Executive Vice President Doug Hoehn of Milestone Equipment Holdings stressed that the “most important thing to do for a motor carrier or driver is to provide a good piece of equipment,” and described technological and equipment advancements being made to accomplish that.

“We have taken several steps that help customers and drivers know what equipment is available,” Hoehn said. One of them is an emailed daily utilization report that provides real time information, while congestion and delays can result in consequences far beyond the boundaries of the facility.

What the speakers in each article share is a commitment to further improving greater operational efficiency, information flow and technology. What is different is their views on how to better accomplish these goals through approaches and strategies such as appointment systems, peel offs, equipment upgrades, technology and more.

To provide the broadest possible perspective, upcoming articles will feature commentary from experts representing every IANA division. That approach addresses the important, industrywide goal of advancing the efficiency and productivity through the sharing of knowledge. Future articles will assess how technology, government regulations and other topics affect the drivers’ experience.

Throughout the intermodal industry, further enhancing the driver experience is an increasingly important focus.

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“We have taken several steps that help customers and drivers know what equipment is available,” Hoehn said. One of them is an emailed daily utilization report that provides real time information. Another is accessing equipment supply through chassisfinder.com. Fleets and drivers can select equipment on the web or by phone.
Operations.

use equipment condition information in terminals to enhance compliance, higher customer satisfaction and the ability to better roadside event.

The resulting benefits would include alerts for maintenance and repair to assist drivers in identifying issues before they become a problem. Systems that can monitor light, tire and brake system conditions, along with GPS, can aid utilization and efficiency, he said. They include telemetry systems that can monitor light, tire and brake system conditions.

Sharing that information between parties that turns such data into useful information that can improve the efficiency of the whole system is one of the best ways to improve drivers’ productivity and reduce the risk of breakdowns, according to Harald Joseph. DCLI has invested nearly $45 million to equip over 27,000 units with radial tires and LED lights, and other newer equipment for chassis.

“GPS won’t be something that is an option, but will become almost required equipment” for chassis.

Hoehn believes that upgrading to radial tires, disc wheels and LED lighting on all company chassis gives drivers the assurance that they won’t have a breakdown. Milestone chose that equipment to make its equipment more attractive to users, compared with the older chassis that might not have those features.

The market is embracing newer chassis as ownership of equipment shifts more toward motor carriers, 3PLs, cargo owners and forwarders who are willing to pay slightly more for equipment with the belief that lower total cost of ownership will be the result. He also favors the trucker choice model.

“Having a high-quality chassis readily available for a driver’s use is one of the best ways to improve [drivers’] productivity and experiences,” said Direct ChassisLink Senior Vice President Ron Joseph. DCLI has invested nearly $45 million to equip over 27,000 units with radial tires and LED lights on 80 percent of its fleets. More than 16,000 new chassis have been added to the fleet, with further investment planned in 2019.

Joseph believes that equipment utilization in chassis pools “is actually quite good” and that “as a general rule, there are enough units in the right locations to meet the needs of our customers.”

He advocates improvement of that utilization through increased and collaborative communication among all links in the supply chain.

GPS Benefits

Another approach in use at some locations, Hoehn said, is equipping chassis with GPS to help managers better understand movement patterns so that utilization can be improved.

Eventually, Hoehn believes that “GPS won’t be something that is an option, but will become almost required equipment” for chassis.

Currently, Hoehn believes that GPS is one of the better technology-related steps that could aid utilization and efficiency. They include telemetry systems that can monitor light, tire and brake system conditions. The resulting benefits would include alerts for maintenance and repair to assist drivers in identifying issues before they become a roadside event.

Other benefits related to technology were cited include fewer roadability repairs before failures occur, improved regulatory compliance, higher customer satisfaction and the ability to better use equipment condition information in terminals to enhance operations.

Access to Information

“Having access to information about what shipments are coming in, what equipment is needed to move them, where they’re going, when they’re needed to arrive, etc. are the key data points that drive the utilization equation,” Joseph said. “The data needed to be efficient is available – it’s just a matter of collaboration and sharing that information between parties that turns such data into useful information that can improve the efficiency of the whole system.”

There also are a series of technology-related steps that could aid utilization and efficiency, he said. They include telemetry systems that can monitor light, tire and brake system conditions. The resulting benefits would include alerts for maintenance and repair to assist drivers in identifying issues before they become a roadside event.

Several other benefits related to technology were cited according to Joseph. These benefits include fewer roadability repairs before failures occur, improved regulatory compliance, higher customer satisfaction and the ability to better use equipment condition information in terminals to enhance operations.

Efficiency Can Be Constrained

The system’s efficiency is tested by a number of operating conditions, Hamlin explained. For example, cargo owners desire to have freight moving, but freight isn’t always ready to be unloaded, so truckers and their equipment utilization are hurt. Mega ships’ cargo volume may be too large to move efficiently through parts of the supply chain. Chassis availability can be influenced by heavy street volume, equipment condition or balance issues.

Appointment systems as well as better information flow on when trucks are arriving will be important to enhance operational planning and execution. Hamlin believes. Another step forward is to integrate off-terminal container yards that can help to improve overall turn time by reducing delays at congested facilities.

Port of New York and New Jersey Assistant Director Beth Rooney outlined multiple actions taken at the port to enhance drivers’ experience. One is the trucker resource guide, updated annually, which is available as a downloadable ibook and printed versions, in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Polish, the four top languages spoken by drivers. The guide is designed to inform drivers about every aspect of their port experience.

One feature Rooney cited at New York and New Jersey is the port’s information system that gives status on export and import cargo, functioning as a one-stop web portal. Port Truck Pass, as it is called, also registers and effectively authorizes access to terminals through radio-frequency identification tags. The result is that location as well as track and trace information is available to drivers and port operators alike, in addition to data such as

Chief Operating Officer William Hamlin at ITS Technologies & Logistics also provided multiple perspectives on how to enhance drivers’ experience, including the formation of a working group by IANA’s Operations Committee to evaluate how industry-wide approaches can accomplish that goal.

“Everyone in the chain has a piece of the responsibility and has to be committed to doing their part to improve the system economics and efficiencies,” Hamlin said. “By bringing the broader intermodal stakeholder community together to find ways to improve the overall driver experience and turn time, we can make some measurable improvements,” he continued. “The improvements will come from technology, automation, information flow and improved operations working together.

“There are a variety of factors that impact the driver experience and the efficiency of the move. The issue is that there are many facets of the driver experience depending on the nature of the movement,” he told Insights, including marine terminal, intermodal rail terminal, container yard, distribution center, warehousing and customer facilities. Driver experience can be influenced by cargo availability, gate congestion, facility delays and equipment availability, which are being tackled by steps such as automated gates and appointment systems.

Hamlin

Joseph

Rooney
demurrage, free time and circumstances such as customs holds.

**Appointment Systems Added**

Appointment systems have been an evolving story at New York and New Jersey, beginning at Global Container Terminal. Appointments now are required for part of the workday, but not at all times. Later this year, all trucker moves will require appointments, Rooney said. Two other terminals in the region are slated to be converted to appointment systems this year.

“Generally speaking, it is all about transparency and communication. If everybody knows the plan, the better off the whole supply chain is. Part of the experience at the terminal includes chassis,” Rooney told Insights. “When the chassis leaves the depot, it must be known to be in good condition and roadworthy.”

Glenn Farren, director of tenant services and operations at the Port of Long Beach, said the port’s overarching goal is to make operations more efficient for drivers and all other stakeholders, making the important point that there is a disparity in turn times among port terminals that penalizes motor carriers.

He offered a series of steps that could be taken to continue those improvements, such as taking empty containers off dock to eliminate the existing condition where 30 percent of gate traffic is empty returns and pickups. Two such chassis yards are operating now.

Opportunities also exist in pool operations, through enhancing the mechanisms for determining whether there is a surplus or deficit of equipment for each terminal and equipment provider.

While he favors establishing a neutral, or gray, pool, Farren also noted that the “pool of pools” structure in place in Southern California is a significant improvement over market conditions in place before IEPs adopted that approach in 2015.

Appointment systems would work better, he believes, if they were used for all transactions, not just import pickups. Farren also endorsed trucker-owned chassis.

**‘Peel Piles’ Offer Advantages**

Farren also touted “peel piles” because they can produce eight times as many boxes moved in an hour, compared with conventional operations.

Efficiency also is a critical part of Southern California’s Clean Truck Program, since drivers need to make sure they can make enough moves to turn a profit and cover new truck costs.

One other key improvement will be sharing information between modes to promote greater cargo visibility.

At the Port of Los Angeles spokesperson Phillip Sanfield outlined several steps that can aid drivers’ experience.

He cited the recently implemented PierPass 2.0 program, which requires appointments to pick up import containers, saying that could help to improve turn times. Dual transactions are another advantageous step, he noted.

“What slows drivers down is the picking and choosing of containers that are stacked in a pile,” Sanfield said. “Often, the container the driver is after is at the bottom of the pile, thus causing long turn times. Peel off piles eliminate the picking and choosing and the driver takes the containers from the top and works their way down the pile.”

Drivers’ experience also is enhanced by bringing their own chassis, he added.

A particular focus at Los Angeles is technology known as the GE Port Optimizer, developed in conjunction with the port to improve cargo planning and driver efficiency.

“We are working on technology such as the Port Optimizer to get a better line of sight oncargo,” Sanfield said. That technology is cloud-based software designed to deliver real time information through a single portal. It’s driven by data integration from multiple sources in the port region and uses machine learning.

The technology is scheduled to be in use at all Los Angeles container terminals this year, Sanfield noted, to “help the supply chain monitor and respond to dynamic conditions ... and enable maximum port throughput and delivery performance.”