



John P. Kelly, Chair
Charles Kenny, First Vice Chair
David W. Behrend, Executive Director

FREIGHT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE

Commissioner Stephen Shaw, Chair
Commissioner Sara Sooy, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2024

I. Roll Call of Members

Freight Initiatives Committee (FIC) Chair Stephen Shaw, a Morris County Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and nine voting members were present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Hudson County made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2024 meeting and the City of Newark seconded. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

III. Update on NJTPA Freight Division Activities

Jakub Rowinski, Central Staff, gave an update on the projects that are underway, including the 2050 Freight Industry Level Forecast. This project started one year ago and the first three tasks — the methodological framework, the data acquisition and the Freight Analysis Framework disaggregation — have been completed. Mr. Rowinski said that several other tasks are underway and include an e-commerce analysis and the freight forecasting tool update. The second meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee was held on November 13 and the study concludes in June.

Also, he said a consultant contract has been awarded for the FY 2025 Freight Concept Development Program studies. This effort includes two projects in Middlesex County, the Southern Middlesex County North-South Truck Corridor Project study in Cranbury and Monroe, and a Preliminary Screening for Plate F Vertical Rail Clearance along the NJ TRANSIT North Jersey Coastline in Perth Amboy. Another study will explore options for the East Hanover Avenue Bridge Catenary Rail Clearance Project in Morris Plains and Morris Township in Morris County. The consultant will also help the NJTPA identify projects for the next round of the Freight Concept Development Program, as well as support the subregions in advancing studies that have previously graduated from this program.

IV. Presentations: Rail Freight Update

The Chair introduced three speakers: Ryan Hill, Chief Engineer, Design and Construction, Conrail; Kean Burenga, President, Chesapeake and Delaware (C&D); and Bhavin Kapadia, Project Manager, NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT).

Mr. Hill discussed several key infrastructure projects Conrail is undertaking in North Jersey to improve operational efficiency, alleviate congestion, and support freight traffic. Key projects include: the Barb Siding Extension in Woodbridge and Perth Amboy to accommodate longer trains; a Y Track to connect the Port Reading Secondary to the Garden State Secondary; a Southbound Connector to support the Port Authority's Express Rail Elizabeth Terminal; and the Point No Point Movable Bridge Replacement, the largest project Conrail has undertaken that involves replacing a deteriorating movable bridge over the Passaic River between Newark and Kearny. Mr. Hill emphasized the importance of these projects in enhancing Conrail's operational efficiency while supporting regional freight movements.

Mr. Burenga gave an overview of recent infrastructure projects across several C&D short line railroads in New Jersey, focusing on safety, efficiency, and sustainability. He highlighted the need for tough decisions in the face of limited funding and emphasized the importance of enhancing railroad safety and improving the working conditions for crews. He explained how replacing old tracks with new ones directly contributes to safety, and how sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns to economic feasibility. In addition, Mr. Burenga reviewed several key projects including the restoration of 5 miles of dormant track to connect the Freehold and Southern Branches in 2023. Other recent projects include: South Main Street Phillipsburg in 2019; Stockton Street Interchange in Phillipsburg in 2021; Ringoes Curve in 2022; and Flemington Center in 2024.

Mr. Kapadia provided an overview of the state's Rail Freight Assistance Program. The program aims to improve rail infrastructure by offering state financial support to eligible entities such as railroad property owners, operators, and public agencies. The program's annual budget is \$25 million, with varying funding contributions based on the railroad classification. Eligible projects must meet criteria such as enhancing port commerce connectivity, upgrading rail tracks for 286,000-pound capacity, or improving overall rail freight efficiency.

Mr. Kapadia explained the grant application process, which includes an eligibility assessment and a detailed project proposal. NJDOT awarded 10 grants totaling \$29.6 million for projects like the Garden State Secondary Improvement and Rosebury Curve last year. For 2025, 15 applications totaling \$52.7 million were received, and site visits are underway.

The meeting presentations can be found [here](#). The video of the full meeting can be found on YouTube [here](#).

Following the presentations, several participants asked questions on topics related to the lifespan of composite rail ties, prioritizing the sequence of the projects, infrastructure investment, and customer growth and cost. The questions and responses can be found in the meeting [recording](#).

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

The Chair asked for updates from committee members. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said the agency hosted a maritime conference on November 19 regarding alternative fuels for vessels as part of an ongoing conversation about readiness and availability of these

alternative fuels, especially as demand increases. A summit on the port is being planned for the first quarter of 2025.

NJ TRANSIT reported that the draft NJ State Rail Plan was submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration.

VII. Next meeting: February 18, 2025, (Virtual)

VIII. Adjournment

At 2:29 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Hudson County, seconded by Somerset County, and carried unanimously.

**Freight Initiatives Committee
Attendance
December 16, 2024**

VOTING MEMBERS	
Hon. Stephen Shaw (Chair)	Morris County
Tom Malavasi	Hudson County
Dolores Martinez-Wooden	City of Newark
Ken Wedeen	Somerset County
Bette Jane Kowalski	Union County
Laura Wilton	Governors Authorities Unit
Jay Shuffield	PANYNJ
Charles Burton	Citizens Representative
Mark Jehnke	Ocean County
Andrew Lappitt	Middlesex County
Alan Kearns	NJ TRANSIT
Janice Marino-Doyle	NJDOT
OTHERS	
Bob Hornby	Hunterdon County
John Hayes	Morris County
Tanner Thul	Hudson County
Trevor Howard	City of Newark
Leslie Fordjour	NYMTC
Various members of Central Staff	NJTPA
Adam Bradford	Passaic County Planning Division
Amanda Gendek	NJDOT
Andras Holzmann	Passaic County
Anne Strauss -Wieder	
Bhavin Kapadia	NJDOT
Jack Kanarek	Dewberry
Jim Badgley	
JASKELLY	
Kevin Stephens	
Kean Burenga	Chesapeake & Delaware
Liz Ward	
Lou Millan	NJ TRANSIT
Matt van Hattem	HDR
Michael Fesen	NS
Nathan Fenno	NYS&W
Scott Parker	Jacobs
Stephanie Finch	WSP
Miki Krakauer	
Rick Crawford	Norfolk Southern
Ricardo Matias	Union County
Ron K	
Bob Werkmeister	GPI

Ryan Conklin	Warren County
Ryan Hill	Conrail
Stephan Pezdek	PANYNJ
Stephen Chiaramonte	WSP