

# Regional Coordination for Truck Network Efficiency

New York, NY

## Description

Prior to 2015, use of 53-foot trailers (an industry standard) was prohibited in New York City, except for a single through-route to Long Island. The fact that no 53-foot route served the air cargo facilities at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) limited the economic competitiveness of JFK's air cargo business. The New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), and Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) collaborated with local, State, and industry partners to create an all-interstate route to JFK for trucks pulling the longer trailers. This change was implemented via a rule change by NYCDOT.

## Background

JFK is the nation's leading airport by cargo value and is among the nation's top 10 airports by cargo tonnage. Forecasts and planning scenarios by PANYNJ predict air cargo tonnage at JFK growing by 42% between 2017-2037. However, industry stakeholders identified restrictions on the use of 53-foot trailers as an impediment to that growth.

Prior to 2015, permissible routes in the New York City area for trucks pulling trailers longer than 48 feet did not extend to JFK. Allowing 53-foot trailers to access JFK would improve the efficiency of regional air cargo transport by reducing the number of truck trips needed to move air cargo to and from the airport. Reducing the number of truck trips would in turn reduce congestion and air emissions.

This issue first came to light at a 2008 Truck Summit organized by NYCDOT and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and resurfaced as an early action item in the Goods Movement Action Program (G-MAP) in 2014. G-MAP is a joint initiative of PANYNJ, New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), and NYSDOT. The intent of G-MAP is to establish a shared vision for improving the goods movement system for the New York-New Jersey region and to translate that vision into a coordinated action plan. (Learn more about G-MAP at: <http://www.regionalgoodsmovement.org>.)

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Improved efficiency of the air cargo industry at John F. Kennedy International Airport.
- Used data to inform a policy decision and respond to community concerns.
- Worked collaboratively with private industry and multiple public agencies to affect change.
- Deployed technology to monitor compliance.

## Process

To identify the most common truck routes to and from JFK, the agencies worked with four major motor carriers to gain access to three months of their proprietary Global Positioning System data. The data indicated that the majority of freight trips to and from the airport occurred on the Van Wyck Expressway via the George Washington Bridge (GWB) and Cross Bronx Expressway, and via the New England Thruway (see map on next page). The data also demonstrated that about 99 percent of JFK-bound tractor-trailers crossing the GWB traveled directly to JFK without deviating onto local roads. NYCEDC verified this information using aerial photography. NYSDOT conducted an engineering study to determine that 53-foot trailers could travel safely along the proposed route. Based on these coordinated efforts, NYCDOT proposed expanding the designated network to include a route from the GWB to JFK.

To prepare for expanding the 53-foot trailer network, NYCDOT worked with NYCEDC to fund and deploy cameras near JFK so that NYCDOT could monitor changes in truck behavior. Simultaneously, NYCDOT's legal team drafted the language for the rule change. The agency then held public meetings with community boards and elected officials in the two affected boroughs.

PANYNJ and NYCEDC built the economic development case for the rule change by leading these meetings with a discussion of the many jobs



associated with JFK in the affected boroughs and in New York City at large. They supported their position with relevant data and maps. Community members voiced concerns about noise pollution, vibration, and an increase in congestion, but NYCDOT used the data they had collected to assure citizens that these trucks would not be traveling on local roads. NYCDOT also promised to expand its use of technology to monitor compliance.

The NYCDOT rule change to expand the network of permissible through-routes for 53-foot trailers became available for public comment in February 2015, and it went into effect one month later. (To learn more about the rule, visit: <http://rules.cityofnewyork.us/tags/53-foot-trailer>.) Since the rule change, NYCEDC has focused on conducting industry outreach and raising awareness about this new change. NYCDOT monitors traffic cameras on the Van Wyck Expressway and adjacent surface streets.

As next steps, the agencies that collaborated on this rule change are evaluating whether there are any other missing links in the region’s network for 53-foot trailers. They are also exploring the idea of surveying stakeholders to gauge the effect of the change.

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This noteworthy practice offers an example of how to engage the private sector, how to use data and technology to develop and enforce policy decisions, and how to respond to community concerns. For metropolitan areas seeking to replicate the expansion of freight networks, PANYNJ and NYCDOT recommend the following:

- Engage industry partners on issues where they will see direct benefits from their involvement.
- Seek industry partners willing to share data voluntarily.
- Build a story with the data to address anticipated concerns of the community, elected officials, and industry.
- Focus implementation efforts on specific issues instead of tackling all the freight-related issues in a region at one time.



**Updated route network for 53-foot trailers. (Source: PANYNJ and NYCDOT)**

Added road segments are from New Jersey via the George Washington Bridge and Cross Bronx Expressway to I-95, and from the Bronx across the Whitestone Bridge onto the Van Wyck Expressway into Queens.

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