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Joliet facility dedicated to container trains from West Coast ports, Mexico

John D. Boyd

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Union Pacific Railroad moved its first revenue trains through the new Joliet Intermodal Terminal on Aug. 3, launching UP's fifth major box-handling yard in the Chicago area.

UP spokesman Mark Davis said the facility, located southwest of downtown Chicago, will be one of the carrier's two largest intermodal terminals in the metropolitan area. It will be the only one set up just to handle international traffic to and from West Coast seaports, and moving to and from Mexico.

It officially opened on Aug. 1, a Sunday, but received its first revenue-producing train Tuesday from Long Beach, Calif., and sent out its first revenue train to that same destination.

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UP says the terminal will handle traffic moving between Joliet and Southern California, Northern California, the Pacific Northwest, and U.S.-Mexico border crossings at El Paso, Texas, and Tucson, Ariz.

The 785-acre, \$370 million UP terminal at Joliet was built in conjunction with CenterPoint Properties, which bills its CenterPoint Intermodal Center there as "a state-of-the-art integrated logistics center and inland port" on 3,600 acres. CenterPoint also has a separate intermodal center two miles south at Elwood, which is paired with a BNSF Railway facility.

Davis said the Joliet terminal will not be used as a hand-off site for cross-country trains. It will be the origination point for international trains built with containers from the Chicago area or trucked in from parts of Wisconsin, Indiana and perhaps Iowa. Inbound trains

hauling marine boxes from ocean ports or bringing surface cargoes up from Mexico will discharge their boxes at Joliet for drayage throughout that region.

Eventually, the new terminal will help make it possible for UP to shift some operations and close a small rail yard on Canal Street in Chicago, but it is mainly an addition to the carrier's intermodal network capacity in North America's largest rail hub area.

UP's site plans for Joliet include 3,400 parking or staging spots for containers or trailers, a fleet of four cranes and two mobile lift devices, four 8,000-ft. tracks where operators can load/unload 107 double-stack railcars, plus six more tracks of the same length to sort cars by destination when building trains. It has an annual lift capacity of 500,000 intermodal boxes.

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