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## Short rail line serving L.A. and Long Beach ports gets greener

**Pacific Harbor Line, known as one of the least polluting U.S. railroads, will reduce pollution further by equipping part of its train fleet with advanced engines and special exhaust filters.**

By Ronald D. White, Los Angeles Times

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Pacific Harbor Line Inc. is one of the shortest railroads in the nation, operating only 18 route miles entirely inside the neighboring ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

But the tiny railway is out to smoke its bigger competition when it comes to environmental friendliness.

Already lauded as one of the least polluting U.S. railroads, Pacific Harbor Line on Wednesday unveiled its latest effort at clean living: a glossy, black 2,000-horsepower locomotive that appeared to have undergone few changes except for a new bulge on its roof and a sound, at idle, that one executive said was more like a "giant sewing machine" than a train engine.

The railroad is in the process of upgrading 16 of its 23 locomotives with advanced engines and special exhaust systems that will sharply reduce some key components of air pollution. Pacific Harbor Line said the upgrades would result in an 85% reduction in particulate matter — dust, smoke and other particles that contribute to serious health problems, such as respiratory disease and heart attacks — and a 38% reduction in smog-forming nitrogen oxide compared with the rail line's fleet six years ago.

"We have taken the greenest fleet in America and improved it," said Pacific Harbor Line Managing Director Andrew C. Fox, the executive who hears sewing machines instead of roaring engines.

The effort will elevate the trains one notch in the Environmental Protection Agency's four-tier system of emissions standards for diesel engines; the only cleaner engines would be labeled "Tier 4," and few of those are in operation.

The anticipated reduction in air pollution is a big deal, even to some of the seaports' toughest critics.

"If you look at the big private railroads, who are out proposing newer and bigger rail yards, they have not stepped up to the plate like this one has in cleaning up their fleets," said David Pettit, senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

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"It's going to help clean up the air at the twin ports. They are the largest sources of deadly particulate matter in the region, and anything that makes that situation better is a win for public health," Pettit said.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach together are the sixth-busiest harbor in the world, handling more than 40% of the nation's Asian imports. Pacific Harbor Line doesn't handle all of that traffic, but it still plays a crucial role in the movement of cargo. It's the hauler for the nine so-called on-dock rail facilities inside the ports.

Pacific Harbor Line's job is to break down trains as they arrive and send their cargo containers to the nine terminals at the ports, where containers are transferred to ships. The railway also assembles trains that haul freight to much of the nation, connecting to the Union Pacific and BNSF transcontinental rail line.

Over the course of a typical year, Pacific Harbor Line will handle 1 million rail carloads, hauling an assortment of goods, including automobiles, borax, cotton, grain, heavy equipment, cargo containers, lumber, manufactured goods, petrochemicals and scrap.

One of 22 short-line railroads operating in California, it "handles the first mile and the last mile" of transport, said Mike Stolzman, the company's president.

Its role in California is unique. In the mid-1990s, there were still three separate railroads trying to get cargo in and out of the ports in a timely fashion, a situation that led to frequent disputes over timing and rights of way. In the late '90s, the ports and the railroads decided a neutral third body would work inside the ports.

They chose Anacostia & Pacific Co., one of many private companies that run the regional and short line railroads that connect communities to main rail lines. Pacific Harbor Line began running in 1998.

With one of the youngest fleets in the nation, Pacific Harbor Line had already been dubbed "the greenest railroad in America" by Railway Age magazine. But the company was approached by the ports, Fox said, and asked whether it could do even more to reduce emissions.

The company worked with the South Coast Air Quality Management District and received one of the agency's Carl Moyer grants to pay for the bulk of the retrofit costs.

Pacific Harbor Line chose the engine offered by Progress Rail Services, a division of Caterpillar. The engine would be paired with that new bulge on the roof of the locomotive, a state-of-the-art filter manufactured by a Swiss company called Hug Engineering.

"We're partners with the ports, so we said we would be happy to see what more we could do," Fox said. "The grant gave us \$11 million, which will pay for 85% of the costs. We could not have done this without the partnership with the AQMD."

Gary Eelman, vice president of locomotive sales and leasing for Progress Rail Services, said that the locomotives were a first for the U.S. Although such new engines have been paired with the sophisticated filters in Europe, Eelman said, it had never been done in the U.S.

Pacific Harbor Line expects to receive all of the upgraded locomotives by the end of the year, well ahead of an anticipated boost in business once the Port of Los Angeles' \$274-million renovation of its TraPac cargo terminal is complete in about three years.

The renovation will add a 10th on-dock rail facility at the ports, and Pacific Harbor Line will handle that cargo too.

[\*ron.white@latimes.com\*](mailto:ron.white@latimes.com)

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