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*Saluting the Port of Long Beach on its Centennial*



Carlo Luzzi, manager of rail transportation for the Port of Long Beach, works as a liaison between the terminals, railways and ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

## 'Rail Guru' Keeps The Peace Between Marine Terminals, Railroads

One Of The Many Interesting Jobs At The Port Of Long Beach

■ By TIFFANY RIDER

**H**e's known as the "rail guru" at the Port of Long Beach and is often considered a peacekeeper of sorts among the port's marine terminals and railways.

"That should be my title," jokes Carlo Luzzi, the port's first manager of rail transportation systems. A Los Angeles County native, Luzzi attended California State University, Long Beach for his undergraduate and graduate studies in engineering.

Fresh out of college, Luzzi was offered a job learning about the railroads. This was during a critical time of change at the port.

In the late 1980s, Luzzi explains, many harbor employees were looking to retire and the railroad business at the port was evolving. Instead of allowing the major rail companies to continue business as usual – laying tracks wherever they pleased and sometimes blocking the entrance to someone else's facility, which tended to spur arguments with the marine terminals – the port decided to take ownership of the railroad.

Over the next 10 years, the port formed its own short rail line, Pacific Harbor Line (PHL), and developed a plan to construct the Alameda Corridor – a 20-mile railroad expressline connecting the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the transcontinental railroad. The corridor was completed in 2002. "From the '80s, the infrastruc-

ture was in a terrible state of affairs, to something now where we pretty much have a good, new rail system," he says.

Today, Luzzi is in charge of conflict-resolution and disseminating information about the railroads, from inventory to safety data. Luzzi says he tries to keep all information at his fingertips 24 hours a day. Prior to him, organized data on rail was not available.

Luzzi reports to Doug Thiessen, managing director of engineering, and Al Moro, chief harbor engineer. Under Thiessen, Luzzi follows corridor operations and activity. On day-to-day port issues, Luzzi works with Morro. Luzzi is a member of the operating committee for the Alameda Corridor, which discusses the global aspects and funding for the corridor. He also sits on the Pacific Harbor Line Oversight Committee.

"We're dealing with this huge entity," Luzzi says of the San Pedro Bay Ports. "On the rail side of things, we have to live together, and we do a good job at that. . . . My job is customer service, too – not just making sure it's safe out there but making sure when people call the port, we respond."

According to Luzzi, issues between the rails and the terminals arise because of the convoluted contracting at the port. The port has separate contracts with the railroad and with marine terminals, yet the railroad only contracts with the port and shipping companies – not with the terminals.

The two entities at odds first attempt to deal with a problem themselves, Luzzi says. If they can't deal with it, the second level is PHL, which Luzzi describes as a buffer for the port. If PHL cannot handle the situation, the port gets involved and Luzzi does his best to keep everyone happy through communication.

"When the railroads come here, we treat them how we want to be treated. . . . We treat our work environment as a family environment and treat everybody accordingly. Everybody buys in on it," he says. "The one thing that I feel really sad about is if we did a project and someone says, 'Oh, what's this project about?' I feel like I didn't do my job. . . . No one should ever say that." ■