

# James J. White's Port Overview

*Executive Director, Maryland Port Administration*

## **In the 10 years you have been in Baltimore, what are some of the biggest changes you have seen at the Port?**

The private side of the Port has really taken off in the past decade. When I first got here, there was only one private general cargo terminal. Today, there are five and they are successfully competing for cargo that once was only handled at the public terminals. Before, there was little interaction between the private terminals and the MPA. Today, we work together. The Port of Baltimore is no longer just the public terminals; there is a thriving private sector as well.

The relationship between management and labor is stronger. The leadership is more willing to sit down and discuss issues. We may not always agree, but everyone stays at the table. The benefits of this improved relationship can be seen at our Seagirt Marine Terminal where we average 38 moves per vessel gang hour — the best in the North Atlantic — and in our quality automobile handling program where we now have some of the lowest damage rates of any U.S. port. We are now applying the same fundamentals to forest products and Ro/Ro.

One of the biggest changes is in our relationship with the environmental community. We have moved beyond being adversaries over dredging to where we share the same goals of protecting the Chesapeake Bay and maintaining the Port's competitiveness. Last year, we entered into a partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and some of the most vocal critics of our dredging program are now helping to shape our plans for managing dredged material over the next 20 years.

## **You direct an historic port that is credited with actually creating the city of Baltimore. What is it that makes this port unique and gives it the edge in key cargoes?**

Since its infancy, Baltimore has succeeded because of its

inland position. Baltimore was, and still is, the closest port to the Midwest. This works to our advantage with such cargoes as automobiles, farm equipment and Ro/Ro — cargoes that benefit from staying on the water as long as possible to reduce inland expenses. Being so far inland no longer gives us the advantage we once had with containers; however, customers get the benefit of our superior intermodal connections including two class-one railroads, skilled labor, state-of-the-art facilities and high productivity. Another key asset is our 50-foot channel.



BILL MCGALLEN

## **The MPA's Strategic Plan provided a blueprint for focusing the Port's marketing and facility development on niche cargoes. Why has this plan been so successful?**

The Strategic Plan totally refocused our thinking. It helped us understand our strengths as a port and directed our energies towards those cargoes we could successfully attract. We were then able to target our resources instead of wasting time and money chasing cargoes we had little chance of attracting. By putting our resources in line with our strengths, we

were able to develop a business plan in tune with our customers' needs. Finally, the Plan demonstrated that we were serious and committed to certain lines of business. The Plan is not static and it was updated in 2002. This gives our customers the confidence they need to make long-term commitments to Baltimore.

## **You have placed a great deal of importance on strengthening the Port's relationships with elected officials, the Maryland business community, the private terminals and the public at large. How does this type of outreach help you accomplish your business goals?**

It is very simple. If people do not understand our business, they are not likely to support our needs for capital funding,

our dredging program, land acquisition, or any other issue that comes before the legislature. By reaching out to every corner of the State, we are broadening our base of support for the Port. More importantly, legislators are more likely to act when they hear from people in the private sector. When 50 people from the business community show up for a hearing in Annapolis, or 100 citizens attend a Congressional briefing in Washington, our elected officials take notice.

### **As a Port Director, what do you see as your greatest challenges in the year ahead?**

Clearly, the economy is going to be one of the biggest challenges. The experts keep pushing the recovery out in six-month increments so it is hard to know what kind of year this will be. Consumer spending has kept the economy afloat for a long-time, but who knows how long that will last. And a possible war with Iraq would be very unsettling. Security will also remain in the forefront. Baltimore was fortunate to receive a \$3.6 million security grant in 2002, but we have already spent far more than that on security upgrades. I cannot count on increased revenues to close the gap. Congress will have to act quickly to provide a source of funding.

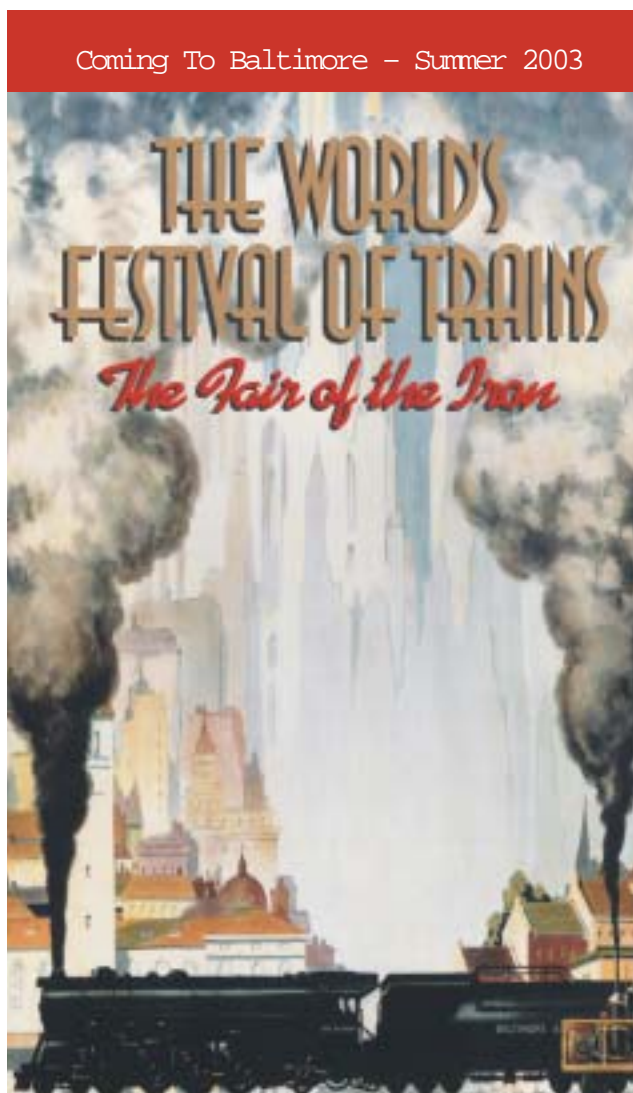
Finally, ILA labor negotiations may be challenging in 2004. We have all taken note of what happened on the West Coast and the devastating effect the shutdown had on the economy. I hope that prior to October 2004, we can work out a contract with the ILA without any disruption to the flow of cargo through Atlantic and Gulf Coast ports.

### **What would you like to see the MPA accomplish during the next 10 years?**

First, I want to see the implementation of a long-term dredged material management plan. Because dredging is so important to our ability to retain jobs and grow new business, we will be working very hard to maintain the momentum we have established with our partners. Because new placement capacity is costly and often contentious, it is my great hope that we implement our plan in such a way that the Port has sufficient placement capacity well into the future. And I believe we can achieve that goal because many people are recognizing dredged material as an asset in restoring the Chesapeake Bay — and they are also more aware of how important a strong port is to the lives of all Marylanders.

Second, we need to acquire more land so the Port can grow. Our ability to expand our business, especially Ro/Ro and automobiles, is constrained by existing fence lines. We must have additional land so we can meet the needs of our existing customers as well as attract new cargo.

Lastly, we need to leave a solid foundation for the next generation. By this, I mean investing our funds wisely in routine maintenance and ongoing rehabilitation of berths and warehouses. I hope future managers will not have to weigh using scarce funds to rebuild existing berths, as opposed to building a new pier where it is urgently needed to support growth. If we work to preserve what we already have, then future managers will have an easier time meeting the changing needs of our customers. ⚓



### **PLAN NOW TO BE AT THE B&O RAILROAD MUSEUM JUNE 27 – JULY 6, 2003**

**A SPECTACULAR 10 DAY CELEBRATION OF RAILROADING,** featuring a live Pageant of the most impressive collection of locomotives from the Western Hemisphere. **NOT SINCE THE ORIGINAL FAIR OF THE IRON HORSE OF 1927 HAS THERE BEEN AN EVENT OF THIS MAGNITUDE.**

**Exhibition and sponsorship opportunities in garden railroading, scale modeling, classic and toy trains, as well as railroading, rail travel, freight and technology pavilions.**

Contact Frank Sheridan at 770-518-9963  
fax: 770-518-1292 e-mail: fsheridan@borail.org

Presented by CSX and the B&O Railroad Museum. In association with the Smithsonian Institution. Visit us at [www.borail.org](http://www.borail.org)

