



**Office of the Mayor
City of Los Angeles**

ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 29, 2008**

**Contact: Gil Duran, Mayor's Office
(213) 978-1649**

**Becca Doten, CD7
(213) 847-7777**

MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA, ALARCÓN SET WHEELS IN MOTION ON EXPANSION OF FIRST NON-PROFIT TRUCK DRIVER ACADEMY IN AMERICA

With state facing a 50,000-driver shortfall, City and state invest \$724,000 in free-of-charge academy that will create high-paying jobs for Los Angeles workers

LOS ANGELES – Taking action to head-off a projected shortfall of truck drivers in the coming decade, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Councilmember Richard Alarcón and a coalition of industry and union leaders today announced the opening of a non-profit truck driver academy on the site of the City's decommissioned Lopez Canyon Landfill.

"The Transportation Opportunity Program will create middle-class jobs and help narrow the economic gap in our City," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "By training Angelenos for good paying jobs as truck drivers, we can help keep our economy strong and vibrant."

"Because of this training academy, by Christmas of next year hundreds of families will have the newfound security of a good paying job – one that can't be outsourced or shipped overseas," said Councilmember Alarcón. "This is a model of smart investment and partnership that will not only train students for middle-class jobs in a growing industry but, because we work with employers, we can ensure that our students are trained properly and will have the jobs they need when they graduate."

The new Transportation Opportunity Program will offer four weeks of intense, behind-the-wheel training for drivers seeking a "Class A" license to drive big-rig trucks and tractor trailers. There is no cost for participation.

Graduates can typically earn \$60,000 in their first year out of the program – plus health and pension benefits – which is double the salary of "Class B" drivers who operate dump trucks and school buses.

— MORE —

Mayor, Councilmember Launch Truck Academy

February 29, 2008

Page 2 of 2

The Lopez Canyon program is an expansion of the Teamsters Joint Council 42 Training Academy in Long Beach, a 501(c)3 non-profit. While the Long Beach academy graduates about 140 students per year, the new Lopez Canyon program will have the space and capacity for 600 graduates per year.

While private-sector driving programs exist (for a charge), the free non-profit academy has a 97% pass rate for the Department of Motor Vehicle's Class A exam – almost double the average pass rate of private schools.

"The Academy is a life-changing opportunity to lift workers out of poverty and strengthen our City's middle class," said Jim Garrison, the Academy Board's Treasurer and president of the Pacific Federal Insurance Corp.

The project is a partnership between employers – including United Grocers, Heavy Transport, ABF Freight, CVS Pharmacy, Horizon Freight, Kraft Foods, SYSCO Foods, Roadway Express and Rockview Farms – the Teamsters Joint Council 42, El Proyecto del Barrio worksorce center, the California Employment Training Panel, and several City departments, including the Workforce Investment Board, the Bureau of Sanitation and its Board of Public Works.

Funding for the academy comes from a \$210,000 City Workforce Investment Board grant, a \$414,000 state ETP grant and \$100,000 from Councilmember Alarcón's district. The City will lease the landfill site for \$1 per year, and employers will contribute \$300,000 in training equipment and staff.

"El Proyecto has been part of this exciting and dynamic partnership that has and will continue to drive new career opportunities and contribute to the growth of the local economy," said Corinne Sanchez, president and CEO of El Proyecto del Barrio. "This is the perfect example of a win-win for local employers, government, WorkSource Centers, organized labor and job seekers."

To determine drivers' eligibility, the academy uses hiring standards laid out by the employers on its board. To qualify, drivers must be a minimum 23 years old; have a clean driving record without DUIs; undergo a background check; and pass a Department of Transportation-mandated drug screening and physical.

Any qualified Los Angeles County resident can apply, and one-quarter of students will come from the areas surrounding Lopez Canyon in the Northeast Valley. As a non-profit, the academy has no requirements for union affiliation for entering students or graduating drivers.

City residents interested in finding more information about the program and about how to apply should call 1-800-FOR-A-JOB (1-800-367-2562), 3-1-1 or visit the City's Workforce Investment Board website at www.lacity.org/wib.

###