

# Assessment of the Terminal Gate Appointment System at the Ports of LA and Long Beach

Genevieve Giuliano, University of Southern California  
Thomas O'Brien, California State University, Long Beach

## BACKGROUND

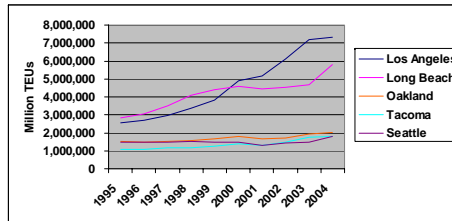
Container traffic at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach continues to grow, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of U.S. and West Coast totals. One result of this growth is increased truck traffic in the port area, which in turn leads to increased congestion and pollution from diesel emissions.

In response, the California Assembly passed Assembly Bill (AB) 2650 in 2002, which imposed a fine on terminals if trucks waited longer than 30 minutes to enter the gates. Implementation of a gate appointment system for trucks was one means available to terminals to avoid possible fines.

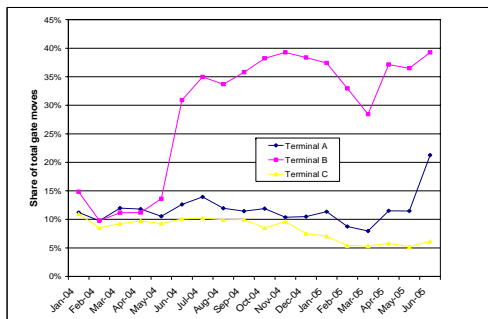
The objectives of the appointment system were to:

- Reduce truck waiting and idling time outside marine terminal gates
- Distribute truck traffic more smoothly throughout the day to ameliorate the peaking phenomenon

West Coast Container Traffic, 1995-2004



Appointments as a share of total gate moves for three sample terminals



## Methodology:

- Monitor appointment system for 16-month period from January 2004-June 2005
- Conduct interviews with 8 terminal operators at Ports of LA and Long Beach
- Analyze appointment data from three container terminals
- Implement survey with 21 different trucking companies
- Perform truck counts and measure truck queues at two terminals over four separate days

## FINDINGS

### Implementation and Enforcement of AB 2650:

- Wide range of appointment policies implemented across terminals
- Appointments as share of total gate moves range from 5-30%, depending on terminal
- No notices of violation issued over life of regulation because enforcement is difficult

### Response of Trucking Industry:

- 42% of total transactions involve appointments
- Appointments primarily used for import pick-ups

- Appointment use dependent on time of day and individual terminal

- Most common reason for missing appointment is delay at the terminal

- Appointments do not translate into reduced turn time because trucks with appointments do not get priority once inside gate

### Impact of Appointments on Queuing, Turn Times and Potential Time Savings:

- No evidence that transactions with appointments are shorter than those without appointments
- No evidence that appointments are associated with time savings for truckers
- It would take a large increase in appointment use, as well as operating practices that save substantial time for truckers, to significantly reduce queuing and total turn time and hence improve air quality

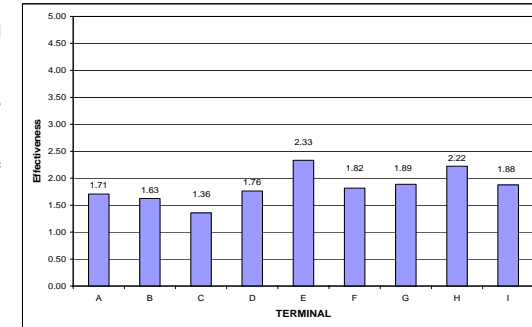
## EXPLAINING OUTCOMES

- AB 2650 was indirectly imposed from outside, not as industry response to perceived problem.
- Gate congestion is a trucker concern and risk of non-compliance is low, so terminals have little incentive to encourage use of appointments.
- Truckers have little incentive to make appointments because they do not result in reduced turn times.
- Appointments can work, but depend on individual operating policies of terminal, including use of technology to speed up in-take process at terminal gates.

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR PIERPASS

- AB 2650 proves how serious goods movement is to elected officials. It is followed by threat of legislation requiring extended operating hours to spread out truck traffic forces terminal operators to act
- Port and shipping interests cooperate in development of the PierPass off-peak gate program that begins July 2005
- Surcharges set to cover the additional costs of extended gates to terminal operators
- Appointments used as tool to better predict off-peak gate moves

Truckers' assessment of Appointment System effectiveness in reducing turn times (terminals with appointment systems)



Estimated percentage turn time savings for sample reductions in queue and transaction times

