



FREIGHT INITIATIVES COMMITTEE

Commissioner Stephen Shaw, Chair
Commissioner Sara Sooy, Vice Chair

Meeting Minutes
October 20, 2025

I. Roll Call of Members

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

II. Approval of Minutes

The Governor's Authorities Unit moved the minutes of the August 18, 2025, meeting and City of Newark seconded. The minutes were approved with one abstention from Morris County.

III. Update on NJTPA Freight Division Activities

Mr. Rowinski gave an update on the FY 2025 Freight Concept Development Program, which is a four-part contract running through June 2027. The two concept development studies include: Southern Middlesex County North-South Truck Corridor Project in Cranbury, Monroe and South Brunswick, and the East Hanover Avenue Bridge Catenary Rail Clearance Project in Morris Plains, Morris Township, and Parsippany in Morris County and preliminary screening for Plate F vertical clearance in Perth Amboy. The remaining section of the contract is for general program support.

Mr. Rowinski said data collection is ongoing, and the team is finalizing base mapping for the concept development studies. The Purpose and Need Statements have been drafted and Local Officials' Briefings for both studies were held in August. Public Meetings were held in October, and the Public Comment period is currently open through mid-November. Mr. Rowinski said they have communicated with the New Jersey Motor Truck Association on the Middlesex project

and communicated with the railroads for the Morris project. The work will continue as planned with a completion date of June 2027.

IV. Presentation: Technology in Freight

The Chair introduced Matt Soule, founder and CEO of Parallel Systems, and Daniel Smith, Principal at The Tioga Group, to present on the latest technology in freight and goods movement. Mr. Soule said the main goal of Parallel Systems is to reduce the number of trucks on the road. Parallel aims to cut into the roughly 10:1 difference in freight market size for trucks versus rail by addressing barriers for shippers including service quality, regularity and consistency that would ultimately result in lower costs. The company is developing a battery electric autonomous vehicle where no locomotive is required. Platoons are more energy efficient, mechanically pushing from the rear and physically amortizing the drag that the lead vehicle sees. A designated lead car is the eyes and ears of the platoon. There are still people required to build and maintain track, load and unload containers, and new jobs being created to oversee operations from the convenience of an office.

A pilot program in southern Georgia received Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approval to start in January, that is now in the late stages of Phase 2, providing an opportunity to verify and validate safety controls in a real-world environment. Parallel Systems is currently working with railroads around ports to connect ports directly to warehouses. This will reduce costs and create the opportunity to decongest some of the truck traffic in and out of ports.

Daniel Smith, Principal at The Tioga Group, presented the realities and limitations of fully autonomous trucks and other vehicles, like delivery robots and drones. The current technology is limited in range and speed within a predictable infrastructure. Findings from a 2023 state and local impact study, focusing on freight, show that we are approaching high automation and hope to reach a solution that includes remote monitoring. There are many potential benefits to automation in the supply chain, from reductions in accidents to expansion of daily coverage. However, the main objective is a reduction in labor costs, which is currently the largest cost in the trucking industry. Mr. Smith added that safety benefits may not be established for decades, and it may take 20 to 30 years before fleet turnover will lead to routinely seeing autonomous trucks on the road.

Mr. Smith said that [Avride](#), an autonomous vehicle and delivery robot developer, launched on the Uber Eats platform in 2024 and is piloting robotic deliveries in Austin and Dallas, Texas, and locally in Jersey City, New Jersey. He added that suburban and rural areas are too dispersed and sometimes lack sidewalks for delivery robots to be effective and in urban areas when you have sidewalk robots sharing space with pedestrians it may cause issues as well.

Following the presentation, participants asked questions related to the [presentation](#). 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. Nipa Maniar from NJDOT said they have completed phase one of their truck parking study and will provide freight management system input for all active NJDOT projects.

VII. Next meeting: December 15, 2025 (Virtual)

VIII. Adjournment

Middlesex County made a motion to adjourn at 2:25 p.m., PANYNJ seconded, and it carried unanimously.

Freight Initiatives Committee

Attendance

October 20, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS	
Mark Kataryniak	Hudson County
Chris Townley	Middlesex County
Hon. Stephen Shaw	Morris County
Dolores Martinez Wooden	City of Newark
Hon. Bette Jane Kowalski	Union County
Charles Burton	Citizens Representative
Dorian Smith	Gov's Authorities Unit
Stephen Pezdek	PANYNJ
Lou Millan	NJ TRANSIT
OTHERS	
Various members of Central Staff	NJTPA
Adam DiSarro Alan Kearns	NJ TRANSIT
Matt Soule	Parallel Systems
Daniel Smith	The Tioga Group
Andrew Ludasi	
Trevor Howard	City of Newark
Kamal Saleh	Union County
Jack Kanarek	Dewberry
Tanner Thul	Hudson County
Bob Hornby	Hunterdon County
Branislav Dimitrijevic	NJIT
Chris Wichman	Geotab
Dan Farina	DVRPC
Michael Fesen Rick Crawford	Norfolk Southern Railway

Kevin Stephens	Morris County
Nipa Maniar Genevieve Clifton	NJDOT
Henry Killian Todd Goldman Jay Shuffield Kyle McGraw	PANYNJ
Samantha DeAndrea	Somerset County
Tom Drabic	Sussex County
Denise Nickel	Middlesex County
Rickie Clark	FHWA-NJ
Ryan Conklin	Warren County
Charlie Romanow Stephen Chiaramonte	WSP, Advisory Services
James Arnau	
Jim Badgley	
George Bulow	
John Hayes	Morris County
Liz Ward	Highlands Council
Tommy Fortunato	
Paul Onish	
Peter Cohen	
Peter Lee	
R Klem	
Scott Parker	Jacobs
Sydney Chan	