Introduction

The Port of Long Beach (POLB) is the premier U.S. gateway for trans-Pacific trade and a trailblazer in innovative goods movement, safety, environmental stewardship and sustainability. As the second-busiest container seaport in the United States, POLB handles trade valued at more than $194 billion annually and supports 2.6 million trade-related jobs across the nation, more than 575,000 in Southern California. POLB serves 140 shipping lines with connections to 217 seaports around the world. Goods moving through the POLB reach every U.S. congressional district. The POLB encompasses 3,200 acres with 31 miles of waterfront, 10 piers, 62 berths and 68 post-Panamax gantry cranes. In 2018, the Port handled more than 8 million container units, achieving the busiest year in its history.

In addition to handling containers, POLB also caters to the Dry Bulk, Liquid Bulk, Roll On-Roll Off and Break Bulk. Typical Break Bulk includes large or heavy items such as steel, lumber and machinery. POLB has dedicated close to 900 acres to facilitate the Break Bulk cargo handling. With new stadiums to power plants, these Break Bulk are very much essential to cater to the growing infrastructure demand in the Country. Once off-loaded from the ship, these loads are transported on the roadways via specialized trucks assembled exclusively to carry such loads with the help of pilot cars and sometimes with assistance from law enforcement agencies. Exhibit 1 shows the typical example of break bulk that POLB caters to.

Exhibit 1: Break Bulk from Pier F Area

These break bulk cargo is referred as the “oversize cargo” which are transported via trucks that are more than 13.5 feet tall, 8.5 feet in wide and 75 feet in length. Exhibit 2 shows a typical trailer plus cab configuration that is used to transport the oversize cargo. Majority of the oversize cargo originates from the Pier F Crescent Terminal. The oversize trucks traverses through Pier F Avenue making a left at Pico Avenue and continues northbound for about 1.5 miles. The trucks then make a right turn onto 9th Street for about 0.75 miles, and then makes another right turn at Santa Fe Avenue, and continue northbound for about 750 feet to reach Anaheim Street. After this point, the oversize trucks have an option to continue northbound on Santa Fe Avenue or travel eastbound on Anaheim Street to reach their destination. Exhibit 3 shows the existing route setting within the POLB.
Exhibit 2: Steerable Trailer Plus Cab Configuration

Exhibit 3: Existing Route Setting for Oversize Cargo

Source: Heavy Transport

It’s just not boxes at the Port, the cargo comes in all shapes and sizes!! - An experience with 9th Street Closure
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Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility Project

The Port of Long Beach is proposing to reconfigure, expand and enhance the existing Pier B rail facility located along Anaheim Street and the 710 Freeway to support more efficient use of “on-dock” rail at the Port’s shipping terminals, which will in turn ease roadway traffic congestion and improve air quality. The Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility Project proposes to:

- Improve roadway traffic flow to enhance motorist and rail safety by eliminating the existing railroad crossing at the 9th Street and Pico Avenue intersection.
- Reconfigure existing tracks and add additional tracks to allow trains up to 10,000 feet long to directly connect to the on-dock rail facilities and the Alameda Corridor railway.

The existing Pier B rail facility serves as a storage and staging area for trains and is a critical juncture in the Port’s rail network. The facility is primarily used by Pacific Harbor Line (PHL), which provides rail dispatching and switching services. PHL has been recognized as America’s “greenest” railroad for converting its fleet to clean diesel locomotives that dramatically reduce pollution and save fuel.

Designed to shift more shipping containers from trucks to rail, the facility will result in a more efficient and sustainable transfer of cargo, helping the Port of Long Beach to stay competitive and meet environmental targets. Exhibit 4 shows the Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility Project’s footprint.

Exhibit 4: Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility Project’s Footprint
9th Street Closure

Closing the railroad crossing at Pico Avenue/9th Street/I-710 Off-Ramp was always a priority of the Port’s Business Operations for many years and a requirement for Pier B On-Dock Rail Support Facility Project. It was also a necessary step to move the cargo through the rail network and increase on-dock rail usage. Exhibit 5 shows the location of planned closure.

Exhibit 5: 9th Street Closure Location

With this closure of railroad crossing at Pico Avenue/9th Street/I-710 Off-Ramp and lacking of alternate routes, transporting the Break Bulk out of the POLB was a huge challenge to the trucking community. Exhibit 6 shows an example of oversize cargo moving before the 9th Street closure.

Exhibit 6: Oversize Cargo Movement

Significance of the 9th Street Closure

With a hard deadline looming over to close the 9th Street and at the same time find alternatives to move the oversize Break Bulk out of the POLB was a significant challenge to accomplish. Traffic signal modification and intersection/roadway improvements were some of the tasks that had to be achieved before the closure.

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Exhibit 7 shows an example of oversize truck that was able to take an alternative route with the roadway improvements.

Exhibit 7: Roadway Improvements to Accommodate Oversize Cargo

With these roadway improvements and a potential closure of 9th Street, the extreme oversize loads still had challenges to traverse out of the POLB. The Project team devised a solution to have gates installed at the railroad crossing and come up with an appointment based system to facilitate the extreme oversize loads still go through 9th Street. With cross jurisdictional, agency and division collaboration, 9th Street was successfully and officially closed to rest of the traffic on March 11, 2019. Exhibit 8 shows the closed 9th Street along with the gates. The exhibit also show the oversize truck movement after gate implementation.

Exhibit 8: 9th Street with Gates and an Oversize Truck Movement after the Closure

With growing infrastructure demand and with excellent customer service offered by the POLB, the POLB has become a preferred gateway choice for all the oversize cargo. This further compels The Port of Long Beach to come up with a permanent solution to cater to the oversize cargo. Some concepts are already being vetted as shown on Exhibit 9 for further roadway widening and improvements. It is just a matter of time to see what direction this will be headed for a permanent solution.

Exhibit 9: Roadway Improvement Concept with Oversize Truck Turning Path

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