One Year In, PierPass “2.0” Smooths Truck Traffic at Los Angeles & Long Beach Ports

Ample Appointments Available

LONG BEACH, Calif., Dec. 2, 2019—In the year since PierPass launched an appointments-based system for trucks picking up containers at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, long late-afternoon queues have been eliminated, and ample appointment opportunities are available for each container. On average, port terminals are offering about a third more appointment slots than there are containers to be picked up.

Terminals have also been working with the trucking community and other stakeholders to add new types of appointment-based services to help truckers achieve greater efficiency, taking advantage of the scalability and flexibility they gained by switching to an appointment-based system.

“Terminals continue offering at least two peak shift and two off-peak shift appointments for each container prior to free time expiration, providing multiple options for each pickup,” said John Cushing, President and CEO of PierPass. “Over the past year, many terminals have also introduced new services. All of this gives the cargo community an enhanced traffic mitigation system, which is running smoothly one year in.”

The OffPeak program was restructured in November 2018. The revised program, informally called “PierPass 2.0,” reduces traffic congestion by spreading cargo movement across two shifts, using appointments rather than the daytime-only Traffic Mitigation Fee (TMF) used in the original OffPeak program that started in 2005. From July 2005 through October 2019, OffPeak has diverted 46.7 million truck trips from Los Angeles weekday daytime traffic.

The revised OffPeak program has achieved the major objectives of the overhaul, including eliminating the long truck queues that previously formed in late afternoons as trucks waited outside the terminals until 6:00 p.m. to avoid the TMF. All 12 terminals report that the late-afternoon queues outside their gates have been eliminated.

Appointments for Exports and Empties

Under the common business rules of the revised OffPeak program, all terminals provide appointments for picking up import containers. Over the past year, many terminals have also begun offering appointments for dropping off export and empty containers. These services make it easier to arrange dual transactions, with a single truck trip dropping off one container and picking up another one.

Of the 12 terminals, eight now offer appointments for exports and for empties.

“One of the advantages we expected from shifting to an appointments-based system was increased flexibility, allowing terminals to continue innovating to improve efficiency and meet evolving market needs,” Cushing said. “We are very pleased and encouraged to see this expectation being achieved.”

Same Day Canceling and Rebooking Capability

In another operational improvement, most terminals are now allowing same-day canceling and rebooking of appointments if an appointment is available. Terminals were able to make this enhancement through software modifications.

Also, one terminal has begun allowing trucking companies to make appointments for picking up containers several days before the ship docks, allowing truckers to better plan their workloads.

“The new appointment-based PierPass system is working, and we are encouraged that the terminals are responding to our recommendations for additional improvements to their appointment systems,” said Weston LaBar, CEO of the Harbor Trucking Association. “We continue working with PierPass and the
terminals to make the container pickup and delivery process faster and smoother for truckers and their customers.”

By providing additional shifts during off-peak hours, PierPass has allowed the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to make better use of their infrastructure and investments, allowing cargo volume to grow without negatively impacting traffic conditions.

Prior to the creation of PierPass in 2005, the two ports were struggling to handle cargo volume during the five existing shifts per week, causing severe traffic congestion. Significant capacity remains during the four additional shifts terminals are currently providing per week.

**Appointments Remain Ample, No-Show Rate Holds Steady**

During the third calendar quarter of 2019, a weighted average of 30% of available daytime appointments and 41% of available nighttime appointments went unused. This indicates that, on an aggregate basis, more than enough appointment slots are being made available by terminals.

When the program began last year, the percentage of no-shows (when the trucker fails to appear for an appointment) averaged between the mid-20s and the low-30s. For both of the past two quarters, no-shows were down to an average of 14% of peak-hour appointments and 15% of off-peak appointments, as terminals continued meetings and follow-up with trucking companies that repeatedly miss their appointments.

More information about the revised OffPeak program is available at [https://www.pierpass.org/about/offpeak-2-0/](https://www.pierpass.org/about/offpeak-2-0/). PierPass is the agent of the West Coast MTO Agreement (WCMTFA), a discussion agreement filed with the FMC. WCMTFA’s members are the 12 marine terminal operators at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

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