaya-Morga

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

The program, part of a partnership between Metro and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, includes teams that will be deployed to “hotspots” that have been deemed in need of crisis response. The individuals suffering mental health episodes—including those who may need a 72-hour involuntary hospitalization—will be provided resources and transport to the appropriate facilities, according to Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn’s office, who authored a motion that initiated talks between the agencies.

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

Up to 10 mobile crisis outreach teams will operate during Metro hours, seven days a week, to de-escalate situations, her office said.

The program also includes a system of “ambassadors” to help link those in need with services, as well as an intervention training for 30 Metro security officers.

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

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

“The agreement enables us to tap additional resources to respond quickly to those in crises with
The clean truck fee—which the ports began collecting starting April—is meant to encourage the transition to zero-emissions goods movement. As it stands, cargo companies are now being asked to transport their goods in and out of the port complex charged $10 per 20-foot-equivalent unit—the standard measure for cargo containers—and $20 for every 40-foot-equivalent or larger unit. These fees are imposed on cargo owners, and the Port of Long Beach has received about half of the $8 million total that has been collected from the fee over its first few months. For port officials, the number reflects a smooth start for the fee.

“It is safe to say we are trending toward our 80¢ per [metric] tonne estimate for both ports,” Port of Long Beach Economic Development Director Mike Cramm said during a June 1 meeting.

Both the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles came together in 2020 to aim for a zero-emission future at the port.

The result of this effort was the Clean Air Action Plan, whose current goal is to implement an emission infrastructure at the ports by 2030. It is bringing the transition away from diesel through the clean-truck fee and in just one of many programs associated with the plan. Most of the money the Port of Long Beach will receive from the first year of the fund will go into funding vouchers to help support the purchase of electric trucks, with about 65% of funds allocated to those purchases.

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

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

About a quarter of the money from the clean truck fee’s first year will be used to build charging stations and hydrogen-fueling stations to ensure that companies can keep their vehicles well charged and maintained no matter where their location.

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

For example, test-equipment trucks at Oakland—where a port is partnered with the San Pedro Bay Port Authority to provide an issue with power supply. A fix was applied soon after, which patched up most of the technical work and the right equipment available at the right time,” UNCOMC Chief Operating Officer Nick Powers said.

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

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

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

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

While this change was needed prior to this project, the global restrictions caused by COVID-19 exacerbated previous issues and made the system a priority for port officials.

“With security in mind, UNCOMC enlisted the help of Amazon Web Services and its Amazon S3 cloud storage system. While the port and Amazon are the first to announce this partnership, UNCOMC had built a long relationship with AWS prior to this project, and the firm knew it would enlist the help of Amazon S3 for this project from the beginning.

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

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

While this system is targeted at carriers and operators, the implementation of the Supply Chain Information Highway has clear benefits for the port itself. “We all benefit from velocity, reliability and predictability,” Hacegaba said. “When the supply chain is humming along, everyone benefits because containers are moving through our ports at their maximum potential.”
The Port of Long Beach is aiming to set an example of inclusivity to agencies across the country through a new initiative: the Equity in Infrastructure Project. Together with four other organizations—the Chicago Transit Authority, the Denver International Airport, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Southern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority—the port signed into the four-year project in December. Through the program, the five agencies have committed to creating more contracting opportunities for historically underutilized businesses, including those owned by women and people of color.

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

“We’re very excited about this proposal,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero told me earlier this month, “and hope to move the needle with regard to furthering equity and inclusion.”

While the Port of Long Beach has touted its success as a “first-tier” port in the past, it is clear that there is room for improvement. Economic growth is necessary not only for the economic growth of the City of Long Beach, but every city in the nation. Cordero also noted that the port has a commitment to creating an environment that provides all individuals and businesses open access to the business opportunities at the Harbor Department in a manner that reflects the diversity of the City of Los Angeles, according to a port summary of the initiative.

Since its debut, Sanfield said, minority and women contractors have doubled. As for the Equity in Infrastructure Project, it’s still early days for the Port of Long Beach. The implementation plan seems ambiguous at the moment, but the port has until December 2025 to—hopefully—see the results of the endeavor.

“When I ask Cordero how he would gauge those results, he said, ‘I think success would be when we have opportunities we create for businesses who have never been able to participate in the various procurement contracts that we have here in Long Beach.”

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

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

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

The airport maintains a waiting list for airlines hoping to acquire flight slots. Prior to the new allocation, the list included, in order: American, Hawaiian, Southwest, Canadian airline Sunwing and Breeze, which requested to be added to the list on Feb. 28, airport spokesperson Kate Kueckendall told the Business Journal. Southwest had requested both slots, while American, Hawaiian and Sunwing declined a slot, the memo states.

The waitlist now, in order, is: Southwest, Breeze, American, Hawaiian and Sunwing, according to the memo. Breeze was co-founded by David Neeleman, who also co-founded JetBlue Airways in 1998. He left the company in 2017. The company focuses on direct, nonstop flights between smaller, “underserved routes” outside of secondary airports such as Long Beach. Neeleman has a string of successful airline startups. He co-founded Morris Air in 1984, which was acquired by Southwest Airlines for $10 million in 1993. And while also CEO of an airline reservation and check-in systems company, Neeleman co-founded Canada-based WestJet Airlines. Since JetBlue, Neeleman co-founded Azul, a domestic carrier in Brazil established in 2013. Breeze was first announced in 2018 with the tentative name Mono Airways. Its first flight took off in spring of last year. •
Uptick in cargo revenue increases Port of Long Beach’s 2022-23 budget by 10%

By Christian May-Suzuki

With a record-setting quarter just behind it, the Port of Long Beach is expecting to see a bump in its revenue. The Board of Harbor Commissioners approved the Port of Long Beach’s $5.4 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30, 2023, at its May 23 meeting. The number is a 15% increase from the previous year, which the port attributes in part to increased cargo revenue.

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

Operational revenue is expected to increase by over $45 million, or 1% from the previous year. The port mainly attributes this boost to the stronger anticipated cargo volume in the wake of record cargo numbers over the first quarter of the year.

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

A large chunk of almost $322 million—or 45% of the total budget—will be used to fund capital projects and improvements as part of an effort to invest nearly $2.6 billion over the next 10 years in major projects centered around improving capacity and efficiency, bolstering existing public infrastructure and reducing environmental impacts.

Of that $322 million, just over $80 million will be directed to the Pier and On-Dock Support Facility Program, which will be “under various stages of design and right of way acquisition” through the fiscal year’s fourth quarter.

Three of the projects that are being funded as part of the Pier B Program—which is a means to increase the port’s capacity to handle cargo traveling to and from its harbors by train—are expected to have designs finalized at the end of the quarter, but construction for the first projects is not expected to be completed until 2025.

The Gerald Desmond Bridge demolition project, meanwhile, is slated to receive $24.5 million from the new budget after it was given $32.2 million to work with last year. The demolition is already underway and is expected to be completed in the fiscal year’s fourth quarter.

The second largest bucket in the budget is the costs of maintaining the equipment and “non-personnel” aspects of the port. Port officials are expecting a cost of $313.2 million—almost a fifth of the budget—for technical services, utilities, construction contracts, insurances, and other expenses not directly related to employees.

On the flip side, around $30.8 million is being budgeted for the personnel that run the port, including salaries and over $35.8 million for employee fringe benefits.

Another notable expense comes in the form of a $2.8 million transfer to the Tidelands Operating fund, which is the highest ever for that transfer. The total—calculated annually at 5% of the estimated revenue for the previous fiscal year—comes out to approximately 1% of the budget.

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

As part of the port’s efforts to work toward sustainable goods movement, $2.5 million of the budget is dedicated to reducing environmental impacts through several different programs. One of these is the Green Flag Initiative, which awarded $3.4 million in dockage discounts in 2021 to vessel operators who slow down to a particular speed threshold as they near the port, which reduces the emissions those ships produce.

Operators receive anywhere from 1% to 5% off of the dockage fees—which range from $77 to over $2,000,000 for every 24 hours spent at the dock, depending on the length of the vessel—depending on how far away from the entrance to the harbor the ship began slowing down. At the meeting approving the budget, an amendment was made to increase the amount allocated to the port’s Community Sponsorship program, which initially had $6 million. The increase of $250,000 comes in the wake of over $700,000 being awarded in sponsorships this March.

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

results to the vaccine.

Masking Requirement continues on page 8

Mounting cases and a seven-day rate that is more than triple what it was around April, have led officials to take necessary precautions. “I’m not going to sugarcoat it. We are facing an uphill battle.” Health Department spokesperson Jennifer Rice Epstein said, adding that the department canvases neighborhoods citywide almost every day offering shots. “But the data are not disputed. People who get vaccinated and boosted are far less likely to become hospitalized or die of COVID-19.”

In Long Beach, just under 70% of residents have been fully vaccinated against the virus, while 75% have received at least one dose.

Following the reassessment of the health order, people a years and older will be required to use a mask in any indoor area that serves as a transportation hub, along with commuter trains, buses and ride-shares—regardless of vaccination status.

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

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

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

By Christian May-Suzuki

One of Long Beach’s most unique features is back in full service for the first time in over two years. Long Beach’s AquaLink service, which ferries passengers between Alamitos Bay and Rainbow Harbor, has returned for the first time in full capacity since COVID-19 sent most of the world into a shutdown. This is the first time since the service closed in March 2020 that AquaLink is able to serve customers at a pre-pandemic capacity. While AquaLink beverages service returned in May 2021, it was at a pre-pandemic capacity. That’s largely thanks to a decision made in that year to expand the service, Chavarria said. Chavarria said the agency sees Long Beach Transit as a community service, not just a means of transportation. “We can’t predict the trend on this because it has been so different, and we don’t even have a full year’s data,” Chavarria said. Still, the agency is hopeful rides will return in full force this summer—and that their momentum will continue into a solid year of ridership in 2023.

Looking ahead, Long Beach Transit hopes 2022 will mark the start of higher ridership numbers. As for what those numbers could look like, Chavarria said the roller coaster of the past three years makes it hard to predict. In 2019, ridership began in March and fared through the better part of that year, but the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant there was less than three months of ridership in 2020. And in 2021, a May start and limited capacity kept numbers artificially low; while the data from the first half of this year also reflects the capacity restrictions.

“We can’t predict the trend on this because it has been so different, and we don’t even have a full year’s data,” Chavarria said. Still, the agency is hopeful riders will return in full force this summer—and that their momentum will continue into a solid year of ridership in 2023. After all, Long Beach Transit knows it has a unique service with the AquaLink. Chavarria noted that AquaLink riders get two benefits from the service: a ride on the water and a way to travel across Downtown without worrying about traffic or parking.

And soon, the agency will also provide transportation to and from the AquaLink itself. Long Beach Transit is in the process of implementing electric battery buses, which are shorter than traditional buses. While the older buses were too large to access Alamitos Bay, where one of AquaLink’s stops resides, the newer, more compact vehicles will be able to stop there. One stop, however, has been removed—and it seems unlikely to return in the near future. While the AquaLink is used to stop at Alamitos Bay, Rainbow Harbor, and the Queen Mary, Long Beach Transit has removed the Queen Mary stop amid the ship’s ongoing shutdown. That removal aside, Chavarria said there have been discussions to potentially expand the AquaLink service, though there are no solid plans at the moment.

“Our hope is to expand service, because at the end of the day this is about moving people and connecting our community,” she said. That community, as Long Beach Transit sees it, goes well beyond Downtown Long Beach residents. Chavarria said the agency views Long Beach as a “metropolitan” city. At its core, she said, the unique experience AquaLink provides plays an important role in LBT’s mission. “Being able to provide an opportunity to transport people from one side of our waterfront to another,” Chavarria said, “is really an incredible thing.”
As Metro kills widening project, Long Beach will move forward with 710 improvements

By Brandon Richardson

After nearly two decades and $160 million worth of studying and planning, the Metro Board of Directors voted last month to officially kill the project to widen 10 miles of the 710 Freeway. The congestion and safety issues about the 68 billion project were meant to alleviate, however, remain in Long Beach, and city officials intend to push forward with their own projects to address them.

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

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

These projects would have been part of the freeway widening effort but could not move forward before the fate of the full project was finalized. Now that it’s been shelved, city traffic officials intend to move forward with 710 improvements but could not move forward before the full project was finalized.

The project’s timeline has completion in 2032. However, the city has reached the end of its lifecycle, Lopez said. Entitlements have been secured by the city for the project, which is well into the full-funded design phase.

Combined, the bridge and realignment projects are estimated to run about $200 million, which is also expected to be funded in large part through state, county and federal money.

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

“We’re going to have a lot of eyes on Long Beach,” Lopez said. “These projects are going to be a huge burden for all involved.”

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

These projects would not have a direct impact on Long Beach. However, congestion often associated with the 710 Freeway, especially during drivers near the Port of Long Beach, which can see some traffic backed up for miles during peak hours. The Harbor Department’s $4 billion Pan-Oceanic Bridge Safety project, however, aims to eliminate thousands of truck trips per day—roughly 7 million per year.

The project is delayed in the making due to delays on trucks to the Port of Rail Yard, increasing capacity by at least 2,000 20-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of shipping above a standard shipping container by 2028. The project is on track with a groundbreaking expected next year, according to Port Executive Director Mario Cordero.

“We’re moving forward with land acquisitions,” Cordero said. The first phase is expected to come online by 2025, Cordero said, adding that he fully expects the project will be completed by 2031, though the official timeline has completion in 2025.

The port supported the 710 Freeway widening project specifically due to the interchange project dedicated to containerized truck movement, Cordero said. But the killing of the project will not have any negative impact on port operations or capital improvement projects, including the Port Rail.

“In fact, the canceling of the project encourages us to move forward in the way we are: we are moving these containers by rail at a greater rate,” he said.

“The park is “really beat up, and the kids out here who had been complaining about it,” Donelon said. “So I thought it’d be a great project for the kids to get involved with; it actually design and develop and name a skate park.”

Donelon helped gather over 550 comments from kids through social media and design meetings hosted at the park to come up with a final design that would best suit the kids.

With the plans done, money is the next obstacle. Donelon noted it was particularly important for the port to support West Long Beach by acquiring the property.

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

The money falls far short of the $57,000,000 to $60,000,000 the city is prepared to spend for its final design of the park, but Donelon said this contribution is key because of the credibility the park will be conferred.

“The port money gives us … a certain legitimacy,” he said. “They just feel like they’re part of something bigger, as opposed to just being a kid in a warehouse, comparatively speaking,” Cox said. “Part of what we are doing is making use of the sea port, comparatively speaking.”

McIlquham, who runs the group, said the park is something, comparatively speaking, “a place that is open to everyone, a place that is open to everyone,” she said. “Some of these containers are built on the property that we can see.”

The park currently has 218 videos available on YouTube, which has been essential in getting advice from someone who has had a similar experience.

“Sometimes you have to bite all the advice you get,” Donelon said. “It’s the sneaky things that we have to do in order to get out from under these circumstances.”

Like other smaller nonprofits, having the port’s name behind Project Womangsod was a key piece to establishing itself.

“I would say that’s a huge step forward for us,” Schwarz said of the port’s support. “Having something like this, something super tangible with the logo has been a real plus.”

Continued from page 11

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

Project Womangsod—founded in August 2020 that helps women escape abusive relationships and households—is receiving $10,000 from the port for an upcoming fundraising event called Re-Loved Market Shop & Shops.

Founder Julie Schwarz envisions the event, which is being hosted in August, as a virtual meeting-and-greet that will also serve as a fundraiser for her organization, whose origins stem from Schwarz’s own difficulties trying to escape her previous relationship in 2010.

“Is the idea to kind of make it sort of a cocktail party, or Lady’s Night Out kind of concept, just to share the story,” Schwarz said. “This event gets my face out into the public.”

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

“Just felt that there had to be more options the government’s able to offer, to a shelter, which is how I ended up getting this thing,” Schwarz said.

Many of the services one offers is to create escape routes and teach people on what is needed to get out of an abusive relationship. This manifests in a variety of services, from helping set up a forward-looking shelter to getting advice from someone who has been in a similar experience.

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

By Anthony Pignataro

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

As of Friday, Robert Garcia claimed 46% of the vote while Briscoe had 44%. As for other candidates, Assemblymember Cristina Garcia had 13%, Peter Mathews had 4%, Nicole Lopez had 3%, William Summerville had 2%, Joaquin Beltran had 2% and Julio Flores also had 2%.

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

Garcia, speaking at his Election Day watch party at a Hotel Maya patio, said it was a "good night for our city and a good night for the country." If elected to Congress this fall, Garcia said he plans to tackle major issues including immigration, gun laws, reproductive rights and climate change.

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

Robert Garcia's campaign raised about $714,000—which is more than the other six candidates in the race combined, according to OpenSecrets. The money came from a wide range of interests, including real estate ($80,800), law firms ($70,346) and construction ($52,388), according to OpenSecrets. Briscoe's campaign raised $75,000, according to OpenSecrets. Long Beach's mayor also benefited from more than $7.5 million spent on him and the remaining $709,000 went toward negative ads and mailings against Cristina Garcia, according to OpenSecrets. Briscoe, a real estate broker and mostly from small donors, according to OpenSecrets. Beltran, an engineer and community organizer, raised just $14,000, while Mathews, a professor of American government, raised about $35,000, according to OpenSecrets. 

The other candidates raised comparatively small sums of campaign funds. Summerville, a reverend, brought in about $95,000, Ocean View School District trustee, raised a little more than $195,000, virtually all of it from his own funds. Briscoe previously ran for Congress in 2018 and 2020 against Rep. Lowenthal, losing each time by nearly 30 percentage points.

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Robert Garcia, Long Beach Mayor

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

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By Jason Ruiz

Al Austin, a Long Beach City Councilmember, Merry Taheri, a nurse, and Jonie Ricks-Oddie, a human resources manager, are set to contend in the March primary election in the 7th District, which includes Belmont Shore, Naples and some neighborhoods south of the Traffic Circle. The candidates emerged with the most votes so far were Kristina Duggan (23%), Greg Hall. The incumbent in that district, Stacey Munguia, was drawn out of the new district boundaries and was ineligible to run.

The composition of the City Council going forward will hinge on the Nov. 8 runoff results. Candidates backed by the political establishment, including Zendejas and Kerr, could solidify a more progressive voting block on the council. Their opponents, Salgado and Patton, would shake up the dynamics of the council going forward. Both Patton and Salgado are pushing for change within City Hall and could shift the council in a more moderate direction and upend a majority that has been in place since 2010.

THREE LATE-NIGHT PRIORITY ISSUES

Homelessness and crime topping the list. Those issues and how the remaining candidates propose to address them could be big factors in determining winners in November. Patton and Salgado are pushing for a sweeping homelessness and crime plan. Though Austin has worked as a labor organizer for most of his career, he has not contributed much to political action committees as Lowenthal. In fact, Lowenthal brought in about $200,000 from nearly 20 labor PACs, according to the Secretary of State. Lowenthal. In fact, Lowenthal brought in about $200,000 from nearly 20 labor PACs, according to the Secretary of State.

Small business owner Josh Lowenthal took the lead over challengers while Austin had 10% (2,639 votes), Foster had 35% (8,942) and Taheri had 9%.

All four candidates in this open seat are Democrats. After redistricting, the 69th now includes virtually the entire city of Long Beach as well as Signal Hill and portions of Carson. Both Austin and Lowenthal, the front-runners in the race, talked about many of the same issues during the campaign, including reducing homelessness, creating good jobs and reducing gun violence.

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Richardson, Price head to runoff in Long Beach mayoral race

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

By Anthony Pignataro

Josh Lowenthal leads in 69th Assembly District runoff

Al Austin, a Long Beach City Councilmember, Merry Taheri, a nurse, and Jonie Ricks-Oddie, a human resources manager, are set to contend in the March primary election in the 7th District, which includes Belmont Shore, Naples and some neighborhoods south of the Traffic Circle. The candidates emerged with the most votes so far were Kristina Duggan (23%), Greg Hall. The incumbent in that district, Stacey Munguia, was drawn out of the new district boundaries and was ineligible to run.

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

By Melissa Evans

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

Luna entered the race in part because he wasn’t ready to give up the life of a public servant. He also accused Villanueva of creating “dysfunction and chaos” that has put public safety at risk.

“In December, Luna said he entered the race in part because he wasn’t ready to give up the life of a public servant. He also accused Villanueva of creating “dysfunction and chaos” that has put public safety at risk.”

Luna, who entered the race in December, has a strong showing despite a crowded field of challengers hoping to unseat Villanueva.

Luna has avoided public clashes with the Board of Supervisors, and has received wide support with the Long Beach City Council. He has a master’s degree in public administration from Cal State Long Beach.

Unlike Villanueva’s relationship with the Board of Supervisors, Luna has avoided public clashes with the Long Beach City Council and has received wide support during his tenure.

Villanueva has been criticized for his handling of the county’s top law enforcement officer. While the Sheriff’s Department has nearly 11,000 deputies and about 18,000 employees, the department has just over 800 sworn officers as of Friday, Luna came in second with 26%.

Luna, who entered the race in December, has a strong showing despite a crowded field of challengers hoping to unseat Villanueva.

Luna had announced in September that he was retiring from the LBPD at the end of 2021 after over 30 years of service in Long Beach, including seven years as chief of police.

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

Luna enters law enforcement as a reserve officer in 1985 and spent his entire career in Long Beach, including seven years as chief of police. While the Sheriff’s Department has over 12 times the amount of sworn officers, Luna would continue to support her over the next five months. While it would be against the county’s charter to endorse a Democrat, Goldberg said Republicans must come together to keep Richardson out of office.

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

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

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

“Think in November we’ll have a choice between the two differing visions for our city,” Richardson said.
Incumbents, newcomer with institutional backing claim victory in 3 City Hall elections

By Kelly Punente

Races for three positions in Long Beach are all set to have been decided last week, with incumbents or newcomers with institutional backing claiming victory. To avoid a runoff in November, a candidate must win more than 50% of the vote—and one early result suggests that candidates for city attorney, city prosecutor and city attorney have all done so.

In the city attorney race, Laura Doux, for her part, appeared headed for a win over challenger Dan Miles as of Friday. However, three votes behind the vote compared to Miles with 58%, the election is too close to call.

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

Miles is also a Long Beach native who has been a Certified Public Accountant for more than 30 years. In a statement after early results came in on June 10, Doux said she listened to continue to serve as city attorney.

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

Early returns also showed incumbent City Prosecutor Doug Haubert defeating challengers Nicholas Liddi and George Meyer. As of Friday, Haubert claimed 55% of the vote while Liddi had 44% and Meyer had 4%.

Haubert was first elected city prosecutor in 2011 and said he’s long been an advocate for innovation and community, Liddi, a former councilmember in Long Beach, said he wanted a tighter focus on economic justice and has vowed to end cash bail.

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

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

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

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

Losing the seat cost the city $6.5 million and will reduce the general fund by millions annually, going forward.

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

State says Community Hospital property exempt from affordable housing law

By Kelly Punente

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

The case, called the Surplus Land Act, was a major hurdle in the city’s plan to pay back significant losses to the hospital’s operator, Molina Wu Dermatology (MWN), by transferring ownership of the 8 1/2-acre property in East Long Beach.

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

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

The property, however, must be sold or transferred by Dec. 31, 2021, to qualify for the exemption, the state said.

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

The December closure was not the first time the facility shut down because of seismic issues. The hospital struggled to find staffing and was saddled with mounting costs for seismic retrofits. By November 2021, MWN announced the hospital would close once again, with the company claiming losses upward of $30 million.

Long Beach is now on the hook to reimburse MWN, in a transaction that will likely result in the city “selling” the 8 1/2-acre site to the group for $0 to fulfill the lease obligation. It is unclear if MWN plans to move forward with a wellness campus in light of the state’s decision. A representative for MWN was not available for comment.

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

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

ULMER & WU DERMATOLOGY

Ulmer & Wu Dermatology is proud to welcome two dermatologists who have been in the area since 2019. Our Long Beach clinic is located at 1045 Atlantic Ave, Suite 816 and 819.

To make an appointment with Dr. Kwak, visit www.ulmerwuderm.com, or call 562-435-5621.

Dawn McIntosh
Laura Doux
Doug Haubert

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Dr. Kwak

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

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

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

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

Or not. Yes, you can downsize and make some money, though in some cases, you might end up taking a loss if you’re planning on, say, moving up in class from pretty-nice Los Altos to highly desirable Belmont Shore or Belmont Heights. As for people just entering the market: There are no “starter homes” in the high-dollar parts of town. Consider a two-plus-one at 250 Grand Ave. at Vista Street in a beautiful part of Belmont Heights, just a short walk to the Shore and the beach. It’s a fairly spacious mid-modern home at 1,020 square feet, with hardwood floors, crown molding, recessed lighting and interior doors with frosted glass panels. Landscaping is nice-looking and easy to care for with drought-resistant ornamental grass. The kitchen is upgraded and includes a breakfast bar. The price for the home in this area is merely fair: $1.2 million. That’s pretty rugged for starters and not easily doable for many downsizers without merely breaking even with their old home sale.

Head north on Grand Avenue up to 10th Street, which the listing generously describes as still being in Belmont Heights, and you’ll find a place at 1016 Grand Ave., right across the street from the Armstrong Garden Center, making landscaping convenient, as is evidenced by the nicely landscaped grounds of this 1,117-square-foot Spanish-style house. Built in 1920 on a large, nearly 5,000-square-foot lot (plenty of room for more trees from Armstrong), the home is move-in ready and has an upgraded kitchen with some fairly spectacular tilework, plus a dining room with built-in storage. It’s a good-enough location, though three or four blocks north of what’s commonly considered to be Belmont Heights. Its listing price is $1.15 million. Kind of a lot, but there’s nothing surprising about Long Beach home prices these days.

Those two examples are on the high end of the local market. And there are plenty of two-plus-ones to choose from in the $700,000 to $800,000 range, but what if you only want to spend $500,000 for a two-bed, one-bath home? I don’t have good news for you. It’s been a few years since a half-million dollars was a lot of money in Long Beach. For that price today, you can get a 560-square-foot house on St. Louis Avenue that’s pretty much the polar opposite of turn-key: it’s apparently a home in mid-flip, which leaves you with the fun opportunity to roll up your sleeves and get to dry-walling, plumbing and electrical as well as a lot of good old-fashioned yard work. It’s listed at an even half-million dollars. Starters might have the energy to tackle it, but for those of us of a certain age who might be considering downsizing, it just makes us tired.
Long Beach workers are prepared for mass shooting event but hope it never comes

By Brandon Richardson

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

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

“It hits home,” Dr. Graham Tse, chief medical officer at Miller, told the Business Journal. “There’s always disgruntled patients and families, but oddly there is an individual out there that is going to not know how to express their dissonance.”

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

Schools have been the site of many mass shootings, including a shooting in Uvalde, Texas, that left 19 young school students and two teachers dead. Before that, a shooting occurred at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store on March 24 that six people were killed.

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

Memorial and St. Mary Medical Centers have both raised the number of trauma patients suffering gunshot wounds. Over the past three years, Memorial has seen an increase of just over 50%, according to hospital data. St. Mary, meanwhile, has seen a 7% jump. Gloria Carter, chief nursing executive at the hospital, said during the rally that “we should not have to live in fear.”

Carter said of the community at large, “At the Long Beach Medical Center campus, staff is prepared for mass shooting events—both internally and out in the community. At least twice a year, a hospital staff participant in an active shooter drill to ensure teams members are aware of procedures and best practices. Too bad.”

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

Los Angeles County, and Long Beach specifically, is well prepared for mass shooting events. Stephanie Garcia, director of trauma and acute care surgery at Memorial, said, “We have trauma centers ready for mass shootings and other mass-casualty events such as earthquakes.

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

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

Each trauma center is stocked with additional supplies, including stockpiles of blood samples to ensure patients do not bleed out on the way in.

In Long Beach, both Memorial and St. Mary are county-designated trauma centers. Memorial is one of several that can accept pediatric patients, while St. Mary can admit adults during such events. Garcia said she brought her children to the June 3 event because it’s important for her to create a safe environment for children moving forward.

“Despite not being there, we’re not able to see everybody and have in our heart that’s just devastating,” Garcia said. “And dropping my kid off at preschool this morning, it was hard. I want to create a safe environment for them, and all children, to grow up in.”

“It’s not a political issue, this is a public health issue,” Garcia added. “I joined because I try to stop children from dying in car accidents. We made car seat laws and helmet laws to protect children. Three years ago, Memorial has seen an increase of just over 50%, according to hospital data. St. Mary, meanwhile, has seen a 7% jump. Gloria Carter, chief nursing executive at the hospital, said during the rally that “we should not have to live in fear.”

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In Long Beach, both Memorial and St. Mary are county-designated trauma centers. Memorial is one of several that can accept pediatric patients, while St. Mary can admit adults during such events. Garcia said she brought her children to the June 3 event because it’s important for her to create a safe environment for children moving forward.

“Despite not being there, we’re not able to see everybody and have in our heart that’s just devastating,” Garcia said. “And dropping my kid off at preschool this morning, it was hard. I want to create a safe environment for them, and all children, to grow up in.”

“It’s not a political issue, this is a public health issue,” Garcia added. “I joined because I try to stop children from dying in car accidents. We made car seat laws and helmet laws to protect children. Three years ago,
Equity commission recommends ban on some police surveillance technologies

By Anthony Piguetore

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

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

“While some cities have attempted to reform the technology, it is the opinion of the [commission] that racist technology cannot be reformed, it must be banned altogether,” the draft states.

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

The draft letter recommends the city ban the LBPD’s use of automated license plate readers, facial recognition technology and other biometric technology. Specifically, the letter points to the LBPD’s use of the Los Angeles County Regional Identification System, known as LACRIS, which is a facial recognition system based on a countywide database of mugshots.

To use the system, which is run by the L.A. County Sheriff’s Department, LBPD investigators submit an image of someone they’re trying to identify, and LACRIS compares it against the database of 50 million mugshots, which critics point out is disproportionately filled with people of color.

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

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

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

The commission’s recommendations were based on testimony from the public, a presentation from the immigrant rights group Just Futures Law, as well as research and findings from the city’s Technology and Innovation Commission, which studied facial recognition tech for over a year, according to the letter. The Equity and Human Relations Commission began looking at the issue of facial recognition technology in October after the city’s Technology and Innovation Commission asked it to review its research and recommendations through a “facial equity lens,” according to Gutierrez’s draft letter.

Doing so requires centering the experiences and needs of those most impacted by the surveillance technologies, the draft letter says. Because 72% of Long Beach’s population is made up of people of color, “an overwhelming majority of our residents have the potential to be negatively impacted by the use of this technology,” the draft says.

In testimony before the City Council last summer, LBPD Chief Wally Hebeish said the department does not use facial recognition to conduct “mass surveillance.” The department’s policy is to only let investigators use LACRIS when trying to identify specific people, while investigating a crime. LACRIS documents state that the database only “assists in the identification process” of suspects.

While the technology has been used to prevent sex trafficking and locate missing persons, civil rights activists have noted that “disproportionate misidentifications and wrongful arrests of people of color” and that “the use of facial technologies to exist,” according to the meeting’s translator.

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

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