

January 25, 2023

Mario Cordero, Executive Director
Port of Long Beach
415 W. Ocean Blvd.
Long Beach CA, 90802

Gene Seroka, Executive Director
Port of Los Angeles
425 S. Palos Verdes St.
San Pedro, CA 90731

(Shared Electronically Via-Email)

Dear Mr. Cordero and Mr. Seroka,



Thank you for the opportunity to highlight a concept that is very important to HTA and CTA motor carrier members – a single, inter-operable, complex-wide truck appointment system across all containerized terminals in the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

With an increased focus on data availability in the supply chain, public sector investment is currently being allocated for digital infrastructure enhancement to support the goods movement ecosystem. These funds may in fact be a perfect fit for a single, inter-operable, complex wide truck appointment system in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach (Ports).

While there are current efforts underway to encourage the use of digital tools for increased transparency in container movement and process, there is nothing yet under specific consideration to link the first or last leg of the container journey - the import or export appointment at the Marine Terminal - to any of these efforts.

With money being available to help jumpstart digital infrastructure deployments, there is now a unique opportunity to take these investment dollars and create something that will have a lasting impact on productivity and transparency in the harbor complex.

HTA and CTA applaud Port of Los Angeles (POLA) leadership for recent¹ statements on future efforts to develop a single appointment system for marine terminals within POLA jurisdiction. We are also encouraged by the recent² work of Port of Long Beach (POLB) leadership to develop technology for enhanced transparency and efficiency at the Port complex.

These efforts by both Ports to bolster productivity at the complex has not gone unnoticed by the motor carrier community. Ideally, these endeavors will result in a new level of collaboration between POLA and POLB to work towards a common goal.

To this end, the HTA and CTA are formally requesting that the Ports work together with motor carrier stakeholders to create a pilot program for a single, inter-operable, complex-wide truck appointment system.

¹ Port of Los Angeles, State of the Port 2023, January 18, 2023: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m26vnetysCk>

² Press-Telegram, Long Beach port announces supply chain data management 'information highway', May 24, 2022: <https://www.presstelegram.com/2022/05/24/long-beach-port-announces-supply-chain-data-management-information-highway/>

Currently, motor carriers are forced to work between several different platforms to secure appointments. Even between marine terminals who share the same appointment software providers, there are unique differences depending on specific terminal requirements.

Because of the disparity, there is not a single, inter-operable system to locate appointment availability for future bookings in the complex. Nor is there central location to aggregate appointments once they have been booked, leaving motor carriers to scramble between several systems every day while keeping numerous spreadsheets to keep track of future and past appointments.

No doubt, a single, inter-operable system across both Ports will ensure a seamless booking process for motor carrier appointment deployment and utilization.

A single system will drive down costs and increase productivity as motor carriers will no longer expend resources and time navigating as many as seven unique appointment systems to create future appointments for container movement at the harbor complex.

A single system will also facilitate compliance with AB2406 (Aguiar-Curry 2022)³ and Ocean Shipping Reform Act (OSRA22)⁴ requirements by providing proof of appointment availability, dual transaction restrictions, chassis restrictions, empty container restrictions and other closures that will help billing parties understand when charges for detention and demurrage are applicable.

Moreover, the system could also enhance appointment availability and notification with functions such as interactive terminal schedules, auto cancellation as well as anti-bot measures to prevent the use of software programs that mimic human behavior for appointment securement (this should also be the practice in terminal-based systems as well). These are but a few examples.

However, for a single appointment system to be successful, it is critical that all marine container terminals in both POLA and POLB agree to share data into an inter-operable system. The terminals would also need to agree on common and consistent business practices to provide a workable mechanism for motor carriers to plan and effectively distribute capacity, similar to WCMTOA efforts⁵ put forth on “PierPass 2.0”.

It is also of critical importance that any single inter-operable system be looked at as a mechanism to enhance transparency, productivity and throughput, not as a potential profit center or enforcement tool to be used against motor carriers.

Clearly, for this to work, there must be a willingness by all parties involved to collaboratively connect for the greater good of the supply chain.

To ensure effective functionality and facilitate on going collaboration, HTA and CTA believe the way to build the most resilient and user-friendly system would be to initially begin the concept as a pilot program that would eventually evolve into a permanent platform once consistent interoperability and functionality was achieved.

³ California Legislative Information (AB2406), October 3, 2022:

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB2406

⁴ Congress.gov (S.3580) Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022 June 16, 2022

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3580/all-actions?overview=closed#tabs>

⁵PierPass - PierPass Members Add Common Business Rules to Terminal Appointment Systems – April 30, 2018:

<https://www.pierpass.org/news/pierpass-members-add-common-business-rules-to-terminal-appointment-systems/>

To further encourage collaboration, this initial pilot program should be created through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to allow the multitude of software providers an opportunity to present a mechanism that would act as the single inter-operable system. Minimum standards for functionality would be set and providers would demonstrate adherence to the requirements and propose a budget along with deployment timelines within their proposals.

It is important to clarify that any concept of single source is not meant to replace existing appointment systems. Any single system must interact and function with existing appointment platforms. Very possibly much of the underlying architecture for a single system may already exist across many software platforms that are currently at work in POLA/POLB marine terminals.

No doubt, this effort has the potential to be a game changer for the Port complex. The undertaking itself would be unprecedented and a clear signal to the supply chain ecosystem that both Ports are committed to implementing operational enhancements that will result in increased productivity.

The world is watching the supply chain and the time to act is now. It is possible that there will not be a better time to embark on this voyage.

Thank you both for taking the time and energy to consider our request.

Sincerely,



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Sincerely,



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