

LA's APM Terminals says upgrades reduce truck waiting times to 35 minutes

by [Stas Margaronis](#) 16 hours ago

The APM Terminals at the Port of Los Angeles has completed a major upgrade deploying new automated battery /diesel powered straddle carriers that move containers from ships (via ship to shore cranes) and then to and from trucks in as little as 35 minutes, according to Denson White, APMT Los Angeles Chief Commercial Officer.

On August 26th, White briefed reporters about the modernization program at APMT in which truck waiting times have been reduced from one and a half hours using manned tractor/container carriers to as fast as 35 minutes using the automated straddle carriers: "These are all autonomous vehicles. There's really only two places in the world ... where the entire facility is operating with this type of equipment. This type of equipment is made by Kalmar a Finnish company. There'll be more to come."

The APMT presentation accompanies arrival of Maersk's newest methanol powered container ship at the Port of Los Angeles. The vessel has the capacity to reduce carbon emissions by 65% powered by methanol according to a Maersk spokesperson. The vessel is dual fuel and so uses conventional bunker fuel as well methanol and has a capacity to carry 16,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units).



APM Terminals at the Port of Los Angeles

A name giving ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, August 27th that will include A.P. Moller-Maersk CEO Vincent Clerc and Congresswoman Nanette Barragan.

White said before modernization, the APMT facility was a challenge for truckers to navigate: "it's just such a large place that they wouldn't know where to go."

Today, things have changed: "While the truck stays in one place We take the empty export container off the truck there in that spot, the truck stays there and then we bring the next container to the truck. The difference is that these straddle carriers grab the container one time and then move it to wherever it needs to go and takes it from A to B, so you don't have to pick it up, don't have to touch it multiple times. It just starts moving throughout the facility. "

The result is that the APMT facility has gone from truckers taking up to an hour and a half for pick-ups and deliveries to 35 minutes under the upgraded system: "We have gone to in many days, averaging an hour and a half in trucker turn times to where our goal every day is ... to 35 minutes in the past two months, we've been the best in the harbor. People now start talking about us very positively."

The APMT straddle carriers utilize a hybrid battery diesel propulsion system, although, two new fully electrical carriers will soon be arriving. APMT hopes to replace all its hybrid straddle carriers with electrically powered ones by 2028: "They just got the first two fully electric ones loaded on a vessel to come to us and they should be here before the end of the year ... We. hope to have replaced all the straddle carriers by 2028 ... Just as fast ... as we can get them in."

White said the changes have resulted in a 30% reduction in the longshore workforce at APMT: "if you had a hundred people here before, you have about seventy people now Somewhere in that mark."

The APMT straddle carrier system differed from automated container terminals such as at Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port of Long Beach and similar automated terminals at the Port of Rotterdam that use automated guided vehicles run on batteries:" The big difference in modernized facilities, automated facilities and what's going on here is most other facilities you go to is that there's a sled (also known as an automated guided vehicle or AGV) that goes to an area and you take the container and you put it on that sled and the sled moves it to another place and then it gets taken off and touched again and moved off."

White explained that the APMT facility was transformed from a conventional terminal to the modernized facility beginning in 2020 just as the COVID pandemic began: "And we're looking at what really and truly just became a fully finished product just in the past months. We had sometimes as many vendors on our site working and transforming this place as there was people working in the facility. This was not a small feat to adjust the facility from what it was to what it is now Other facilities shut down to do something like what we did, like they just shut down for a year and a half. We did it all while operating during one of the toughest times in our industry."

The operation is managed at a control center where members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) direct operations: "We have a different building and that's where the mechanics, the clerks, are sitting in a control center helping work and operate. And you still have the union labor that's doing all of this work all within the same control center."

White said the APMT deploys 132 automated straddle carriers to run on its container terminal operations and that the terminal has the capacity to process 3.5 million TEUs per year.