Port projects are improving terminal productivity

By: Robert L. Wallack | **Issue #660** | Nov 13 2017 at 08:00 AM | Channel(s): [Ports & Terminals](https://www.ajot.com/news/channel/ports-terminals)

Stronger global economic growth is resulting in rising cargo volumes in United States coastal ports. Port of Vancouver USA and Port Newark Container Terminal (PNCT) have multi-year expansion and infrastructure projects and Port of Hueneme is also improving infrastructure for its fresh produce from South and Central America. Del Monte Fresh Produce depends on the heavy lifting and raw muscle of their stevedoring operations to distribute temperature sensitive produce.

In 1979, Del Monte Fresh Produce led the way for other fresh fruit companies to distinguish Port of Hueneme as one of California’s busiest seaports which now handles over $9 billion in all kinds of cargo annually from bananas to automobiles, mainly. To cope with the growing volumes of cargo, the Army Corps of Engineers will dredge the Port depth to 40 feet from 35 feet and the Port is implementing shore side power for vessels to save fuel and reduce emissions. Del Monte Fresh Produce Ocean Cargo Services operates as Network Shipping Ltd with land trucking, ocean shipping vessels and operations.

Ports America, the largest terminal operator and stevedoring in the United States, does all of Del Monte’s cargo movements and monitoring. Ports America is the terminal operator in Port of Hueneme and Del Monte hires them to “take care of everything,” said Chuck Caulkins, port manager, Del Monte Fresh Produce in a recent talk with the *AJOT*. Caulkins began as operations manager 21 years ago and promoted to port manager 12-13 years ago. He was a naval officer prior to his career in Del Monte Fresh Produce.

The Port owns both facilities used by Del Monte with a long-term lease. The fresh produce importer contracts with Ports America for stevedoring. One ship arrives each week from either Ecuador, Costa Rica or Guatemala and Ports America hires the labor to discharge the bananas, fresh pineapples, melons cantaloupes, honey dews and watermelons. These shipments move to the warehouse or by container to rest in the yard where longshorepersons plug in the refrigerated containers to monitor temperatures.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) is essential to Del Monte and Ports America and represent approximately 20,000 longshore workers on the West Coast of the United States. The Port, the terminal operator and Del Monte can be assured fresh produce will arrive to customers in the western one-third of the United States because of the recent contract extension with Pacific Maritime Association (PMA). The contract extension will raise wages, maintain health benefits and increase pensions from 2019-2022.

The fresh produce cargo is handled by an ILWU clerk and teamster forklift operator from San Pedro Forklift, Inc. from the “point of rest” in the Port to truck loading. Most Port of Hueneme customers pick up their own cargo at the Port, explained Caulkins. He added, “Ports America has interesting operations with the Port of Hueneme by many cargo types of breakbulk produce, containerized produce, autos and military shipments.” Del Monte Fresh Produce also does business in Galveston, Texas; Port Manatee, Florida and Holt Terminal in Philadelphia.

**Rail Access**

Port of Vancouver USA is anticipating more container volumes from the improving global economy and from the sailing of more megaships carrying 20,000 containers. There are a few projects underway such as the nearly completed West Vancouver Freight Access (WVFA). This is a $250 million rail expansion project to increase the Port’s capacity from 55,000 to 400,000 rail cars per year. This will reduce regional rail congestion by as much as 40 percent on the BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad main lines, according to Katie Odem, spokeswoman for Port of Vancouver USA.

At the terminal operator and stevedoring level, “this project will increase unit train capacity since trains can now be discharged without removing the engine (power) making the operation cost-efficient. Adding train capacity will enable terminal operators to handle multiple commodities at one time, helping the Port of Vancouver USA to attract high-volume bulk projects,” she added. The WVFA project is to be completed by 2018.

In addition, Project 7 will enlarge Kinder Morgan’s dry (copper, bentonite clay, and other minerals) facility with more tracks in connection with WVFA and reduce dust from unloading by a covered, enclosed area to be completed this year. Project 11B is to improve grain track unit trains by 2018 and the Continental Industrial Building in lot 1 of 7 is a 125,000 square-foot (32-foot clear height) light-industrial warehouse in a 67 acres Park for tenants in advanced manufacturing, warehousing and distribution. This building will have several features for environmental sustainability to be completed in 2017.

On the East Coast, Port Newark Container Terminal embarked on a $500 million expansion and infrastructure upgrade to facilitate the growing vessel volumes in part from the new Panama Canal. PNCT has a long term phased program to 2030 that will double capacity by 2019 from 1.3 million TEU to 2.3 million TEU per year. Chris Garbarino, PNCT Vice President Operations explained to the *American Journal of Transportation* that “to date, our straddle carrier fleet has grown by more than 20 percent and our yard capacity in excess of 33% with additional expansion activity in progress. PNCT added three super-post Panamax (SPPX) cranes (in operation) with two additional cranes in service by the end of the first half of 2018 and two more cranes in the design and planning process for a total crane fleet of 14.” Finally, productivity will improve at the terminal by a new and expanded truck gate complex to speed trucks through the facility for reduced truck turn time to be completed in the first quarter of 2018.

A reliable terminal operating system (TOS) is important to knit together all the moving equipment, rolling stock, operations and administration events. PNCT worked with Navis to successfully upgrade to the N4 platform in the first quarter of 2017. Navis is part of Cargotec Corporation *(see Matt Miller article on page 8)* a provider of operational technologies and services for terminal operators and ocean carriers with their combined goal of becoming the leader in intelligent cargo handling.

The N4 implementation was timely since cargo volumes are increasing in PNCT and the testing and live data flowing of N4 improved productivity, especially in rail activities. “Post N4 implementation, crane productivity climbed 20% and N4’s rail planning and execution functionality has aided in promoting and attracting additional rail business to PNCT,” said Garbarino. PNCT selected N4 also because of its data, billing and reporting capabilities and for its optimization modules as well as for configuration and data analytics capabilities and its integration with other advanced terminal technologies, such as, optical character recognition (OCR) which are important in gate management systems.

Robert L. Wallack

*American Journal of Transportation*