A Step Towards Green Growth

By Gary Toebben, President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

As a $52 billion economic engine, the region’s economic future largely depends on our ability to more efficiently handle containers at the ports while simultaneously reducing the environmental impact on local communities. Achieving “green growth” at the Port of Los Angeles could take a major step forward when the Los Angeles Harbor Commission votes on whether to certify the TraPac Container Terminal environmental impact report (EIR) at their Thursday, Dec. 6 meeting.

TraPac is one of the West Coast’s largest shipping terminal operators and a major tenant at the Port of Los Angeles. This project will allow TraPac to modernize its container terminal, including important upgrades to existing wharf facilities and the construction of a buffer area between the terminal and the community. Once completed, TraPac will be able to process nearly 70 percent more containers with less environmental impact.

The TraPac EIR is significant for two reasons. First, certifying the EIR will provide greater certainty to many of the port’s tenants who have been stuck in limbo for years. No major project can move forward without a certified EIR and it has been more than six years since the port last certified one. Further project delays will force more tenants to move operations elsewhere while doing nothing to improve our local environment.

Second, the TraPac EIR fulfills the model of “green growth” that the ports and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa have been promoting for the last two years. By using state-of-the-art technology and design, the TraPac expansion would succeed in expanding container capacity while significantly reducing emissions impacts on the local communities. It requires all docking ships to use clean on-shore power rather than their own engines, reduces truck trips by 30 percent, replaces diesel-powered cranes with electric cranes and provides a 30-acre buffer zone between the terminal and port-adjacent residents.

Local residents and our environment are not the only winners under this EIR. All Southern Californians will share in the benefits of a modernized ports complex. The goods movement industry already supports 500,000 jobs throughout the region at an average wage of nearly $50,000 and growing. Economists project that the ports and goods movement sector can be the number one provider of new, good paying middle-class jobs over the next 20 years. Setting the stage for this job growth is why this EIR certification is so important.

The public – including supporters and opponents – will turn out in high numbers to give public testimony on the TraPac EIR when it comes before the Harbor Commission. Please join us by taking a moment to complete an e-mail support letter that will be sent to the commissioners. It’s important that our voices are heard.

And that’s the Business Perspective.

Gary L. Toebben
President & CEO
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

The Business Perspective is a weekly opinion piece by Gary Toebben, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, produced with the input of Senior Policy Advisor Rusty Hammer.