



2021 AAPA LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS – COMMUNICATIONS

Classification #11: Special Events

2021 State of the Port – “The Year of Recovery”

2021 State of the Port – “The Year of Recovery”

Summary

The Port of Long Beach's status as a major economic engine for the region and an international standard bearer for excellent service as well as sustainable movement of cargo make the Port's annual State of the Port a “must attend” event for the regional maritime and business community, as all face the same challenges of trade wars, competition and other developing issues. The usual challenges of sharing information about Port achievements and future goals with a large, diverse audience were greatly augmented for the 2021 event by the restrictions demanded to meet COVID-19 protocols, specifically transitioning from an in-person to a virtual presentation.

The State of the Port event, produced in video format this year by the Port's Communications and Community Relations Division, highlights the past year's accomplishments and milestones and sets the tone for the Port for the year ahead to address those challenges, especially recovery from the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments by Long Beach Mayor Dr. Robert Garcia, Long Beach Harbor Commission President Frank Colonna, union officials and others led into Executive Director Mario Cordero's main State of the Port address, focusing on the 2021 “A Year of Recovery” theme, the grand opening of a new bridge and citing the extraordinary cooperation among all Port stakeholders in response to the pandemic as an essential element of the Port's record cargo year in 2020. The Port's creative team incorporated stunning videos, music, photography and design – in addition to compelling speech-writing – to reinforce key presentation points and maximize the impact of the event. On social media and video platforms the program video garnered more than 7,000 views, post media coverage was extensive, and the project was completed on time and dramatically below the cost of the traditional, in-person event.



The Port of Long Beach

1

Communication Challenges and Opportunities

The Port of Long Beach is the Port of Choice – 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, the Port handles trade valued at more than \$170 billion annually and supports 2.6 million trade-related jobs across the nation, including more than 575,000 in Southern California. The Port of Long Beach prides itself on its top-notch customer service and operational excellence, and in both 2019 and 2020 industry leaders named it “The Best West Coast Seaport in North America.” Founded in 1911 with a single municipal dock at the mouth of the Los Angeles River, today the Port encompasses 3,200 acres with 35 miles of waterfront, 10 piers, 80 berths and 70 gantry cranes. The five-member Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners is responsible for setting policy for the Port of Long Beach and managing the City’s Harbor Department.

Under normal circumstances, The Port of Long Beach’s annual State of the Port, traditionally held in late January,

is a “must attend” event for the regional maritime and business community, as all face the same challenges of trade wars, competition and other developing issues.

However, because COVID-19 restrictions made it impossible to gather the intended audience for an in-person event, State of the Port needed to be reimagined to reach the same audience, but virtually.

In addition to ongoing considerations, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced many jarring new challenges to international trade during 2020, extending into 2021. All these issues, existing and developing, needed to be addressed at the event, including:

- Declining cargo during the first half of 2020;
- A cargo surge during the last half of 2020 that elevated Port of Long Beach cargo to 8.1 million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units), resulting in an all-time record year;
- Ongoing fallout from the trade war with China;

- Continuing uninterrupted operations through the Port, a major economic engine, to keep vital goods and supplies moving to their destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The safety of front-line Port workers during the pandemic;
- The completion of ongoing Port construction/infrastructure projects during the pandemic;
- Continuing top-caliber customer service while transitioning to telecommuting;
- Supporting and maintaining close ties with the local community and other local stakeholders during the pandemic.

2 Complementing the Overall Mission

To accomplish the Harbor Commission's goal of providing open channels of communication between the Port and its various constituencies – a goal shared by Port executive management and staff – the Port of Long Beach Communications and Community Relations Division implements a comprehensive annual campaign to reach all of its critical target markets.

During the COVID-19 pandemic that has had such a dramatic impact on not just the industry but everyday life, it is critical to keep our core audience and the general public informed about our crucial sector of the economy.

This annual campaign includes advertising and publicity in traditional, web-based and social media, plus

extensive educational outreach, community sponsorships, industry conferences and outreach to customers, Port stakeholders and the local community at events such as the annual State of the Port Address. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all in-person activities needed to be reimagined to achieve the same results, but in a virtual format.

The State of the Port is tailored to focus on sharing the Port's efforts to meet the goals of its Strategic Plan, and the speeches at the 2021 event focused on how the Port is meeting the six goals set by the Board of Harbor Commissioners in the most recent version of the Strategic Plan, updated and released in April 2019:

- Strengthen the Port's competitive position through secure and efficient movement of cargo while providing outstanding customer service;
- Maintain financial strength and security of assets;
- Develop and maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure that enhances productivity and efficiency in goods movement;
- Improve the environment through sustainable practices and the reduction of environmental impacts from Port operations and development;
- Broaden community access to Port-related opportunities and economic benefits;
- Attract, develop and retain a diverse, high-performing workforce.

At the 2021 State of the Port, identifying problems and solutions related to the pandemic was aimed at reassuring all Port stakeholders that these Strategic Plan objectives are unchanged during the pandemic, that business at the Port of Long Beach continues to operate and can even thrive during a crisis, and that the Port is on track to make 2021 "A Year of Recovery" as business operations slowly return to something closer to normal.

In addition, the event is designed to be a bellwether for the Communications and Community Relations Division to follow in speeches, appearances and events during the remainder of the year.

3

Planning and Programming Components

Goals of the 2021 State of the Port

- Reinforce the message that the Port is open, operating and thriving despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other trade disruptions, continuing to move vital goods to market during a record year, completing a decade-long infrastructure improvement program, and preparing for a “Year of Recovery”;
- Promote to the business community at large that, despite the challenges of 2020, the Port continues to provide operational excellence, top-notch customer service, and long-term vision and leadership for the maritime industry;
- Thank the Port’s stakeholders and front-line workers for their extraordinary efforts in keeping cargo moving and completing construction projects during a time of extreme risk and uncertainty, emphasizing those collaborations as key to the Port’s continued success;

- Demonstrate that the Port is an important sector of the local, regional and national economy, and that port workers are essential workers who should be prioritized to receive vaccinations and the equipment they need to work safely. Also advocate for additional government funding for the maritime sector to assure business continuity and future growth.

Objectives

- Reach a large viewership, especially the Port’s core business audience, despite the fact that an annual “must attend” event would have to be conducted entirely online;
- Craft a video that would appeal to the Port’s various target audiences, including the officials who would normally be present to network with audience members at an in-person event;
- Make the video available on as many platforms as possible to ensure both a wide viewership and also minimize the possibility



Construction of the final phase of the Port's Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project continued during the pandemic

- of the technical glitches that can often negatively impact live online events;
- Incorporate stunning video of the Port, music, photography and design – in addition to speakers' appearances and compelling speech-writing – to reinforce key presentation points and maximize the impact of the video;
- Maximize the use of web-based and social media to both promote and distribute the event;
- Make the 2021 State of the Port video available for viewing after the day of its premiere;
- Produce the 2021 State of the Port within a budget of \$50,000, considerably less than the budget of \$175,000 for the 2020 in-person event;
- Evaluate the success of the event based on social media responses, analytics and traditional media coverage.

Target Audiences

- Elected and appointed officials;
- Current and potential Port clients;
- Companies that service the Port;
- Government agencies;
- Environmental watchdogs and other Port stakeholders;
- Safety and security agencies;
- Long Beach residents and community organizations;
- Educators, students and future employees;
- Members of the news media.



Despite a sluggish first half of the year, 2020 became a record year for cargo movement at the Port of Long Beach

4

Actions Taken and Communication Outputs Used

Overview

Each year, the State of the Port event is closely watched by civic leaders and maritime industry leaders regionally, across the nation and worldwide. The Port of Long Beach's status as a major economic engine for the region and nation, its reputation for operational excellence and as a leader in sustainable development make the event a "must attend" for the regional maritime and business community. A simultaneous webcast has always been available for those who cannot attend in person, and the archived video is available for future or repeat viewing on the Port's website.

State of the Port highlights the past year's accomplishments and milestones and sets the tone for the Port for the year ahead. It is also traditionally a launch pad for Port announcements, this year including:

- Celebrating the accomplishment of construction milestones such as the opening of the replacement for the Gerald Desmond Bridge;

- Acknowledgment of the dedication of front-line workers to keeping cargo moving during the pandemic;
- Marking a record year of cargo movement and;
- Looking forward to 2021 as "A Year of Recovery."

The usual challenges of sharing information about industry crises, Port achievements and future goals with a large, diverse audience were augmented by the restrictions demanded to meet COVID-19 protocols, specifically transitioning from an in-person to a virtual presentation.

Scheduling and Format

Deciding how best to present the 2021 State of the Port was a complex question that led to much discussion in the Port's Communications Division. Several approaches were considered, including a live "WebEx"-type event. The final decision was to produce a high-quality video presentation, featuring dynamic footage and graphics, and release it to the public



Opening the replacement of the Gerald Desmond Bridge was a major Port accomplishment celebrated in the 2021 State of the Port

on Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021. The video was posted at the advertised time of 9 a.m. on the Port’s website (using the Vimeo platform), on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) and on YouTube. It was decided that this approach would look the best, reach the largest possible audience, and avoid some of the potential technical pitfalls and lower video quality that many on our team had experienced during other virtual meetings and events – both as participants and viewers – necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Video and Presentations

State of the Port 2021 – Speakers and Running Order
<https://www.polb.com/stateoftheport> and <https://vimeo.com/508230311>

0:00 – Dr. Robert Garcia, Mayor, City of Long Beach

Welcome and discussion about challenges facing the City during COVID-19, why this is a virtual event, praise for the Port and Commissioners for their work during the pandemic and brief 2020 Port highlights.

1:31 – Union Representatives

Brief video comments from members and officials of the various unions that work at the Port, outlining challenges that they faced during 2020 and their hopes for a better 2021.

2:30 – President Frank Colonna, Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners

Thank you to essential Port workers for keeping cargo moving and discussion about Port’s decision to remain open and operating during the pandemic.

3:46 – Video Highlights of 2020

As is traditional at the Port’s live State of the Port event, a highlight of the 2021 virtual event is a dynamic video segment featuring aerial and drone footage of vessels, terminals and Port operations. This year’s segment, culminating in aerial footage of the Port’s recently opened “Bridge to Everywhere,” was set to “America” from *West Side Story*, music selected by Port Executive Director Mario Cordero as having personal meaning to him.

4:44 – Executive Director Mario Cordero, Port of Long Beach State of the Port Address

Filmed at an active Port terminal, with operations visible and occasionally audible during the presentation, the 20-minute address includes:

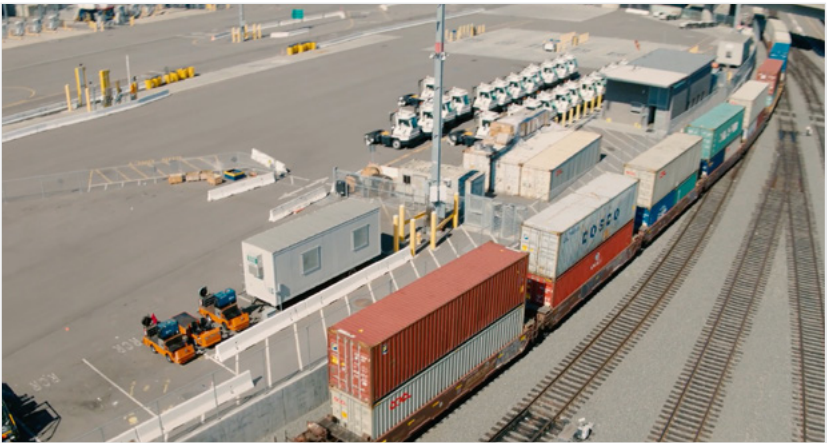
- A moment of silence for maritime workers who lost their lives to COVID-19
- A call to vaccinate front-line logistics workers immediately
- A look back at the beginning of 2020, when ports faced uncertainty because of the U.S.-China trade war and the beginnings of the effect of the pandemic on the supply chain
- Highlights from a challenging year
 - Hard work of Port staff
 - Establishing a COVID testing site in the Port
 - Opening the new “Bridge to Everywhere”
 - Launching a new brand and website
 - Moving more containers than ever during a record year
- What would it take to keep the Port operating safely – changing operating hours and practices inside the terminals, shifting to telecommuting, etc.
- How the Port coped with a surge in cargo that began during late spring 2020 and is still continuing
- Welcoming new ships and services
- Ongoing construction. In crisis, we build – the Port continued construction projects, including the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project, a new fireboat station, rail expansion and the final phase of Long Beach Container Terminal. The bridge is now a landmark on the Southern California skyline.
- Building a zero-emissions future
 - The Port of Long Beach is also continuing its commitment to being The Green Port, testing new zero-emissions cargo handling equipment and aiming for a goal of zero-emissions cargo handling by 2030 and a zero-emissions drayage fleet by 2035.
- Working with a new presidential administration – a vision for

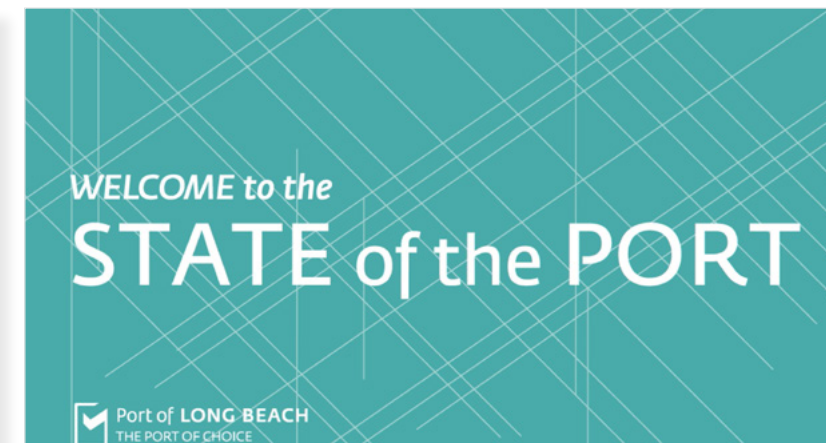


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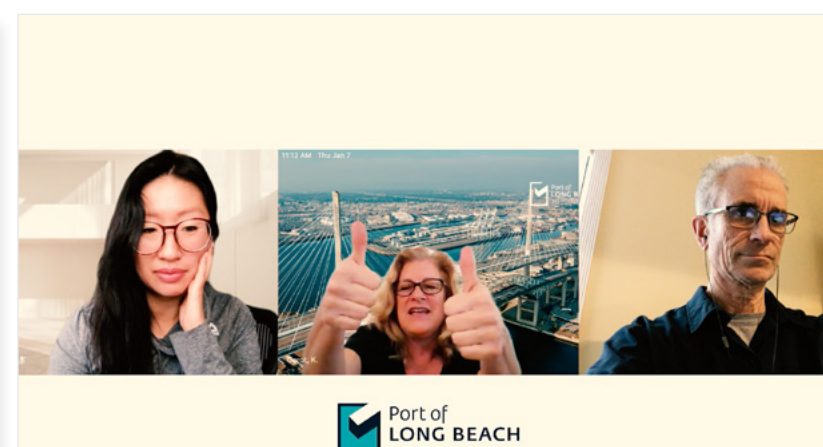
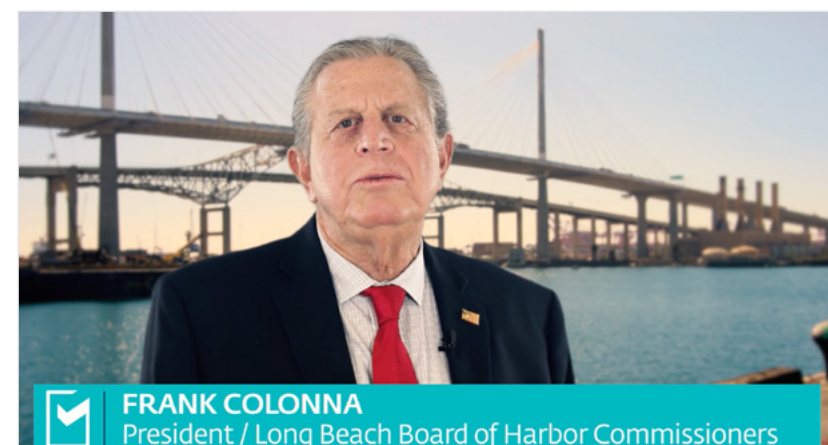


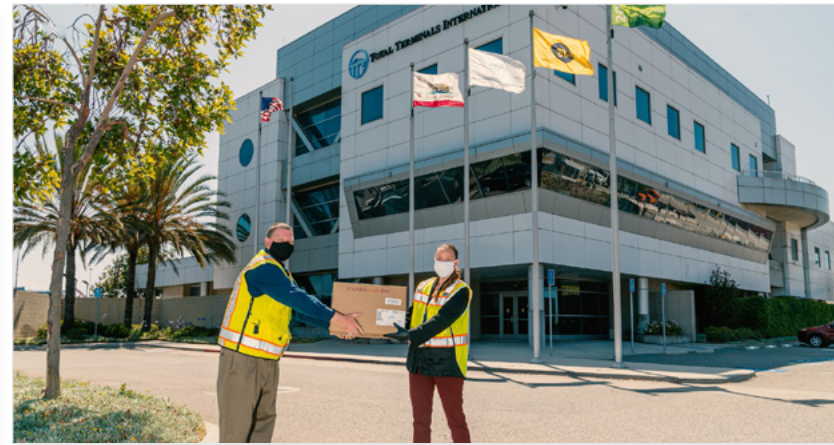


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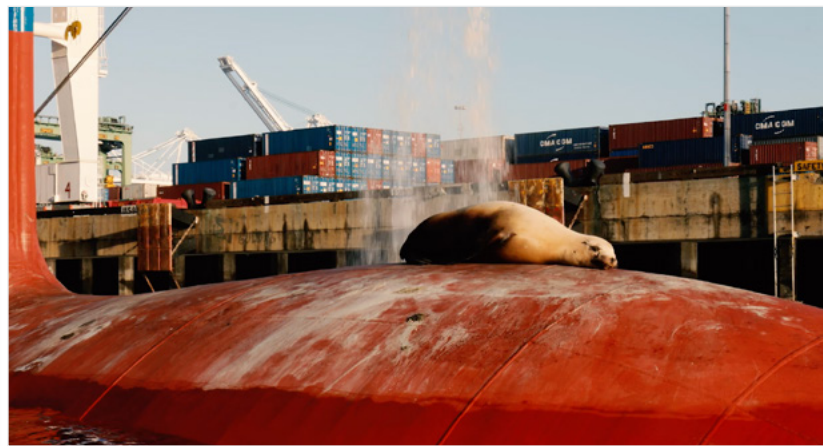
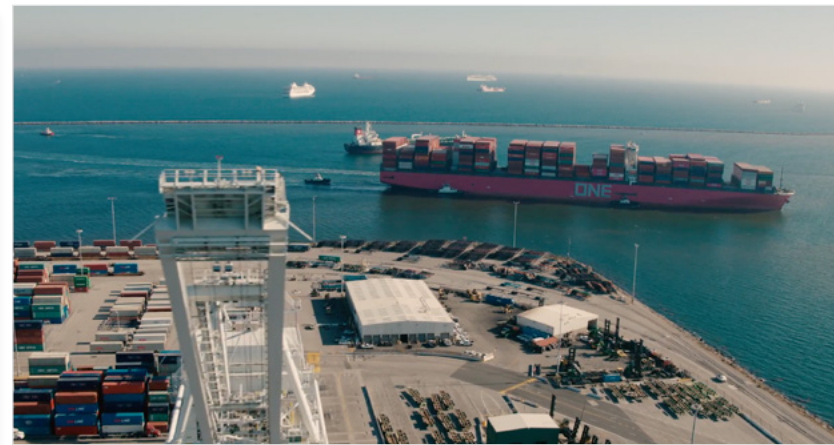
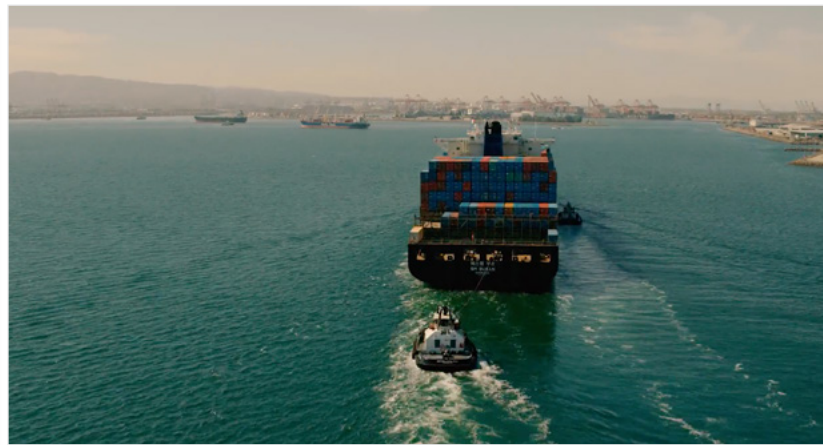
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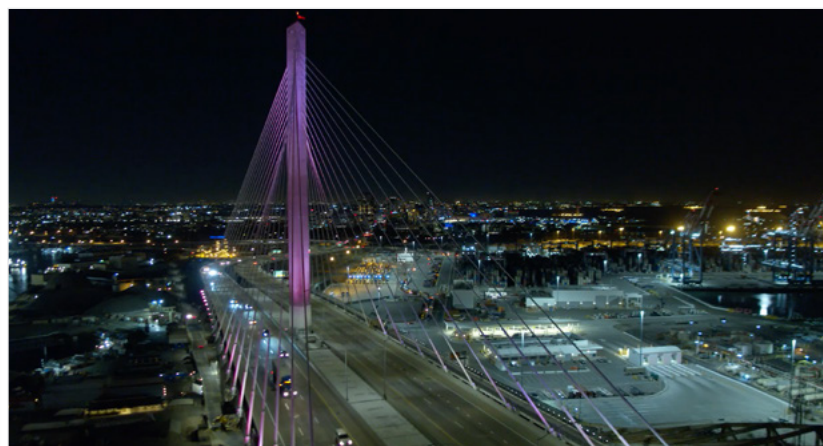
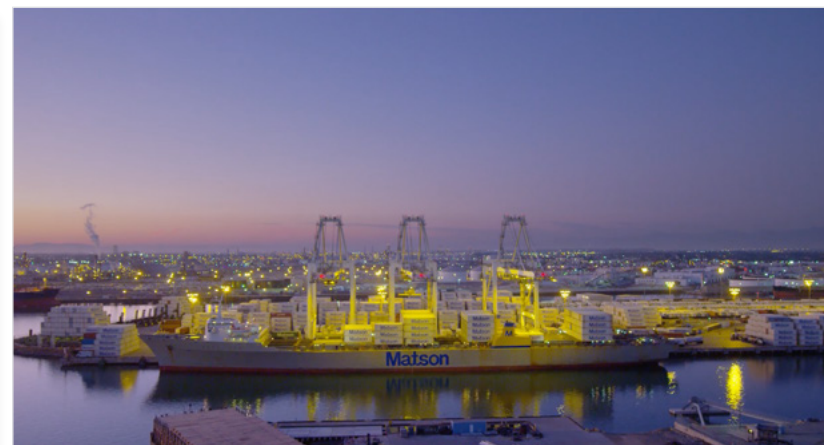


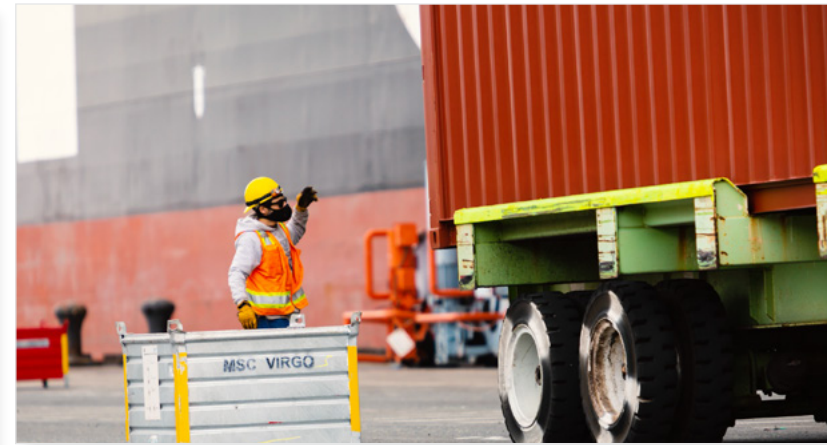
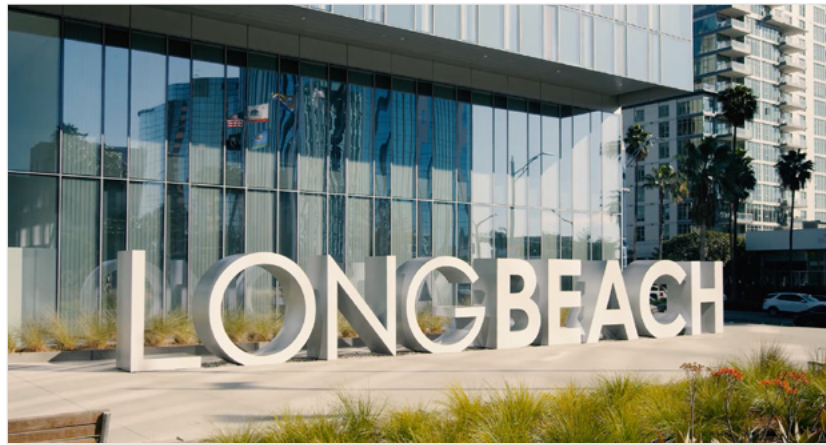
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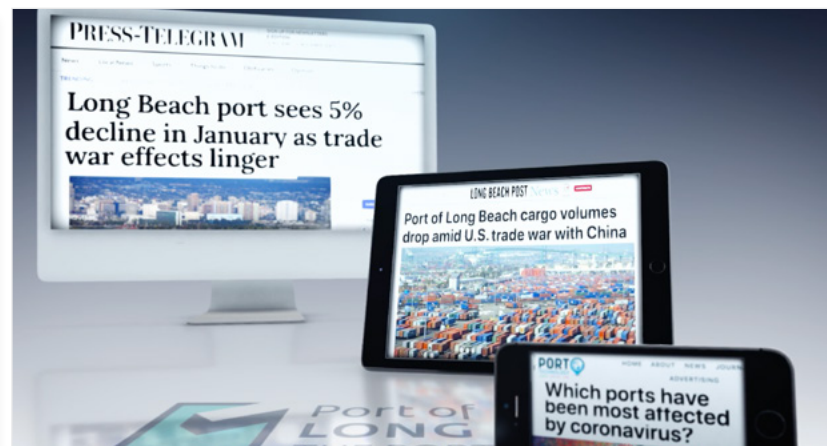


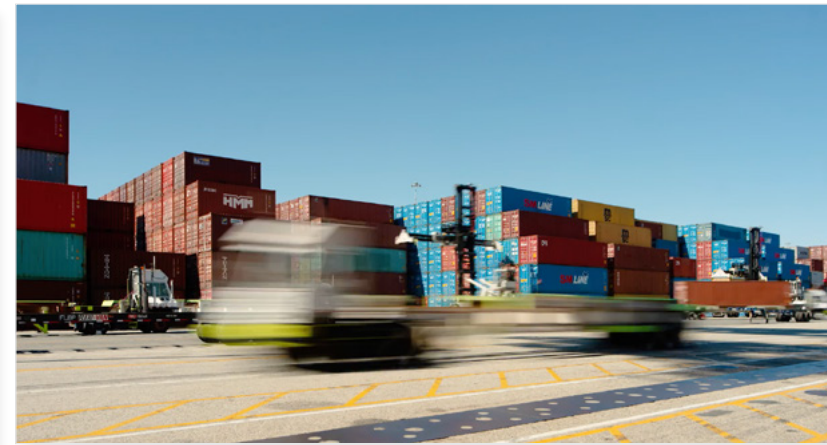
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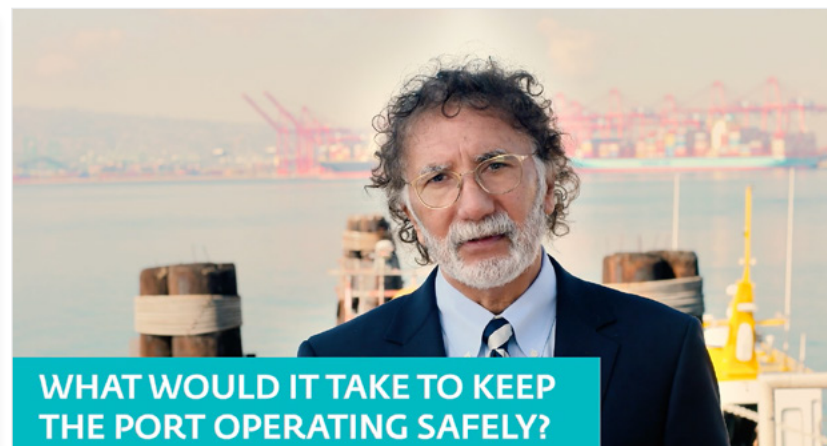
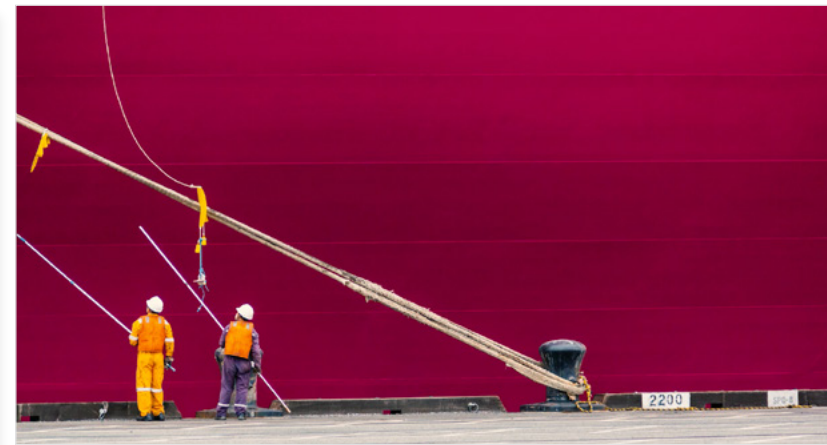
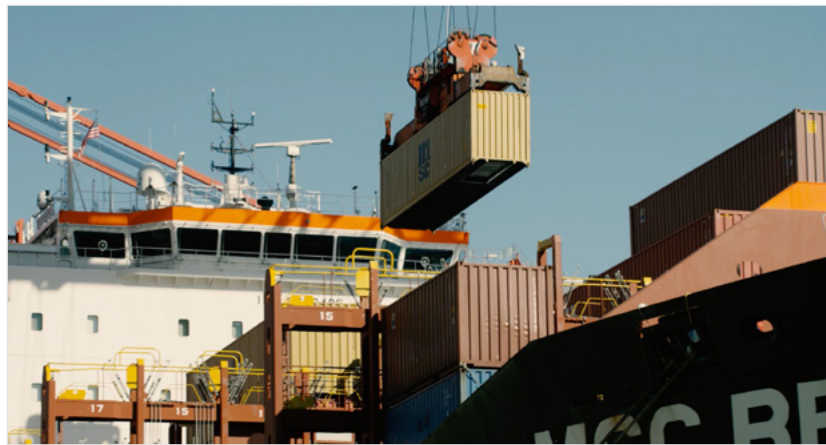


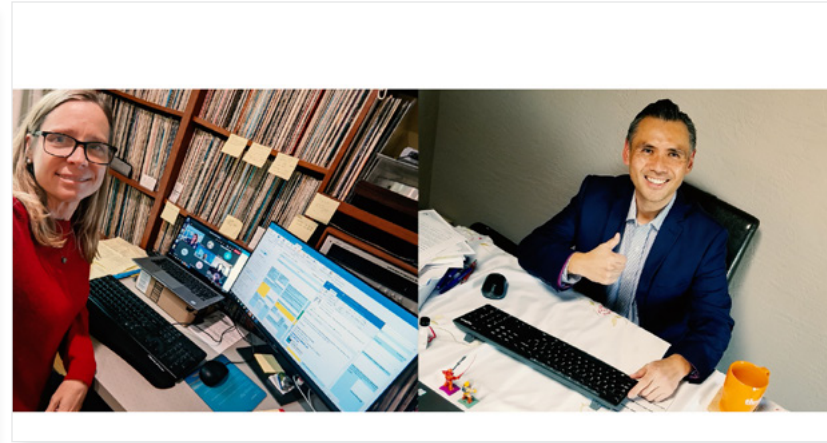
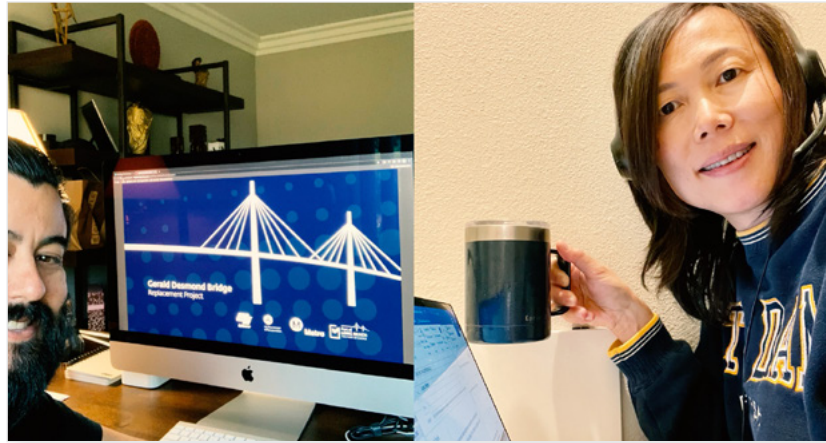
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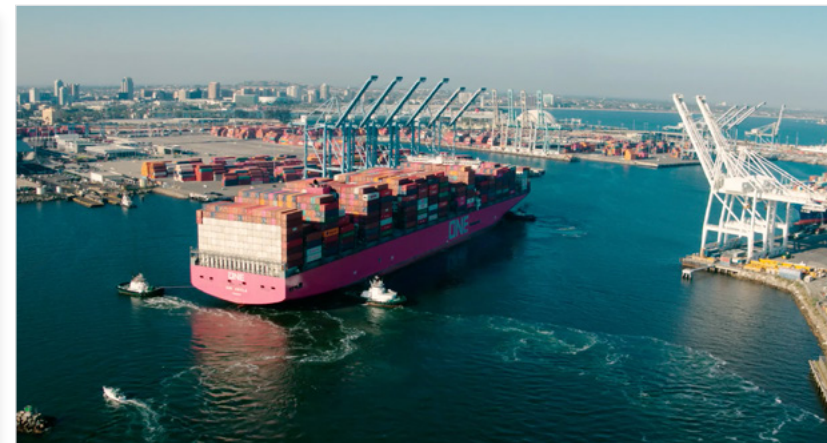




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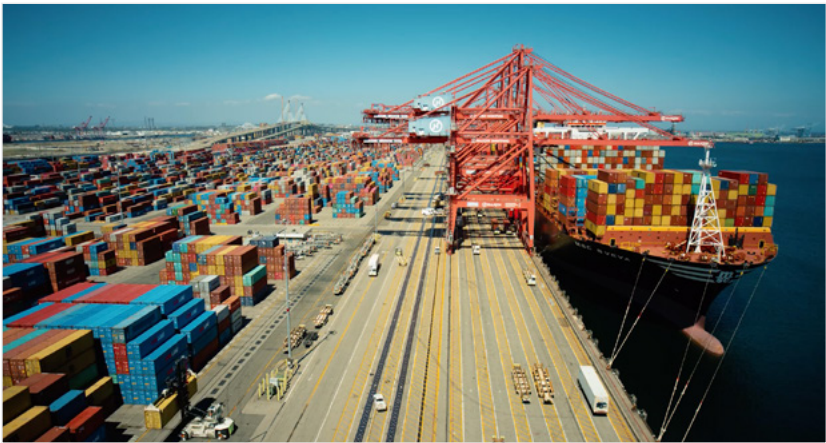
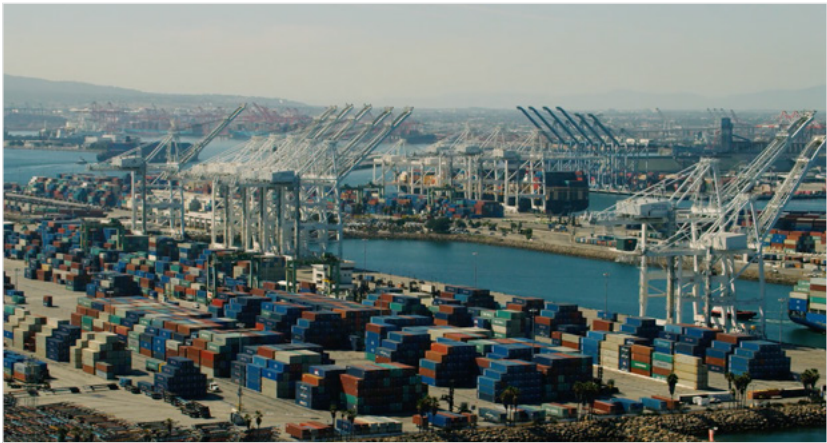




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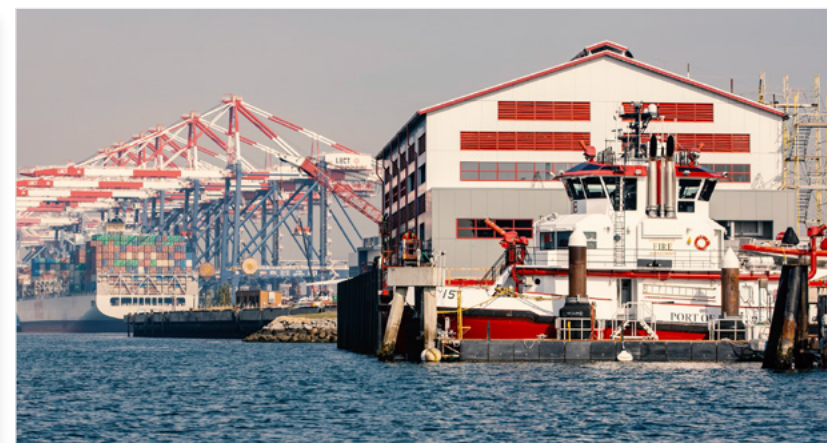
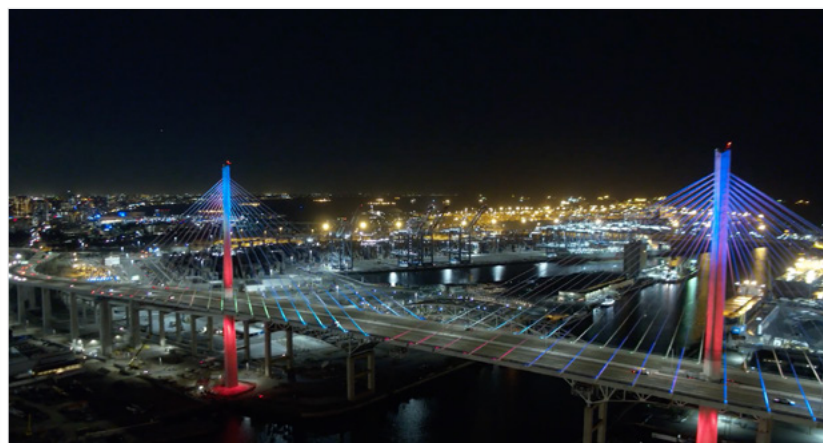
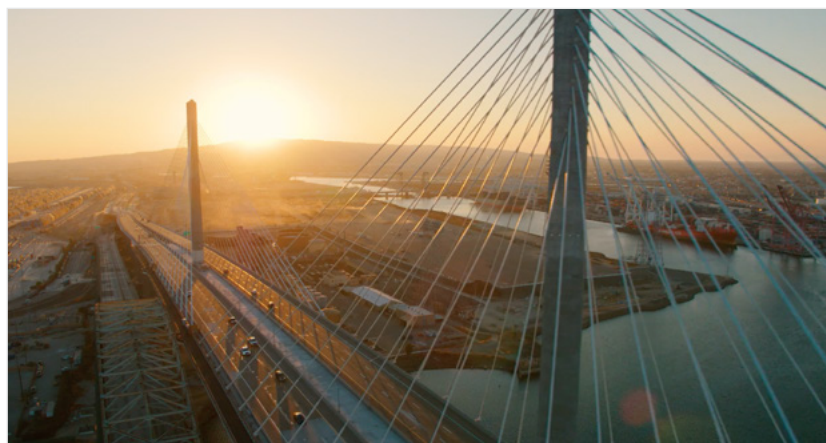
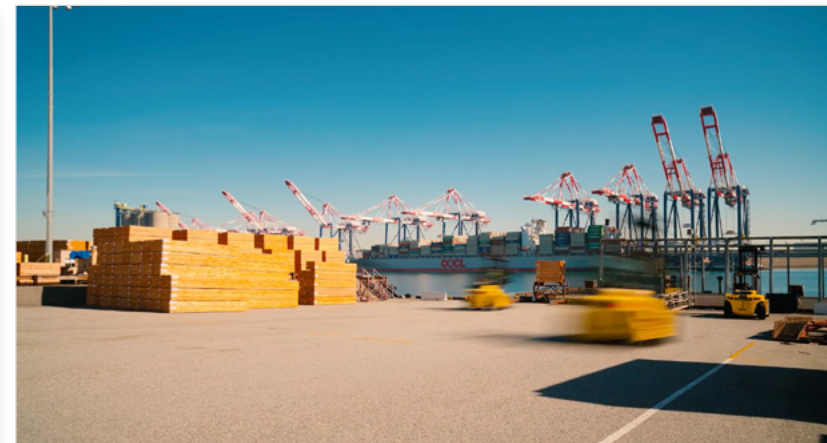
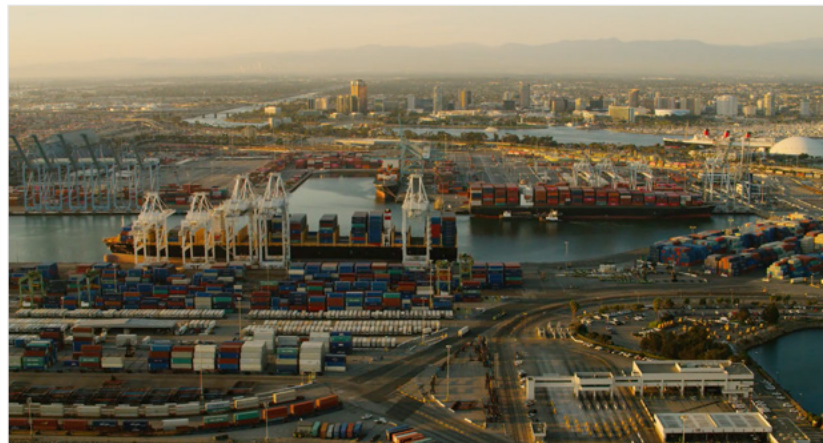
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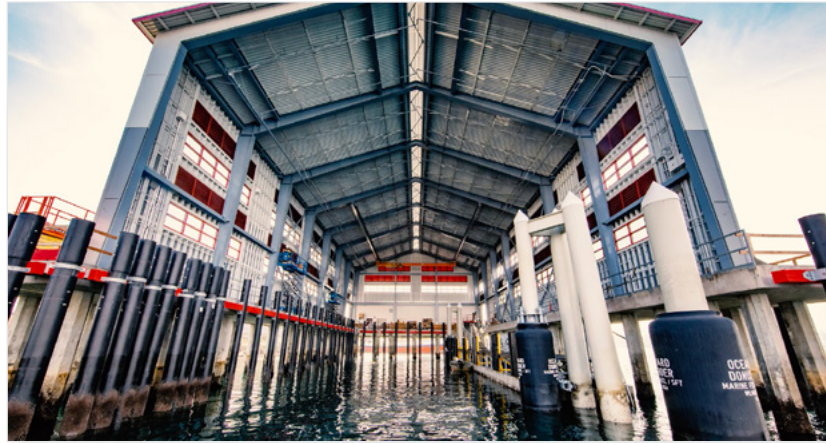
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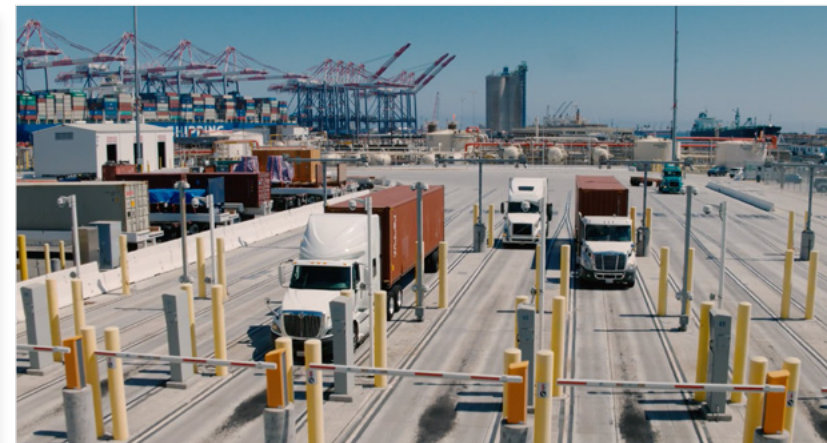


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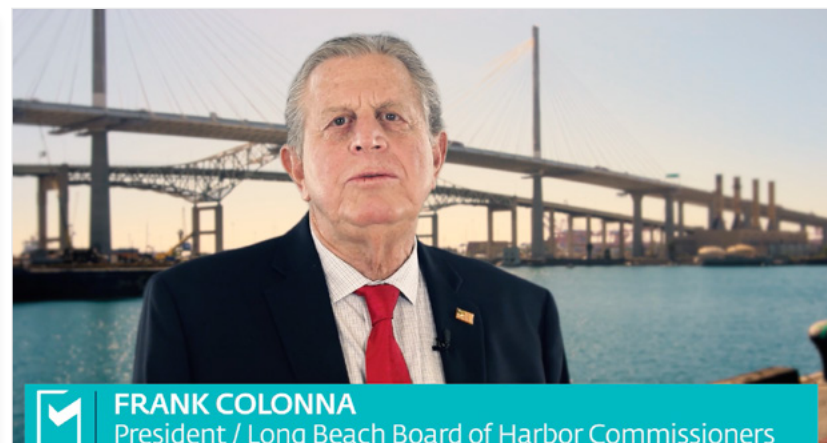
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**BUILDING A
ZERO-EMISSIONS FUTURE**




**REAFFIRMING THE
PORT'S VALUES**



 **FRANK COLONNA**
President / Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners



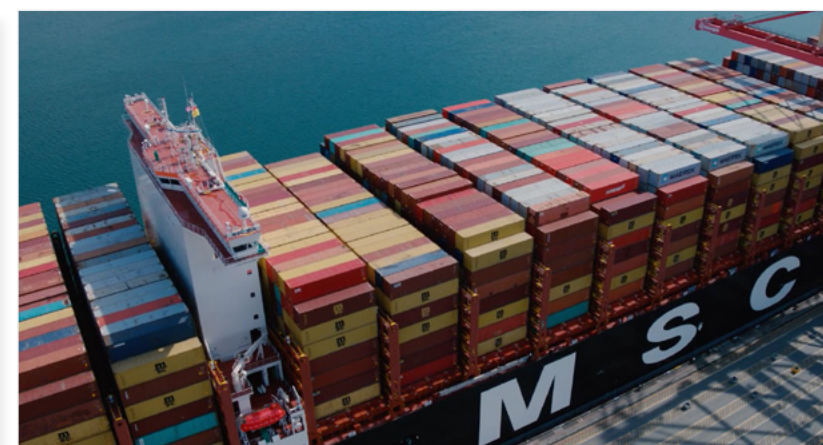
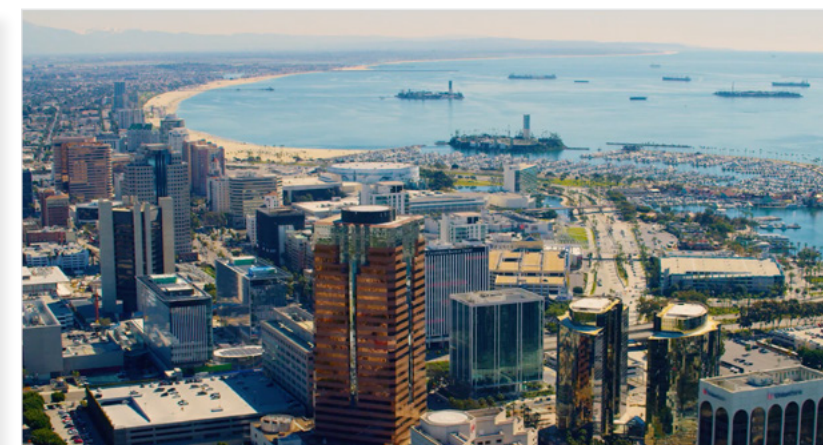
 **STEVEN NEAL**
Vice President / Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners

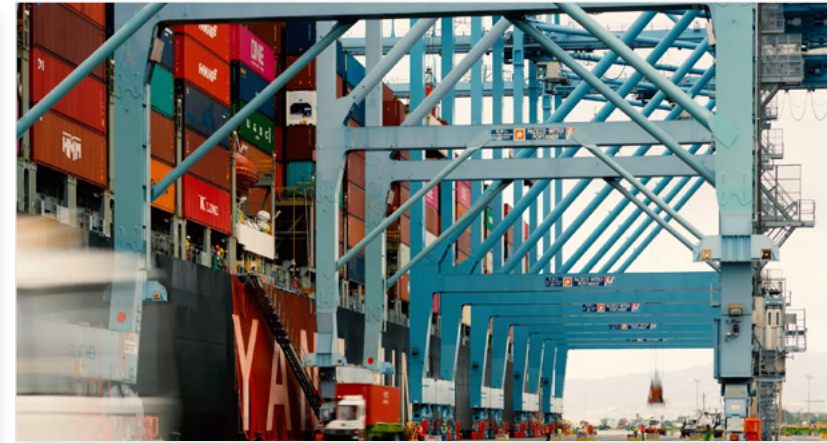


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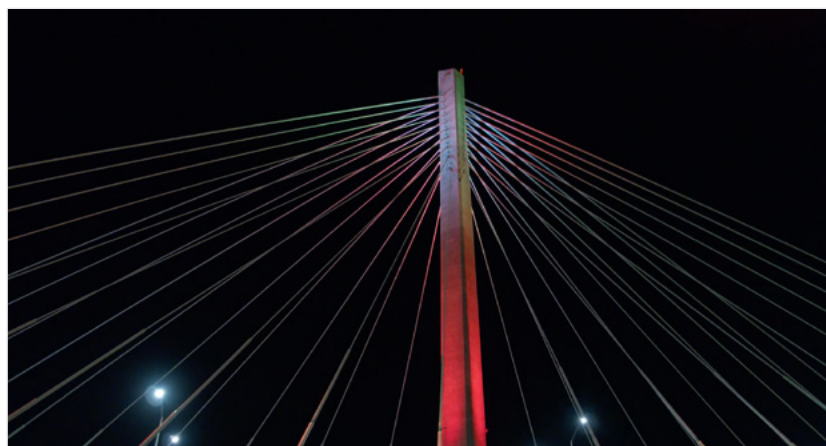




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reassessing the nation's trade and logistics policies

24:44 – Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners

The five members of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners, appointed to the Commission by the Mayor and confirmed by the Long Beach City Council, comment on various highlights of 2020 including:

- Capital improvements
- Commitment to equity and inclusion
- Education outreach and workforce development
- Partnering with labor and other stakeholders to distribute medical supplies during COVID
- Community sponsorships for nonprofits

26:00 – Executive Director Cordero

A look ahead to 2021 as “A Year of Recovery.”

Visual Presentation

During our live State of the Port events, the address is usually coupled with a

PowerPoint presentation featuring photos and graphics highlighting the key points of the speech. This year's video “virtual” address allowed graphics, video and photography to be completely integrated into the address, a necessity to hold viewers' attention and also a more effective way to punctuate the key points of the speech. The Communications and Community Relations team will utilize these visuals for other purposes during the coming year; however, this year, a separate PowerPoint presentation with these elements is not available for viewing as it normally would be following a live event.

Event Production and Timeline

The Port of Long Beach Communications and Communications team developed a streamlined plan for this year's State of the Port event – several different virtual formats were considered before the team settled on a recorded video presentation. The Communications team created a timed event outline and running order, and all speeches, including the main address for Executive Director Mario

Cordero and ancillary speeches for Mayor Robert Garcia and members of the Harbor Commission, were developed in-house by the Port's Communications and Community Relations Division with input from the speakers and assistance from a Port contract writer. Writing began in November 2020, wrapping up as soon as year-end cargo figures became available in mid-January 2021.

The stunning photography that accompanies the State of the Port address is accumulated throughout the year to support various Communications projects; in addition, drone and aerial video footage is produced throughout the year, some especially for the address and some in conjunction with other projects. Images are produced by several longtime contract photographers, and the aerial and drone footage by longtime contractor Media 360. The budget for these photo/video shoots is usually covered as part of individual events throughout the year. The Communications Division's graphics team always works closely with speech writers and Media 360 to

produce charts and other graphics; this year the collaboration was especially close as the pre-recorded nature of the address made split-second timing of photos, video and graphics possible. Also, the need for memorable images was increased to avoid long periods of “talking heads” in the video.

Finally, filming sessions were scheduled with Mayor Garcia, Harbor Commission President Colonna and the other four members of the board, and Executive Director Cordero. This filming was conducted at the Port Administration Building (inside and around the downtown Long Beach Civic Center Plaza) and on location at terminals inside the Port. The crews and speakers adhered to all social distancing and safety guidelines, keeping the number of personnel involved to a minimum.

Editing was completed by Media 360 with direction from the Port Communications and Community Relations team.

Collateral and Media Coverage

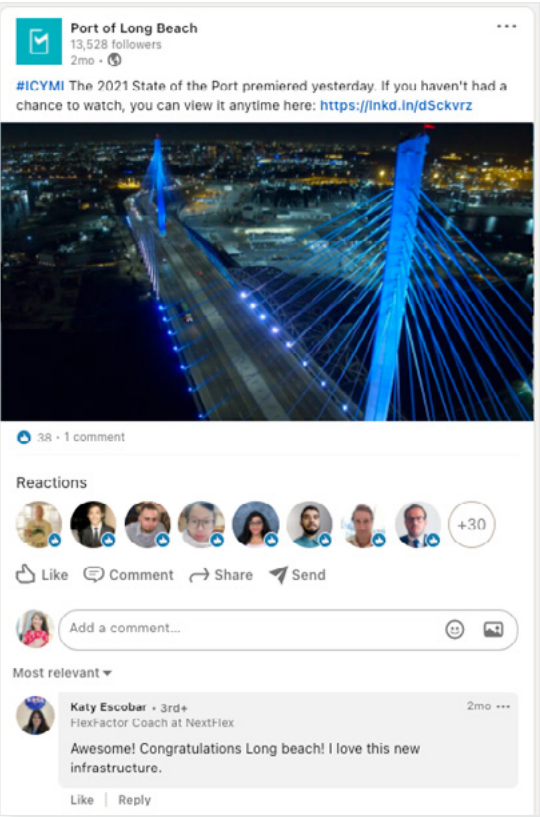
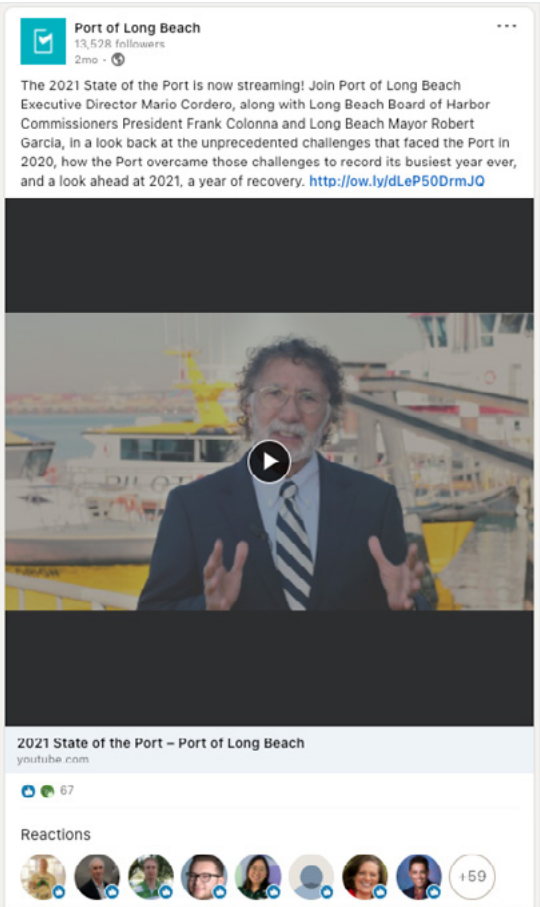
Invitations

Once the format of a video-only presentation was agreed upon, the Port designed and distributed online invitations to the targeted stakeholders normally invited to the live event. In addition, this year the invitation was distributed to the much larger group of subscribers to the Port’s news releases and community newsletters, since space accommodation at a live venue was not a consideration. No RSVPs were solicited for the same reason; the invitations simply served as reminders to log on for the virtual event on Feb. 4 at 9 a.m. An initial news release announcement was sent to approximately 11,000 people on Jan. 20, along with an announcement in the Port’s YourPORT Community Newsletter to approximately 4,800 recipients on the same date. Reminders were sent on Feb. 1 and the morning of Feb. 4 when the video went live.

Social media

Before, during and after announcements, reports and event videos were posted on social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Vimeo and YouTube. The social media campaign for the State of the Port event ran from Jan. 20 to Feb. 20. The promotion for State of the Port was different this year because there was not an in-person event. Promotion was directed toward encouraging people to watch the pre-recorded program on its release the morning of Feb. 4, but it also reminded them that the program would be available to watch any time after it was posted. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn were the main platforms used to promote this event. For this year’s virtual event all platforms were used to reach as many people as possible; both business and community audiences were targeted to promote the “Year of Recovery” theme.

Pre-event promotion on Facebook consisted of five posts including photos, a promo video and links. On



the day of the event, the program was posted natively to Facebook and to IGTV on Instagram. A preview was also posted to the Instagram grid and was shown in the feed. Afterward, three posts including photos and a link to the full video were placed on all four platforms to further promote the program and give it a longer life. On social media the program video garnered more than 2,000 views. Over the life of the campaign nearly 31,000 people were reached via social media.

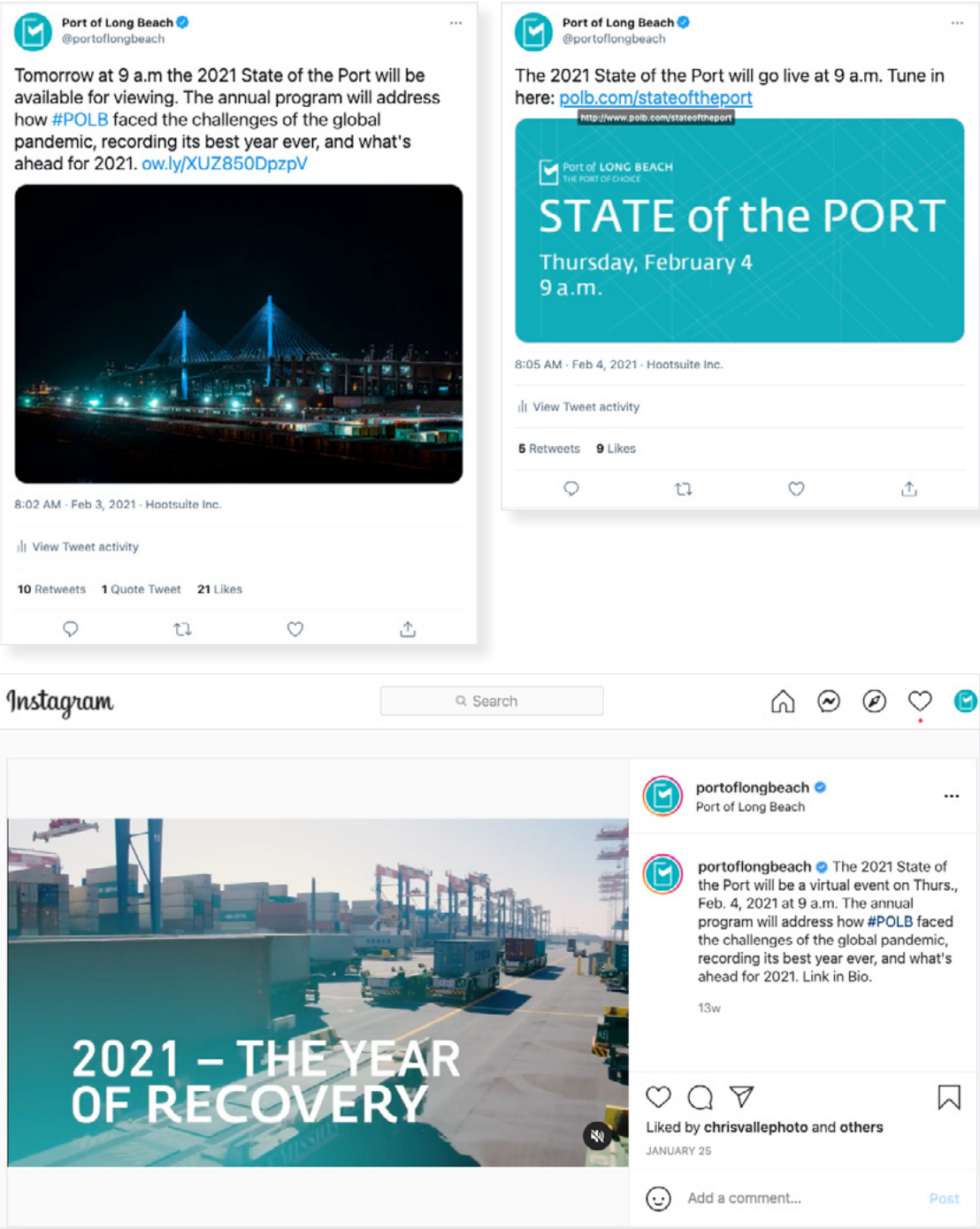
News Media

A news release was distributed on Jan. 20 (see invitations, above) to stakeholders, media outlets and subscribers to Port information inviting them to watch the video on Feb. 4.

In addition, a news release recapping the video and the achievements highlighted in the State of the Port address was distributed to approximately 6,000 recipients, including news media, on Feb. 4, the day the video went live. This release directed readers to watch the video, which has continued to be available since the day of its release.

Personnel/Cost

The Communications and Community Relations team spent approximately 500 hours planning and executing the 2021 State of the Port, with most of the team being involved at some point. The in-house creative team provided direction for all content production, including both by in-house personnel and contractors. In addition to staff time, the overall cost for the video/virtual event was approximately \$11,000, mostly for contract writing services and the filming of the actual speeches. Costs for aerial and drone footage and photography were included in separate events throughout the year.



5 Communications Outcomes and Evaluation Methods

Although the “social” aspects of the annual State of the Port gathering were a definite loss for participants who take advantage of the occasion to reconnect with colleagues and catch up, most elements of the State of the Port video were well received. The part the Port and Port stakeholders are playing in combating the COVID-19 pandemic was well defined. The videos, with dramatic drone and aerial footage and using the familiar *West Side Story* musical accompaniment, were especially powerful and well received. Stellar photography clearly showed infrastructure construction progress and innovations made by the various terminals and the roles the Port plays throughout the local community. In addition, graphics clearly explained the issues being presented in the State of the Port Address.

Since the State of the Port event, portions of the speeches, along with videos, graphics and photographs, have been repurposed for other presentations, advertising campaigns and other uses through mid-2021 and will remain valuable resources in the months ahead.

Event Statistics

- The virtual 2021 State of the Port event was produced on time and well under its \$50,000 budget, attracting similar viewership to the Port’s traditional live event.
- 11,050 recipients were emailed the news release/announcement of the 2021 State of the Port video/event, with two follow-ups, including the morning the video was released.
- 4,835 recipients were emailed the Port’s YourPORT Community Newsletter with the same announcement.
- 6,640 recipients were emailed the follow-up news release on the State of the Port address.
- Nearly 31,000 people were reached via social media during the State of the Port campaign, from Jan. 20 to Feb. 20.
- On social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) the State of the Port video garnered over 2,000 views.
- From the day of release to the beginning of April 2021, the video has received 4,970 views on YouTube and 588 impressions on Vimeo (this reflects the number of times the video was loaded, embedded on the polb.com website; a technical glitch prevented a fully accurate tally of views, but this is a reliable approximation). This is compared to about 340 live views and 600 archived views of the event in 2020 (which had an in-person attendance of 750).
- Traditional and trade media, including print and broadcast, reached local, national and audiences of more than 1 million people, with major coverage by Bloomberg and CBS.
- With interest running high in the ports of Southern California, coverage was very strong in the trades and in local general media, which had been following the ongoing stories of the surge in cargo volume and the explosive rise in COVID-19 cases during the winter of 2020-21.

Comments

"I'm incredibly proud of the way the Port Communications team – staff and contractors – pulled together during a very difficult time to produce a really incredible and effective virtual version of our annual State of the Port. Job well done!"

- Kerry Gerot, Director of Communications and Community Relations, Port of Long Beach

"The State of the Port was brilliant! Really beautifully rendered and positioned. Production values were awesome and the narrative was spot on. Every spokesperson rose to the occasion. Congratulations to all and my respect and regards to my friend Mario for a job well done during really tough times."

- Linda H. DiMario, Economic Development Consultant, Greater Irvine Chamber

"Just want to thank you all for a job well done for an amazing State of the Port video. From promotion, marketing script, visuals, and to final video – All came together very well. Visuals were especially beautiful. Yay to us!"

- Jen Choi, Manager of Creative Arts and Design, Community and Community Relations Division, Port of Long Beach

"Great job. Visuals were especially beautiful."

- Art Wong, freelance writer, former Assistant Director, Communications and Community Relations, Port of Long Beach

"Excellent presentation. Thank you."

- Jim DeMask, WZI Worldwide

"Just watched it. WOW! Great Job!!!"

- Matthew Arms, Director of Environmental Planning, Port of Long Beach

"Congratulations on a terrific State of the Port video! Outstanding. I love the new brand and how you used the container throughout the video."

- Michele Grubbs, Vice President, Pacific Merchant Shipping Association

"WOWZA!!! That was outstanding. We're all having to move to virtual meetings and events during the pandemic, and the production value for many of them is pretty terrible, with bad sound and worse video. Congratulations to all for a really excellent production. State of the Port 2021 rocked!"

- Lovetta Kramer, Kramer Communications

Links

Video – 2021 State of the Port

<https://www.polb.com/stateoftheport>
or <https://vimeo.com/508230311>

Video – 2020 Highlights (West Side Story
– “America”)

<https://youtu.be/groWL5tfbiY?t=226>

Script – 2021 State of the Port

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ygjzxA-pajlq5hcyHZxuqDp-IDbeoUoR/view?usp=sharing>

Follow the Port of Long Beach:



*The Port of Long Beach's
new "Bridge to Everywhere,"
opened in October 2020,
towers over the span
it replaced, the Gerald
Desmond Bridge*