



## **FREIGHT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Charles Kenny, Chair

### **Meeting Minutes February 22, 2022**

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#### **I. Roll Call of Members**

Freight Initiatives Committee (FIC) Chair Commissioner Charles Kenny, Middlesex County, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. There were 12 voting members present. The Commissioner noted that the NJTPA had applied for 1.5 AICP credits and 1.5 Professional Engineering credits for the meeting.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2021 meeting was made by Hudson County, seconded by the Governor's Authorities Unit, and carried with 10 affirmative votes. Ocean and Somerset counties abstained.

#### **III. Update on NJTPA Freight Division Activities**

Anne Strauss-Wieder, Central Staff, said the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act features several new freight related initiatives, including a new requirement for state freight plans to include an assessment of truck parking and a pilot program offering responsible younger drivers an opportunity to qualify for interstate commercial driver's licenses prior to turning 21. Also, in December, the Administration announced a program aimed at improving the attraction and retention of truck drivers, with a particular focus on underrepresented demographics.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said the region finished out the year with some new additions to industrial spaces. She said that since the end of 2016, the region has added about 165 buildings, and 13 million square feet are now under construction. Leasing activity was dominated by retail, wholesale and third-party logistics. Leasing activity slowed in the fourth quarter of 2021 because of rising prices and a lack of space. She noted that industrial space development has been shifting toward repurposing existing properties such as older office buildings.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said container activity at the Port has reached all-time highs, with nearly 9 million TEUs processed in 2021 without the level of vessel backups seen at the Port of Los Angeles. She noted that the e-commerce market share is 19.2 percent of all retail spending and

continues to grow. Ms. Strauss-Wieder noted a permanent shift in grocery shopping behavior toward buying online and picking up in stores (BOPIS).

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said the NJTPA is updating and enhancing the Goods Movement Strategies for Communities Web Tool and adding a rail freight module to the application. She also noted that NJTPA freight staff is working closely with NJ TRANSIT and NJDOT to address impediments to national standard rail access in the region that were identified in NJTPA's Freight Rail Industrial Opportunities Corridor Program.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said the MAP Forum will hold a March 24 Clean Freight Workshop, which is open to the public.

#### IV. Presentations:

Ryan Hill, Chief Engineer, Conrail, reported that Conrail is completing the final signal work on its regionally significant Waverly Loop project, which is allowing northbound trains to bypass the Oak Island Rail Yard. That project is expected to be completed in April and will benefit operations at Port Newark. In addition, a new siding track from Hackensack to Kearny was completed in October to add capacity and operational flexibility to train movements in the area. Mr. Hill said Conrail has requested proposals to begin replacement of the Point-No-Point Bridge, which is used by freight trains travelling over the Passaic River between Newark and Kearney.

Mr. Hill said other recent projects completed by Conrail include the construction of support tracks at the Oak Island rail freight yard and a new siding track extension in Perth Amboy. Another project, which is in Preliminary Design, will build a new three-way junction track near Conrail's Port Reading Yard to provide operational flexibility to points South and East.

Cory Wyatt, Manager, Intermodal Rail Development, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ), briefed the Committee on another major freight rail project taking shape that would create a southern connection from the ExpressRail facility in Port Elizabeth to the national rail system. The project is a partnership between Conrail and PANYNJ.

Chris Lamm, Cambridge Systematics, who is leading the consultant team for NJTPA's update to the 2008 Freight Rail Grade Crossing Assessment Study, said the update will document current conditions and operations of at-grade crossings along the region's major freight rail lines and develop recommendations for addressing issues at the top 10 crossings. The study is scheduled for completion in 2023.

Scott Parker, Jacobs Engineering, briefed the Committee on the NJTPA Freight Concept Development Program, which advances freight infrastructure projects that may not be eligible for funding under other programs. Two potential projects were selected for study this round: the Port Reading Secondary South Main Street Grade Crossing Elimination Project in Somerset County and the Berkshire Valley Road Truck Circulation Study in Morris County.

V. Two-Minute Reports on Freight Activities from Committee Members

- Lou Millan, NJ TRANSIT, said the agency is working with NJDOT on the State Rail Plan and will reach out to the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations to discuss passenger and rail considerations and outreach.
- Genevieve Clifton, NJDOT, introduced Janice Marino-Doyle, new lead for the agency's Office of Freight Planning. Ms. Clifton noted that the 2022 update of the federally required Statewide Freight Plan is underway with participation by NJTPA and other stakeholders. She said NJDOT continues to work on Complete Streets efforts with the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations and other partners to advance some freight design aspects into the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Complete Streets programs. She said work on the Marine Highway Program continues, and NJDOT is determining how to develop wind port connectivity from Port Raritan to all ports along the Delaware River. Ms. Clifton noted that the next NJDOT Freight Advisory Committee meeting will be held on March 25.

IV. Next meeting:

Commissioner Kenny announced that the next virtual meeting of the FIC is scheduled for Monday, April 18, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

V. Adjournment

At 2:40 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Governor's Authorities Unit, seconded by Sussex County, and carried unanimously.

**Freight Initiatives Committee  
ATTENDANCE  
February 22, 2022**

VOTING MEMBERS	
Hon. Charles Kenny (Chair)	Middlesex County
Hon. Chris Carney	Sussex County
Hon. Bette Jane Kowalski	Union County
Hon. John Kelly	Ocean County
Byron Nicholas	Hudson County
John Hayes	Morris County
Trevor Howard	City of Newark
Adam Bradford	Somerset County
Jeffry Nielsen	Governor's Authorities Unit
Genevieve Clifton	NJDOT
Lou Millan	NJ TRANSIT
Jay Shuffield	PANYNJ
Other Attendees	
Hon. Lourdes Leon	Union County
Jim Katzenberger	Accelerx Group
Tom Visee	Arup
Chris Helms	Bergen County
Chris Lamm	Cambridge Systematics
Katharine Kirk	CAMSYS
Ryan Hill	Conrail
Cara Radzins	Capital Region Council of Governments
Dr. Jobi Odeneye	NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development
Rickie Clark	Federal Highway Administration
Robert Werkmeister	GPI
Matthew Van Hattem	HDR Inc.
Tom Malavasi	Hudson County
Carrie Fellows	Hunterdon County
Paul Ciannavei	IHS Markit
Paul Bingham	IHS Markit
Scott Parker	Jacobs Engineering
Paul Carafides	Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Tom DiBiase	M. Baker Int.
Mike Dannemiller	Middlesex County
Doug Greenfeld	Middlesex County
Denise Nickel	Middlesex County
Richard Jackson	Modjeski-Masters
Benjamin Peacock	Morris County
Dede Murray	Morris County
Adam DiSarro	NJ TRANSIT

Genevieve Clifton	NJDOT
Jim Vari	NJDOT
Stephen Chiaramonte	NJDOT
Veronica Murphy	NJDOT
Janice Doyle	NJDOT
Mary Ameen	NJTPA
Dave Behrend	NJTPA
Anne Strauss-Wieder	NJTPA
Jakub Rowinski	NJTPA
Beverly Morris	NJTPA
Gabrielle Fausel	NJTPA
Melissa Hayes	NJTPA
Elizabeth Johnson	NJTPA
Rick Cippoletti	NJTPA
Ted Ritter	NJTPA
Jeff Perlman	NJTPA
Keith Hamas	NJTPA
Mark Solof	NJTPA
Elizabeth Johnson	NJTPA
Lois Goldman	NJTPA
Ann Ludwig	NJTPA
Blythe Eaman	NJTPA
Adam Caspari	NJTPA
Chris Wichman	NJTPA
Michael Fesen	Norfolk Southern
Rick Crawford	Norfolk Southern
Bob George	Norfolk Southern
Kevin Ellis	Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
Rich Donovan	NVCOG
Leslie Fordjour	New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
Mark Jehnke	Ocean County
John Ernst	Ocean County
Blair Wegescheide	PANYNJ
Cory Wyatt	PANYNJ
Hilary McCarron	PANYNJ
Andras Holzmann	Passaic County
Sal Presti	Passaic County
Jack Gill	STV
Tom Drabic	Sussex County
Liza Betz	Union County
Syd Chan	VHB
Ryan Conklin	Warren County
Dave Dech	Warren County
Todd Fontanella	Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Keith Spero	
Raffi Ridrigo	
Ronald Klempner	
Sandy Johnston	
George Bulow	
E. Powers	
Carlos Espindola	
Alexandra	
Mike	