



FREIGHT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE

Commissioner Jason Sarnoski, Chair
Commissioner Sara Sooy, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes August 15, 2022

I. Roll Call of Members

Commissioner Charles Kenny, Middlesex County, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. There were 12 voting members or their representatives present.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 21 meeting was made by Ocean County seconded by Somerset County and carried unanimously.

III. Update on NJTPA Freight Division Activities

Anne Strauss-Wieder, Central Staff, said there are 860 million square feet of industrial properties in the NJTPA region as of the second quarter of 2022, and 13.1 million square feet are under construction. She said recent deals include the leasing of the former Toys R Us distribution facility in Morris County to List Logistics; a new 111,000 square foot building acquired by Lowes; and a new 191,000 square foot building under construction in North Brunswick. Ms. Strauss-Wieder noted that many buildings under construction are smaller; lease rates are very high; and there is now more on-spec construction.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said, since the pandemic began, consumers are still buying online for home delivery or picking up in store, and food delivery companies like Fresh Direct continue to grow.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder said container activity at the port is at an all-time high, and supply chains are under pressure to evolve to meet new needs. The 2022 container movement volume at the port is well above 2019-2021. Significant issues across supply chains include empty container movement and transport by truck and rail. She noted that 21 vessels were anchored near the port for a variety of reasons.

Ms. Strauss-Wieder reported that the NJTPA is updating and enhancing the Goods Movement Strategies for Communities webtool, which will be expanded as part of the Freight Rail Grade

Crossing Assessment update to include rail freight community issues and strategies. She said work is advancing in the FY 2021 Freight Concept Development Program with projects in Morris and Somerset counties. Also, methodology is being developed to assess the need for last-mile commutation options for workers at freight facilities. To that end, a peer exchange workshop on effective practices will be held in November.

Commissioner Kenny said he read an article about shippers bypassing the West Coast and southern ports for Port Newark because of the faster turnaround. He noted that Middlesex County is trying to address the problem of getting workers to warehouse facilities, but it has been difficult to get employers to participate as part of the solution.

IV. Presentations:

Genevieve Clifton, New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), said the 2022 New Jersey Statewide Freight Plan will be an actionable plan that will reinforce and support growth in the state by taking advantage of new technologies and state-of-the-art infrastructure. She introduced Stephen Chiaramonte, WSP, the consultant team project manager of the freight plan update.

Mr. Chiaramonte said several new elements that emerged from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) are included in the plan. He noted that NJDOT was the first state department of transportation to complete a comprehensive look at its multi modal freight network in 2007. Since then, state freight plans became a federal requirement for receiving National Highway Program funding (currently \$420 million for New Jersey).

Mr. Chiaramonte said the plan confirms the importance of freight, and it documents how the state will invest money, human capital, and time in policies and actions that will help support and grow the goods movement industry.

Sebastian Guerrero, WSP, spoke about highway freight congestion metrics and costs. He said 200 bottlenecks in the state have been identified, and the daily cost of congestion to the freight industry is \$24.3 million. He said highway congestion impacts New Jersey supply chains for food and agriculture, chemicals and plastics, and automotive products.

Stephanie Finch, WSP, said New Jersey is a strong player for its size in the national maritime sector. She spoke about the plan's maritime update, which considers commodity flows and needed investments in maritime facilities and landside connections. Ms. Finch noted that northern New Jersey is the first destination for 60 percent of imports. Ms. Finch said, looking ahead to 2050, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ) Master Plan anticipates strong growth.

Scott Parker, Jacobs Engineering, highlighted the rail portions of plan. He said the rail network footprint and number of operators remain static, but volumes and employment have declined in response to the pandemic. Mr. Parker noted improvements to the rail network, such as the Waverly Loop and Point-No-Point Bridge projects, have been made (or are underway) since the state's last freight plan was completed in 2017. Mr. Parker spoke of constraints on freight rail,

which include weight limitations, vertical clearance, capacity and bottlenecks, and grade crossing safety. He said although much progress has been made in bringing New Jersey rail infrastructure up to current industry standards, there is still much more to do.

Chris Lamm, Cambridge Systematics, spoke about the equity side of the freight plan and the goal of ensuring communities that are overburdened with poverty and other disadvantages are not further impacted by the burdens of transportation, such as environmental and public health impacts. He said the plan considers community access to freight-related jobs, transit to help them travel to those jobs, and access to education and training in the freight movement sector.

Mr. Chiaramonte noted that the NJTPA is leading the way with many subregional studies that focus on freight. Hudson County is conducting a truck routes assessment and Middlesex County a freight movement study; Union County recently completed its Truck Mobility Study and Monmouth County completed a freight study in 2019. These efforts are funded through the NJTPA Subregional Studies Program.

The 2022 Statewide Freight Plan is due to be approved by the Federal Highway Administration by the end of the year.

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

Ms. Clifton said the NJDOT Rail Freight Assistance program solicitation will soon open for applications.

Stephan Pezdek, PANYNJ, said the port still sees substantial amounts of congestion, mostly because many shippers are choosing to move cargo to the East Coast to avoid West Coast congestion. He said the PANYNJ recently instituted a quarterly fee at the Port of New York and New Jersey to ocean carriers who are not responding to the accumulation of empty containers. He said June 2022 was the second-best month ever at the port, with container traffic increasing by 40.7 percent compared to June 2019. Mr. Pezdek also reported that bridge and tunnel crossings are still slightly off from 2019 crossings. He said, in June, 10.5 eastbound vehicles crossed, which was slightly below pre-pandemic levels. Mr. Pezdek said current truck volume is 115 percent of 2019 volume.

Alan Kearns, NJ TRANSIT, said the agency continues to work on the state rail plan.

Byron Nicholas said the Hudson County Truck Routes Assessment study through the NJTPA Subregional Studies Program is underway. Kevin Force, Hudson County, said the study considers infrastructure needs as well as equity and the impacts of freight trucking on the County's communities. He said a series of freight forum discussions will be scheduled to discuss a variety of issues.

Ken Wedeen, Somerset County, said the County continues to work with Ms. Strauss-Wieder and Jakub Rowinski, Central Staff, on the Port Reading Secondary At-Grade Crossing Elimination Study. He said Somerset County just launched its circulation element update, through the Subregional Studies Program, and is beginning the county investment framework update. He said

freight goods movement is going to be a major component along with equity and how freight impacts transit and road networks. Mr. Wedeen said the County is seeing growth in proposed warehousing and considering how to connect coordination nodes where warehousing is starting to pop up in non-traditional locations.

Trevor Howard, City of Newark, said the City was just awarded two Local Freight Impact Fund grants for two avenues. Also, the Forward-Bound Doremus redevelopment plan for the Doremus Port-Industrial District is nearing completion.

Commissioner Kenny noted that the Southern Middlesex County Freight Movement Study is underway through the Subregional Studies Program.

VI The October 17, 2022 meeting will focus on strategies and effective practices for collaborating with industrial developers in communities.

VII. Adjournment

At 2:46 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Somerset County, seconded by Hudson County and carried unanimously.

Freight Initiatives Committee
ATTENDANCE
August 15, 2022

VOTING MEMBERS	
Hon. Charles Kenny	Middlesex County
Byron Nicholas	Hudson County
Mark Jehnke	Ocean County
Trevor Howard	City of Newark
Andras Holzmann	Passaic County
Ken Wedeen	Somerset County
Liza Betz	Union County
Ryan Conklin	Warren County
Dorian Smith	Governor's Authorities Unit
Genevieve Clifton	NJDOT
Lou Millan	NJ TRANSIT
Stephan Pezdek	PANYNJ
OTHERS	
Peter Cohen	Amtrak
Chris Helms	Bergen County
Chris Lamm	Cambridge Systematics
Jack Kanarek	Dewberry
Kristen Scudder	DVRPC
Ricky Clark	Federal Highway Administration
Bob Werkmeister	GPI
Matt Van Hatterm	HDR Inc.
Kevin Force	Hudson County
Scott parker	Jacobs Engineering
Sabrina De La Vega	Jersey City Historic Downtown
Frank Capo	Maher Terminals
Katie Kirk	Cambridge Systematics
Andrew Lappitt	Middlesex County
Mike Dannemiller	Middlesex County
Renu Chhonkar	Monmouth County
John Hayes	Morris County
Dede Murray	Morris County
Alan Kearns	NJ TRANSIT
Adam DiSarro	NJ TRANSIT
Various members of Central Staff	NJTPA
Michael Fesen	Norfolk Southern
John Ernst	Ocean County
Charles Liou	PANYNJ
Tod Goldman	PANYNJ
Blair Wegescheide	PANYNJ
Tom Drabic	Sussex County

Stephanie Finch	WSP
Sebastian Guerrero	WSP
Stephen Chiamonte	WSP
JP Magron	HDR
Ben Peacock	Morris County
Paul Onish	
Zac Werkmeister	
Elizabeth Langmaid	
George Bulow	
Janis Gutierrez	
James Badgley	
Ronald Klempner	
John Lane	