



Graveyard Shifts & Hoot Gates

Off-hour Trucking Would Ease Freeway Traffic

During pre-dawn hours, dozens of truckers emerge from Total Terminals International's "hoot gate" on Pier T.

Rush-hour commutes on Southland freeways are a nightmare. One answer for easing traffic congestion may be found as most of us sleep.

In the pre-dawn hours, beginning shortly after 3 a.m., dozens of truckers emerge from the "hoot gate" at Total Terminals International's facility on Terminal Island. Having picked up a container loaded with cargo, they zip onto nearly empty freeways, ahead of morning rush-hour commuters.

Hanjin and its terminal operator, TTI, have offered the early morning hoot (owl) gates for a decade. Other shipping terminals at the Port of Long Beach also offer extended gate hours, at least on occasion. Still, the vast majority of truckers pick up and deliver cargo at the Port during weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Only about 15 percent of truckers use the off-hour gates. It's not nearly enough truckers for terminal operators to offset their costs — \$25,000 to \$40,000 per shift. So, except for Hanjin, few terminals regularly offer extended gates.

A shift of more of the truckers to the off-hours could ease freeway traffic congestion.

For several years, the Port has worked closely with terminal operators, trucking companies, importers and exporters to encourage greater use of extended gates. The Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners approved

\$75,000 to help develop software for a truck appointment system. The commission approved

another \$10,000 for a survey of distribution facilities to see how many could operate during the off-hours. So far the results have been disappointing.

"The entire supply chain has to better utilize the existing infrastructure," said Port Executive Director Richard D. Steinke.

Day-Use Fees

State Assemblymember Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, has introduced legislation to force the issue. His measure would impose a daytime fee on truckers who pick up or deliver cargo at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles — providing

a disincentive for daytime trucking and an incentive for nighttime activities. In response, two industry groups are developing their own plans. The Waterfront Coalition, which represents many large retailers and importers, and the

“We can't continue to count on building our way out of all of our troubles. What we need to do now is to find ways to work smarter with what we have.”

Richard D. Steinke
Port of Long Beach, Executive Director

Pacific Merchant Shippers Association, which represents shipping lines and terminal operators, are working on plans

to use privately imposed daytime fees to offset the costs of off-hour operations.

Growing Trade

The urgency is clear. Over the next 15 to 20 years, U.S. consumer demand for foreign-made products will double or triple trade at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. That will mean two or three times as many trucks. With the local population and the number of motorists also growing, freeways will be overwhelmed.

There are plans to improve the Long Beach (710) Freeway.

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Michelle Kyle, Long Beach City College International Business Student

Rewarding Scholars

Scholarships Awarded to Cal State and City College Students

Michelle Kyle likes to lead by example. When one of her teenage sons asks why he has to do his homework, she can proudly say, “for the same reason I do.”

The 39-year-old mother of two attends two schools, Long Beach City College and the University of Phoenix, while holding down a full-time job with Epson America Inc. What’s it like for her two sons to have their mother attending two colleges?

“They really love it,” she said. “When we go somewhere I tell them to bring a book, and they see me doing the same thing. They can follow my lead, and it really shows them that education is the best thing.”

Kyle, an international business student, is one of the recent recipients of a Port of Long Beach scholarship. Each May, the Port awards scholarships to international business students at Cal State Long Beach and Long Beach City College. Scholarships also are awarded to students in LBCC’s trades and industrial technologies programs preparing for opportunities in port-related industries.

Kyle thanks the Port for inspiring her to pursue an education in business management.

“When you walk around a store like Wal-Mart,” she said, “and realize that all these things had to pass through the Port, you try to imagine how the whole system works, and how it all affects us. It is pretty amazing. I wanted to know how that all worked.”

Franks Garcia is another of this year’s 17 Port scholarship recipients. Garcia is a 39-year-old father of three who decided he wanted something better for his children and decided to return to school.

“My father was a mechanic, so I grew up with it,” he said.

“It only made sense for me to get into it.” But after nearly 10 years with Nissan and Acura as a mechanic, Garcia thought he had peaked in the profession. Seeking a way to move forward, he joined the diesel mechanic vocational program at LBCC.

While in the program, Garcia was chosen to participate in a mentor program with Long Beach Transit. Much like an internship, the program gives students the chance to learn and work in a real world environment, but with no guarantee of a future job. Garcia took the opportunity and wowed them. Long Beach Transit offered him a full-time position as a diesel mechanic, the only student from his mentor class to be so honored.

In his first six months with Long Beach Transit, he won a \$2,000 scholarship and decided to continue with one of his dreams. “I am studying business administration, and someday I want to be a general manager in the automotive or diesel field,” he said. Garcia said the Port scholarship he recently won will help him toward his goal.



Frank Garcia, Long Beach City College Diesel Mechanic, Vocational Program

Qualification for Scholarships

Since 1993, the Port of Long Beach has awarded more than \$120,000 in scholarships to 121 college students. To qualify for scholarships, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- A cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0
- Evidence of financial need

- Documentation demonstrating a legal right to work in California
- Students’ service to the community or college work experience and other academic degrees are taken into consideration.

Hoot Gates

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With government strapped for cash, legislators say they will not appropriate funding as long as existing roadways have unused off-peak capacity.

So freeway improvements won't begin until the logistics industry shifts more of its operations into the off-hours.

That shift has been difficult. Truckers complain that the existing system of extended gates is haphazard. Some terminals offer early morning hoot gates, while others offer night gates from 6 p.m. to 3 a.m., and still others extend their gate hours by opening on weekends.

There also are problems at the other end of the cargo exchange, at the warehouses and distribution centers. Very few of them are open in the off-hours, again because of the low volume of trucking. In some communities, off-peak trucking activity is prohibited. Unless there is a high volume of trucking during the off hours, shipping terminals and distribution centers won't open overnight and on weekends. But unless shipping terminals and distribution centers consistently open during the off hours, the trucking industry cannot plan more off-hour operations.

Daytime fees may be the answer. One way or another, it seems likely the industry will have to increase its hours of operation.

"Historically, we've been able to build our way out of congestion, by expanding the Port, the freeways and the rest of the infrastructure. But we can't continue to count on building our way out of all of our troubles," said Steinke. "What we need to do now is to find ways to work smarter with what we have."



Correction: In the Spring 2004 issue of Re:port, on page 7, quotes from two graduates of the Global Logistics Specialist program were incorrectly attributed. The quote attributed to Mr. Greg Gutierrez should have been credited to Mr. Gareth Osborn and Mr. Osborn's quote should have been attributed to Mr. Gutierrez. The Port of Long Beach apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused.



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