



NYC: Freight Rail / Port Facilities Needed

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Long before there were cars and trucks clogging our roads and delivering nearly all our food and goods, New York City was the Transport Capital of North America. Today, New York mostly just moves around people and paper (or electronic) money instead of food or manufactured goods. However, with solid planning and investment now, the city prepare for a lower energy future and can regain it's place as a major trading hub of goods.

New York's early position has a transportation hub was because of its ability to handle large amounts of water borne traffic. Water is still the least energy intensive mode of transportation for bulk goods. New York has a world class deep water harbor connected to a world class river (Hudson), which is in turn connected to the Erie canal (finished in 1825) and the Great Lakes. This connects an enormous amount of good farm land with a port where goods can be traded from around the region and beyond.

Then in the 19th Century New York became the Center of a the Northeast rail network which ultimately ran from coast to coast, with NYC as a major import/export point for trade with Europe. This flourishing of commerce built the foundation of the city's advantage as a financial hub for the 20th Century.

Then after WWII, New York's importance as a place to ship goods began to decline as freight traffic went instead to cheaper land in NJ and Robert Moses began his massive road and bridge building projects. The trend toward trucks continued with the advent of Just-in-Time shipping routes which relied on a point to point distribution system rather than a hub and spoke system of water/rail shipping.

As a result of all the changes over the last 50 years, it has actually become more difficult to ship goods by water or freight rail into the city of New York. As the cost of diesel fuel for long haul trucks continues to rise, NYC is going to need a better infrastructure to receive goods by water and rail.

While there have been some recent efforts to revitalize NYC's non-truck freight capacity, such as Staten Island's [Howland Hook port](#) and some efforts to retrofit some Metronorth lines for freight container traffic, there is still much work to be done.

The most formidable obstacle to getting rail freight into NYC is that there are no direct rail links from NY harbor up the Hudson to Selkirk NY, 140 miles north of the city. The answer is to build a [cross harbor tunnel](#) as advocated by [Move NY](#) connecting NJ with Brooklyn. This would save New Yorkers the costs hidden in all the goods they purchase that come from higher diesel fuel costs.

It would also help if we would make freight trucks pay their fair share of the damage they cause every year to the "free" east river bridges by putting [tolls on them.



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