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New Loader Test Market

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One of the Few

Jimerson Underground tests LBX prototype in Stafford

■ Story by Liz Krajca, Photos by John Boykin

On a jobsite near their company headquarters, where everyone could easily go see it like a new baby, Jimerson Underground tests a prototype Link Belt wheel loader for LBX Co. in Stafford, southwest of Houston. R.B. Everett, the Houston area Link Belt Earthmoving dealership, has been involved in bringing this new piece of construction equipment to the marketplace by arranging several customer trials for the prototype. It is one of only two prototypes built for testing throughout the U.S.

As one of the newest Link Belt Earthmoving dealerships, R.B. Everett of the Houston area was chosen for the test market because they are an established, knowledgeable dealer, in business for 91 years, in a highly active construction market.

"Link Belt wanted us to get a good evaluation from people who use these types of machines," said R.B. Everett Sales Manager, Bob Hodson. "These customers had inquired about purchasing loaders, so we wanted to let them try this prototype. It has a lot of features, bells and whistles, that we like."

The Working Jobsite

Jimerson Underground had been contracted by the City of Stafford to provide drainage capacity for the 200-acre Freeport Southwest industrial park development along U.S. 90. They are running a 60-inch underground line from Freeport Southwest, near the intersection of U.S. 90 (Main Street) and Promenade, 400 feet under the 4-lane thoroughfare and railroad tracks, then angling southwest to empty into an established drainage



In the toolcarrier application, the new loader transports a pallet of bricks to be laid for a manhole entry.



Teamwork shows on the job that is one of the few in the nation involved in a new equipment evaluation. From left to right are Tony Bonner, project superintendent; Tom Nugent, project coordinator; Buddy Jimerson, consultant for Jimerson Underground; Pam Madrigal of Jones & Carter, Inc. Consulting Engineers, representing the city of Stafford; and Rick Vincent, R.B. Everett sales representative.



Above: Link Belt excavator is joined on the job by the new wheel loader.

ditch. From that point, stormwater runoff will drain into Oyster Creek, and ultimately into the Brazos River.

Existing water and sewer lines in the U.S. 90 right of way were relocated before the 60" inch steel line could be installed. Steel sections were installed in some of the water lines.

The 400-foot tunnel was subcontracted to H & I Boring and Tunneling, a division of American Trenchless, who had an Akkerman 60-inch closed-face tunnel-boring rig.

"The soil was good to us," said Kevin Treadwell, H & I project manager. "It was a drier, sandy clay." With this method, H & I jacked the tunnel machine across with the pipe. "We set some pipe in the hole, jacked it in, set more pipe and jacked that in. We averaged about 40 feet per day."

"They aligned it with a laser, went all the way through and came out within .02 of the grade in 400 feet," said Tom Nugent, Jimerson project coordinator/estimator. The alignment was perfect.

"Ground water caused some challenges earlier in the project," said Buddy Jimerson, consultant for Jimerson Underground. "You get down so deep and that boiling quick sand comes up," added Jimerson, "so we had to use a well point system while we had the tunneling machine going."

Jimerson has been using the LBX L130 in both toolcarrier and loader modes on this jobsite, which extends in opposite directions from the ROW,

approximately 2,000 feet from FM 1092, the nearest intersection that crosses the railroad tracks.

"We have been using it to transfer things back and forth from here to the north side of the track, moving pipe and stringing out material," said Tony Bonner, Jimerson project superintendent. "The weight is evened out with the size of the front bucket and with the engine where it's located closer to the center of the machine. It makes it easier to work on slopes. It doesn't have the rocking feeling that some of the other machines that size have."

According to Jimerson operator Noe Aguinaga, the loader has a lot of power, which he liked.

Development of a New Machine

LBX Co. officially unveiled their new loader at CONEXPO-CON/AGG in Las Vegas in March, but a great deal of research and testing went into bringing the new piece of machinery to the showroom.

The new loader was developed by LBX in answer to the needs of contractors who use loaders in a variety of applications. This increased utilization on the machine will make contractors more productive, and will also save them significantly on machine costs.

"The development of Link-Belt loader has been on-going for over 2 years," said Jeff Akel, LBX Co. product manager, articulated trucks/wheel loaders. "LBX chose to allow select dealers and contractors who are familiar with competitive wheel loaders to evaluate these units prior to introduction at CONEXPO to get feedback from their perspective on how the Link-Belt loader stacks up against the competition in areas of productivity and comfort."

LBX used several criteria to choose the evaluation dealers and markets. Among them were strength of customer relations, knowledge and experience in the wheel loader market, positioning in those markets, and the multitude and variety of applications to which the wheel loader would be used.

"R.B. Everett fit that criteria very well and were mutually interested in LBX's goals for the evaluation," continued Akel.

The second evaluation loader is based at Carlisle Equipment Group where it undergoing evaluations in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana with similar successes.

Other Texas customers involved in the evaluation of the L130 included Montgomery County, northeast of Houston, and Wharton County, west of Houston. Commissioners and precinct supervisors involved in the evaluation were impressed with the new model.

"An integral part of the development process is the feedback that is received from the field, whether from the evaluation period or from full production," said Akel. "David Morice, LBX region manager, R.B. Everett, and Carlisle Equipment have all sent back very positive suggestions on how to make a very productive machine even more productive. LBX engineering evaluated all suggestions to see what could be integrated onto the machine pre-introduction at CONEXPO/CON-AGG, and what needs to be reviewed in the development process and can be introduced on future models."

LBX will introduce the L120 (2 yard, 110 horsepower), L125 (2.6 yard, 135 horsepower), and L130 (3.2 yard, 173 horsepower) at ConExpo. The L140 (4 yard) and L150 (5 yard) loaders will follow. LBX will not introduce a tool carrier because the current design used for both applications renders the tool carrier redundant.

"We're excited about it [being involved in testing a prototype] and like to see innovation," said R.B. Everett's Bob Hodson. "We're looking at it just like a customer. We've already ordered a few of these units in varying sizes for our rental fleet and for new inventory." □



Jimerson crew constructs a manhole that will provide access to the 60-inch storm water line.