Public Testimony  
October 18, 2018  
New York City Council Committee on Economic Development  
Re: Oversight - FreightNYC

Submitted by Karen Imas, Senior Director of Programs, Waterfront Alliance

Waterfront Alliance is a nonprofit civic organization and coalition of more than 1,000 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders. Our mission is to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities.

New York’s preeminence as a business capital is a direct consequence of its ports. Focusing on waterborne freight and the marine highway through the proposals in FreightNYC is an excellent strategy for improving how we move goods through our region.

Preparing for a future of complex supply chain logistics demands that we increase our focus on waterborne cargo. Ninety percent of the cargo moving through New York City—a city of islands surrounded by waterways—is delivered by truck. FreightNYC is a win for our region in several different ways: less pollution improving health, decreasing congestion and more good paying maritime jobs.

FreightNYC is not only a local issue but a regional issue with global implications. We commend the City for looking at how to create a regional barge network to offer alternatives from transporting goods through the northeast - not just between New York and New Jersey but also up into New England.

Waterfront Alliance supports increased investment to bring our region’s maritime assets to a state of good repair and to enhance multimodal freight systems – from Hunts Point to Sunset Park to Staten Island – this is a priority. We were pleased to see that Red Hook Terminal had its lease renewed recently and we are eagerly awaiting the activation of the Sustainable South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. Investment is needed in vital maritime and rail infrastructure not only in order to create economically competitive barging in our harbor, but in order to ensure that our maritime assets are resilient for a future of climate change and rising sea levels.

Also of importance to the City’s future is dredging to maintain channel depth for the safe navigation of ocean-going vessels and for future ferry routes.

Through FreightNYC, the City has an opportunity to grow good-paying skilled jobs inspiring the next generation of freight industry leaders. Maritime and supply chain education at schools like Urban Assembly Harbor School should be replicated.

While many policy proposals are laid out in detail in FreightNYC, one common element is essential for success and that is political will. If there is a shared vision of an economically significant and resilient maritime industry in the New York and New Jersey region, leaders need to take actions to affirm the commitment to this vision. Ports will succeed not only because of market opportunities but due to support from and coordination with their local and regional public institutions governing infrastructure development, project permitting and trade promotion.

Waterfront Alliance engages with maritime stakeholders in an effort to understand what is needed by both public and private stakeholders for success and putting the appropriate policies in place. We hope to be a continued resource as FreightNYC takes shape.