Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa speaks to guests at the Berth 200 groundbreaking.

From left, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and PHL President Otis Clatt

Below: From left, Greg Dixon, General Superintendent; Don Norton, Director Marketing and Administration; Howard Magana, Director Operations; Marlon Taylor, Manager Transportation; Stephen Moore, Road Foreman of Engines; Robert Giannoble, Chief Engineer; Otis Clatt, President; Manny Alvarez, BLET Local 214 President; and Greg Peters, Manager, Operations Support

Pacific Harbor Line had the honor of assisting Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in his grand entrance during the Jan. 16 Berth 200 groundbreaking. Villaraigosa rode a PHL engine into the future site before addressing other port officials and employees at the press conference.

Berth 200 will include PHL’s new home, as well as a new intermodal storage railyard that will improve a vital link in the national freight network. The new yard will function as a critical link between the Port of Los Angeles and Alameda Corridor, providing staging and storage for trains using the corridor.

Construction of the $137.7 million rail project at Berth 200, also known as the West Basin Railyard, will generate about 2,000 direct and indirect jobs. When completed, the new yard will move cargo more safely and efficiently, reduce truck traffic on roads and freeways, and improve regional air quality while strengthening the Port of Los Angeles’ position as the nation’s No. 1 trade gateway.

The Berth 200 railyard project also enables track space at the TraPac container terminal to serve as TraPac’s future on-dock rail facility. With completion of the $365 million in rail, roadway and terminal improvements at TraPac during the next three years, TraPac will join the other seven container terminals at the Port of Los Angeles that offer shippers the speed-to-market advantage of on-dock rail.

“This project creates jobs, reduces pollution and makes our city a better place to live, work and do business,” Villaraigosa said. “The economic and environmental benefits of this investment will be felt across the nation.”

“The West Basin Railyard is a model project for how government is supposed to work,” said Harbor Commission President Cindy Miscikowski. “We are pooling federal and state grants with Port revenues to improve a critical link in the nation’s supply chain and support the kind of sustainable solutions we need to meet our most pressing needs.”

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As Berth 200 railway construction gets under way, PHL will follow the two-phase project as it relocates from the current site to its new one.

Phase I, starting in April, includes construction of the new yard including the new PHL office and locomotive shop. Utility, electric and sub-surfacing companies will begin their relocation process. PHL is scheduled to start moving operations to the new yard near Dec. 1.

Phase I also includes support tracks for the TraPac and China Shipping/West Basin Container terminals, double-track connections to the Alameda Corridor and national rail network, and access road improvements.

After PHL moves Dec. 1, demolition of the current office and Pier A yard will follow to make way for TraPac’s West Basin expansion.

Phase II is due to begin construction later this year and includes final rail network connections and vehicle overpasses to eliminate at-grade crossings for more efficient flow of truck and commuter traffic. Both phases are due to be completed in summer 2014.

PHL prepares for move to Berth 200

PHL accommodates Overweight Container Logistics

Since coming aboard with Pacific Harbor Line in 2011, Overweight Container Logistics has found the railroad’s service beneficial in expanding its own.

An agriculture loading business, OCL handles the import and export of agricultural products via rail and truck to ships. The company is located outside the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in the “overweight corridor,” ensuring heavy cargo can be transported to and from the terminals quickly and efficiently.

“The great thing with PHL is that it increases the amount of rail service we can have,” said President Val Carroll. “Previously, we were limited to the amount of cars we could do. By expanding service to PHL, it took our rail from handling 70 to 80 cars to more than 300 cars last year.”

Before PHL’s service, OCL also was limited to the customers it could serve. Because of its location, it only had access to BNSF cars. PHL allowed them to serve both BNSF and Union Pacific.

“Gaining UP cars is important for our agriculture customers,” Carroll said. “We have one that only has UP service at their location.”

Along with expanding OCL’s business, Carroll said the work relationship with PHL has been good.

“They’ve been more than accommodating,” he said. “We’ve called to get work done on a Saturday and they’ve opened for us. The computer interface has been convenient. We can navigate and block cars by typing in a few things, which makes it simple. The people, interface and infrastructure have all been positive.”

Carroll said OCL employees look forward to growing their business and expanding beyond the agriculture line if possible.

Currently, OCL offers transloading from inland to ocean containers or vice-versa and cross-docking at the facility to achieve maximum weight capacity. It offers trucking with drayage service to the ports of LA and Long Beach to the Southern California area and regular inland transport to much of Southern California, Arizona, Nevada and Utah. Employees also deliver cargo throughout the United States.
From left, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and PHL President Otis Cliatt visit on the way to the groundbreaking conference.

Port Executive Director Geraldine Knatz, Ph.D. said the Port’s top priorities are competitive operations, strong relationships and financial strength.

“This project hits all three marks by allowing us to move cargo more safely and efficiently, making us a better business partner and neighbor to our surrounding communities, and procuring federal and state funding to make the best use of Port dollars,” she said.

The railyard will be constructed with $16 million in federal grant money from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s highly competitive Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program, which is known as the TIGER Discretionary Grant program. The Port secured $51.2 million from the State Proposition 1B Trade Corridors Improvement Fund Grant that is administered by Caltrans and $22.1 million from METRO-awarded federal funds. The Port is investing $48.37 million from its Harbor Revenue funds for the project. Funding for the Berth 200/West Basin Railyard project was awarded during the second round of TIGER grants.

The rail project construction begins on the heels of completion of the Harry Bridges Boulevard Roadway Improvements, a $22 million project also built with federal stimulus dollars.

“This ensemble of roadway, rail and terminal infrastructure is part of the Port’s $1.2 billion investment in capital improvements during the next five years that reflect the Port of Los Angeles’ commitment to responsible growth and global leadership in international trade,” Knatz said.

The project strengthens the Port’s position to maintain and expand discretionary cargo — goods whose owners choose the Port of Los Angeles over competing ports to import and export their products. As the leading seaport in North America in terms of shipping container volume and cargo value, the Port of Los Angeles generates more than 830,000 regional jobs and $35 billion in annual wages and tax revenues.

Mark your calendars
Annual Health Fair
June 1, 2013, at 9 a.m.
El Dorado Regional Park
7550 E Spring St.
Long Beach, CA 90815-1617
Employees have taken it upon themselves to work safely and surpassed 365 days without a reportable injury. They have achieved 378 consecutive days injury free as of Jan. 31.

“Everyone does what they have to do to work safely,” said Locomotive Engineer Johnny Carper. “We have respect for each other and look out for one another. I have a family to support, so I want to make sure I go home safely.”

Employees take pride in achieving an injury-free year, while also having the best year in safety ever for PHL. Locomotive Engineer Lonnie Pate said the success can be attributed to communication and not becoming complacent.

“It may seem like we do the same thing over and over again, but nothing is ever the same,” he said. “Even though I made sure a derail was down, I am still looking for it to be up. I double-check every time.”

Pate said job briefings and communication between locomotive engineers and conductors is important. They must ensure everyone understands what is going on, what their movement will be and when it will be.

“You don’t want to assume others understood what you told them,” he said. “Whatever you say, you want them to repeat it back to you so you know they understand it.”

As employees continue through the year, safety stays at the forefront.

“Everyone wants to go home safely to their families,” said Jessie Petteway, locomotive engineer. “We do it for our families and the company. It’s nice to be looked at as a safe person and be appreciated for being safe all year.”

Promotions and awards

Pacific Harbor Line congratulates the following employees on their locomotive engineer promotions. They completed training in January.

- Melissa Barrereas
- Christopher Hale
- Amadio Maestas III

New, experienced employees work together to enhance safety culture

Experienced employees know the importance of safety on the job and pass that knowledge along to new hires. It takes commitment from both sides to ensure the proper safety training is received and accepted.

As part of the training process, new employees are mentored by experienced employees to be taught the right way. Locomotive Engineer Lonnie Pate advises new hires to stop and speak up if they don’t understand something.

“Don’t try to go any further with the task or move,” he said. “Just stop and ask questions. It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

Locomotive Engineer Johnny Carper said when it comes to new hires, he often takes more responsibility, handling more critical tasks to show them how it’s done.

“The equipment is heavy, it doesn’t stop and is unforgiving,” he said. “If they don’t understand, tell us. Experienced crews should take time and explain it since they’ve been in that role and know what they’re going through.”

“The safety in train service is credited to the crews,” Pate said. “We’ve been responsible in making sure we work safely.”

Teamwork, communication keep MOW safe

Maintenance of way employees are proud to have achieved more than six years injury free. As of Jan. 31, these employees had reached 2,478 days without a reportable injury.
Gomez takes on new challenge

Bringing in eight years of field experience, Alex Gomez looks forward to his new role as track gang foreman. He was promoted Jan. 20.

“When I came in, I knew nothing about railroads,” he said. “I enjoy the learning experience and fixing the track. It’s not the same thing every day.”

Gomez joined Pacific Harbor Line Aug. 30, 2004, as a track laborer. He enjoyed his work out in the field taking care of defects. He likes that he’ll continue to be out in the field being a foreman.

“I’ll still find defects myself and apply remedial action,” he said. “Whether it be a loose bolt, broken rail or problems with the walkways, I’ll still be out looking for anything unusual.”

Gomez said his prior experience will help him as foreman.

“I think it helped me being a laborer,” he said. “Others have had previous railroad experience, and this is where I learned. I was willing to learn and ask questions about the job.”

Gomez continues to learn from Roadmaster Jose Rodriguez. As previous foreman, Rodriguez knows what needs to be done and is willing to pass along that knowledge. They both look forward to working together and keeping their co-workers safe and complete jobs efficiently.

When Gomez comes to work, he doesn’t know what each day will bring. He loves the challenge and learning from it.

“You can never learn too much,” he said. “Whether being a manager or laborer, you’re always learning something new.”

Outside of work, Gomez enjoys time with his wife, Veronica, and their children, Alex and Arlett.

Rodriguez ready to continue success in leadership role

Jose Rodriguez is up for the challenge as he takes on the roadmaster role for Pacific Harbor Line maintenance of way.

“I want to continue in making sure things run smoothly,” he said. “Doing the jobs out in the field, those came easy to me. It’s more of a challenge to manage people, learn new rules and learn the transportation side, but I’m up for it.”

Rodriguez joined MOW as a laborer Nov. 15, 1999. He was promoted to track gang foreman and handled those responsibilities until becoming roadmaster Jan. 1. Having field experience and working with his team for many years, he looks forward to helping them continue good work habits.

“I work with a good group and know their daily jobs and habits,” he said. “I want to keep the track up to standards for PHL to continue serving customers.”

Rodriguez also has gained knowledge from former Roadmaster James Connolly and Chief Engineer Robert Giannoble.

“I enjoyed working with Connolly and Giannoble and learning from them,” he said. “I’m honored they have the confidence in me to do this job. I plan on continuing to keep everyone safe and ensure work gets done.”

When it comes to the new role, Rodriguez wants to keep lines of communication open with managers to make sure they have proper track and time and will not interrupt service. With his team, he wants them to have the material they need as well as the right protection when out in the field.

“I want to make sure I attend to their needs and provide what they need to do their job,” he said. “My main goal is keeping them safe.”

Rodriguez continues the learning process himself, attending more training classes and ACE refresher courses. He looks forward to gaining knowledge from others who have experience in management roles.

“I work with good people and in a good environment, which is why I enjoy my job,” he said. “This promotion couldn’t have come at a better time.”

Rodriguez and his wife, Elizabeth, have a daughter, Daisy, and another child on the way. When he is not with the family and taking his daughter to play softball and basketball, he fixes old cars.
Employee Appreciation Banquet

Pacific Harbor Line employees and families celebrated an ongoing safety record and recognized individual safety accomplishments Jan. 20 during the employee appreciation banquet.

PHL President Otis Cliatt congratulated employees on achieving a year without a reportable injury and continuing it.

"Being 365 days without a reportable injury and counting, we’ve developed a renewed safety culture and demolished our previous record of reportable injuries," he said.

Employees who attained service milestones were recognized in front of the audience. Those with five years of service were awarded a PHL varsity jacket. Those with 10 years received a check for $1,000.