



NYC's Ports

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In our [recent discussion](#) of NYC's potential advantages in a high energy cost world, the importance of being deep water port (or at least having the potential to be one) seemed to be one of NYC's pivotal advantages over more landlocked areas. This allows goods to be shipped at much lower energy costs. It seems that any infrastructure plan to deal with peak oil will have to restore many of the working waterfronts in NYC, even in Manhattan where waterfront real estate is premium priced.

A recent Gotham Gazette [indepth article](#) examined the city's ports as part of their "waterfront" series. First, here's a little history:

The port grew rapidly with the introduction of steamships and especially with the completion in 1825 of the Erie Canal, which made New York the most important connection between Europe and the American heartland. By the mid 19th century, more passengers and products came through the port of New York than all other harbors in the country combined.

In 1944, at the height of World War II, the New York port was the busiest in the world - and in all of history.

The port's importance has faded in the decades since then. But it remains a powerful

presence. The Port of New Jersey and New York is the third busiest in the nation, after Los Angeles and Long Beach, California. Last year more than 5,300 ships delivered goods here that went to 35 percent of the U.S. population.

While the financial, real estate, media and other service industries have become the heart of the NYC economy, shipping still represents about \$14 billion of the regional economy, although 80% goes through NJ's larger container terminals. Much of the cargo is actually automobile import and export...



And there is a lot of investment happening right now to link the existing ports to good freight rail as business has picked up in recent years and I imagine trucking is becoming more expensive than rail.

The Port Authority is busily bolstering the infrastructure of the port to make it more easily accessible to trade that has been expanding at higher-than-expected rates. Shipments increased nearly 12 percent last year when it was projected to increase at 4 percent.

Construction for rail lines in Staten Island will allow direct transfer of goods to rail cars instead of having to load everything on trucks as is done now. Rail and storage facilities are being expanded in Elizabeth, too. The biggest project is the merging of Maher and APM terminals in New Jersey to create one major 445-acre facility.

The frantic construction amidst the burgeoning business brings a scene to mind for Rick Larrabee, director of port commerce for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, he told Shipping Digest last October. "It's like having your family over for Sunday dinner when you just started renovating your kitchen on Friday."

I think there needs to be a well developed plan to move much of NYC's freight transportation (mostly trucking now) over to either freight rail or water based transportation, especially for Manhattan, which does not have a freight rail link at all. This would be a good complement to the cross-harbor [freight rail tunnel](#), which would link the NJ ports to Brooklyn/Queens/Long Island.

One area that Mayor Bloomberg has focused on currently is moving a significant chunk of the city's trash transportation to water links. This seems like a great strategy in general, but there is significant local opposition to any marine transfer trash facilities in residential neighborhoods (including my own). Perhaps if these could be bundled together in a complete package of waterfront development plans that would aim to reduce truck traffic congestion/pollution, create local shipping jobs in waterfront communities, create brownfield manufacturing development opportunities nearby and integrate them with the other greenway/park proposals then we could transcend some of the local NIMBY fights that will pop-up when done piecemeal.



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