

Baltimore Brew

A strong year for the Port of Baltimore

February 19, 2015 at 1:44 pm

Thanks to a rising sea of cars and containers, the Maryland Port Administration registered its highest cargo level in 2014, the agency announced today.

The port handled more cars and light trucks than any other U.S. port last year – 792,795 – up 5% from the 2013 total.

This increase, combined with a record handling of 484,410 containers, translated into 9.7 million tons of general cargo – a 1% uptick over the 9.6 million tons in 2012.

Baltimore has long been a leading importer of foreign cars, but now is shipping out more cars than ever before. Last year, 259,312 vehicles crossed MPA docks for export.

Private Shipments

The port is also a large exporter of coal and other commodities from private terminals. Overall, the private sector handled 19.8 million tons of mostly bulk goods, including sugar, aluminum, forest products and farm machinery as well as coal.

The MPA estimated the total value of goods moved through the port at \$52.5 billion last year, making Baltimore the ninth largest port in the U.S. for the total dollar value of cargo and 13th for cargo tonnage.

The 2012 shutdown of the Sparrows Point steel mill, a leading importer of iron ore and coke, put a major dent in the port's private cargo handling.

The MPA plans to turn the southern tip of the former steel mill into a marine terminal, primarily for car and truck shipments, but also for anticipated new business coming to Baltimore after the widening of the Panama Canal.

The Daily Record

Port of Baltimore posts records

By: Adam Bednar Daily Record Business Writer February 19, 2015

The Maryland Port Administration announced that 2014 was a banner year for certain commodities passing through the Port of Baltimore's public marine terminals.

According to the state, the public terminals handled 9.7 million tons of overall total general cargo last year. General cargo includes items such as autos, containers and forest products.

“The Port of Baltimore is one of Maryland’s most important economic assets, and it will play an integral role in our efforts to help grow the state’s economy,” Gov. Larry Hogan said in a news release. “My administration is focused on building Maryland’s reputation as a place that’s ‘Open for Business,’ and the port can play a pivotal role in spreading this message while also delivering real economic growth.”

The port, when combining cargo from public and private terminals, set a record when it imported 792,795 cars, topping the previous year’s mark of 752,100 cars . The port has imported the highest number of cars of any port in the United State for the past four years.

Combined public and private terminals brought in 29.5 million tons of cargo last year that represented \$52.5 billion. Baltimore ranks the highest in the nation for importing commodities such as cars, imported sugar and construction machinery.

Overall, the port is responsible for 14,630 direct jobs, \$3 billion in personal wages and \$300 million in state and local taxes.

2014 International Cargo Records at the Port of Baltimore

Autos (public and private terminals)

- 2014: 792,795
- Previous record: 752,100 (2013)

Export Autos (public terminals)

- 2014: 259,312
- Previous Record: 237,397

Containers (public terminals)

- 2014: 484,410
- Previous record: 439,802 (2013)

General Cargo (public terminals)

- 2014: 9.7 million tons
- Previous record: 9.6 million (2013)

Baltimore Business Journal

The West Coast port mess is boosting shipping in Baltimore

By Rick Seltzer Feb 20, 2015, 7:22am EST

The ongoing labor dispute slowing traffic at West Coast ports has lifted the cargo container business at the Port of Baltimore.

On Thursday, the Baltimore port reported breaking several of its own international shipping records in 2014, including a cargo container record that fell as container traffic jumped 10 percent from the previous year. About a tenth of the increase can be attributed to companies shifting their business while West Coast labor talks have dragged on for months, backing up shipping, said Maryland Port Administration Executive Director James J. White.

"I know I'm talking to a lot of manufacturers and importers," he said. "They're going to play it more safety for the future. I think you're going to see them spreading their cargo from the West Coast, sprinkling it over the East Coast ports."

Still, White isn't counting on the West Coast situation to be an indefinite boon for Baltimore shipping. He's predicting it will be resolved soon as management and labor leaders see East Coast and Gulf Coast ports benefitting from the backlog.

The West Coast negotiations aren't the biggest driver behind the uptick in Baltimore container traffic, White said. The port has been winning cargo in large part because it loads and unloads ships rapidly.

"We do more moves per hour compared to other East Coast ports, which allows the ships to hit the dock and get off the dock as quickly as possible," White said. "The ship owners want the ships at sea. They don't want them sitting around at port."

Looking ahead, White predicts a continued rise in Port of Baltimore container shipping. Some will be driven by the Panama Canal expansion project allowing the canal to funnel more cargo from Asia into the Atlantic. Perhaps more importantly in his eyes, Asian manufacturing seems to be shifting south, making it more attractive to ship into the Atlantic through the Suez Canal.

As for the prospect of labor issues in Baltimore upsetting container shipping, White doesn't see it in the cards. Things have been quiet on that front since an arbitrator ruled against a work stoppage in 2013, he said.

Meanwhile, auto traffic at the port has been slowed as negotiations with one large union local continue, but White is hopeful that issue will be resolved soon.

WBAL Radio

2014 a Record Year for the Port of Baltimore

Business is booming at the Port of Baltimore.

The Maryland Port Administration said Thursday that 2014 was a record year for key targeted commodities at the Port of Baltimore's public marine terminals.

Autos and containers each established new records that helped the Port's public marine terminals to a new overall total general cargo record of 9.7 million tons.

"That's the highest increase we've seen in the past decade," said Jim White, Executive Director of the Port of Baltimore.

He said Baltimore's location is key, adding that the area between Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia is the third largest consumer group in the country.

"The consumer is group is huge," he said.

American Journal of Transportation

A record year in 2014 for the Port of Baltimore

By: AJOT | Feb 19 2015 at 04:47 PM

The Maryland Port Administration has announced that 2014 was a record year for key targeted commodities at the Port of Baltimore's public marine terminals. Autos and containers each established new records that helped the Port's public marine terminals to a new overall total general cargo record of 9.7 million tons. General cargo at the public marine terminals is autos, containers, forest products, roll on/roll off equipment, and breakbulk. In addition to the new records, the Port of Baltimore again reached top national status in handling certain commodities.

"The Port of Baltimore is one of Maryland's most important economic assets and it will play an integral role in our efforts to help grow the state's economy," said Governor Larry Hogan. "My administration is focused on building Maryland's reputation as a place that's Open for Business and the Port can play a pivotal role in spreading this message while also delivering real economic growth."

International Cargo Records at the Port of Baltimore in 2014:

- Autos (public and private terminals):
- 792,795 cars (Highest among all U.S. ports for the fourth consecutive year)
- The previous record was 752,100 cars in 2013.
- Export Autos (public terminals):
- 259,312 exported cars (Fourth straight year for record export cars)
- Up nine percent from last year's record of 237,397 export cars.

- Containers (public terminals) :
- 484,410 containers (up 10 percent from 2013).
- The previous record was 439,802 containers in 2013.
- General Cargo (public terminals):
- 9.7 million tons (up one percent from 2013)
- The previous record was 9.6 million tons in 2012.

Combining both the public and private marine terminals, the Port of Baltimore saw 29.5 million tons of international cargo cross its docks last year which was valued at approximately \$52.5 billion.

The Baltimore Sun

Baltimore's public port terminals set cargo records in 2014

By Kevin Rector, February 19, 2015

The port of Baltimore had a banner year for the overall cargo volume handled at its public terminals in 2014, in part thanks to record numbers of automobiles and cargo containers moving across its docks.

The growth was restrained to some extent by local labor unrest, but also buoyed by similar unrest on the West Coast, said James White, executive director of the Maryland Port Administration.

The overall cargo record of 9.7 million tons outpaced the 9.6 million tons handled in both 2013 and 2012, according to the Maryland Port Administration.

Including private terminals, the port of Baltimore experienced a slight decline in tonnage handled, with 29.5 million tons of international cargo last year compared to 30.3 million in 2013, according to the MPA. The value of the total public and private cargo handled in Baltimore dipped too, from about \$52.6 billion in 2013 to about \$52.5 billion last year.

White said the overall decline related to coal exports, which were artificially high in recent years because of coal mine flooding in Australia and a subsequent increase in demand for U.S. coal from China and Korea. That demand returned to normal levels last year as Australia recovered and Indonesia opened new mines, White said.

Nationally, Baltimore ranks ninth for cargo value and 13th for cargo tonnage.

While the numbers overall were strong, White said they "could have been much better" had it not been for the festering dispute between Baltimore's largest dockworkers union and its shippers.

The labor dispute has cast a shadow over the port's operations since at least October 2013, when members of the International Longshoremen's Association Local 333 went on strike for three days and concerned shippers began diverting cargo.

National union leaders placed the local under trusteeship in November and are leading the negotiations on the local's behalf, and no labor disruptions have occurred since the strike. Still, concerns about labor stability have lingered with the uncertainty of the contract, White said.

Local 333 members voted to reject the latest proposal just last week.

Still, for the fourth year in a row, Baltimore — and Local 333 members — handled more automobiles than any other port in the country.

The port handled a record 792,795 automobiles last year, compared with 752,100 in 2013 and 652,000 in 2012. Part of the increase was on the export side, with Baltimore's automobile exports jumping 9 percent year over year, from 237,397 in 2013 to 259,312 last year.

In one example of the port's strengthening position in automobile shipping, officials in September announced a new five-year deal with BMW, including a new processing center that could continue to increase vehicle volume in coming years.

Last year was also the first full year under a new deal the port struck with Mazda in 2013, and White said he had hoped to break 800,000 vehicles in 2014.

Container cargo also reached a benchmark in 2014, with the port handling a record 484,410 containers, a 10 percent increase from the 439,802 containers handled in 2013.

Part of that growth can be attributed to the ongoing labor dispute between West Coast longshoremen and shippers, which led to products usually carried by rail to the East Coast from West Coast ports to be delivered directly by ship, White said.

Other East Coast ports have had even larger growth from diverted West Coast cargo, especially cargo that is destined for the middle of the country. However, Baltimore's ability to attract such cargo is limited by its inability to double-stack containers on westbound trains directly out of its terminals.

State officials touted the numbers as a sign of the port's importance as an economic engine with growth potential in the state.

"The port of Baltimore is one of Maryland's most important economic assets and it will play an integral role in our efforts to help grow the state's economy," said Gov. Larry Hogan in a statement. "My administration is focused on building Maryland's reputation as a place that's Open for Business and the port can play a pivotal role in spreading this message while also delivering real economic growth."

The port generates about 14,630 direct jobs and indirectly supports tens of thousands more, and is responsible for \$3 billion in personal wages and salaries and more than \$300 million in state and local taxes, according to the MPA.

In 2009, the MPA signed a 50-year, \$1.3 billion public-private partnership with Ports America Chesapeake that allowed it to invest more heavily in infrastructure.

One purchase, of next-generation cranes capable of handling the largest international ships, has broadened the scope of what Baltimore — with its 50-foot channel — can handle and attract in the way of cargo and clients.