

RANDOM LENGTHS

River of Trade Conference Docks in San Pedro

James P. Allen
March 9-22, 2007



Senator Alan Lowenthal spoke at a dinner held at Ante's Restaurant for the River of Trade Corridor Coalition Conference on March 1. Photo: James P. Allen.

Last week on March 2, the River of Trade Corridor Coalition concluded its three-day long meeting addressing the environmental and transportation infrastructure needs of the ports as the western gateway of the nine-state corridor from California to Michigan.

The River of Trade Corridor Coalition (ROTCC), created in the fall of 2004, unites cities, counties, transportation authorities, freight movement entities, and businesses along existing traditional and significant trade routes. This includes the NAFTA highway from Laredo, TX to Detroit, Michigan and the multi-modal goods movement corridor beginning with the ports in Los Angeles and Long beach to inland destinations via Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona, Las Cruces, New Mexico and El Paso, Fort Worth and Dallas, Texas.

To highlight the importance of the corridor to his city in Little Rock, Arkansas, Mayor Patrick Henry Hays cited the tax revenue generated for the Recreation and Parks systems by restaurants like the Iron Skillet. Truckers traveling along the corridor frequent this restaurant, which he says is the single largest tax generator in his city. Hays was a former campaign manager for Bill Clinton when he ran for state office there.

Echoing the concerns of many local harbor area activists, these representatives from a wide range of communities in the nine states wondered how they would pay for infrastructure and deal with pollution caused by the trade corridors.

As if punctuating the importance of improved transportation infrastructure, Sen. Alan Lowenthal (D- Long Beach) introduced the Port Investment Bill, SB 974, which like his previous bill calls for a \$30 per container fee per 20-foot container on shipments through the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Yet, this bill also includes the Port of Oakland and designates the money raised strictly for port infrastructure and programs to reduce air pollution. Lowenthal addressed the ROTCC conference at a March 1 dinner at Ante's Restaurant where he raised the container fee issue as one solution that he is fighting for, to redress the air pollution and traffic congestion caused by the commerce of the ports of LA and Long Beach.