

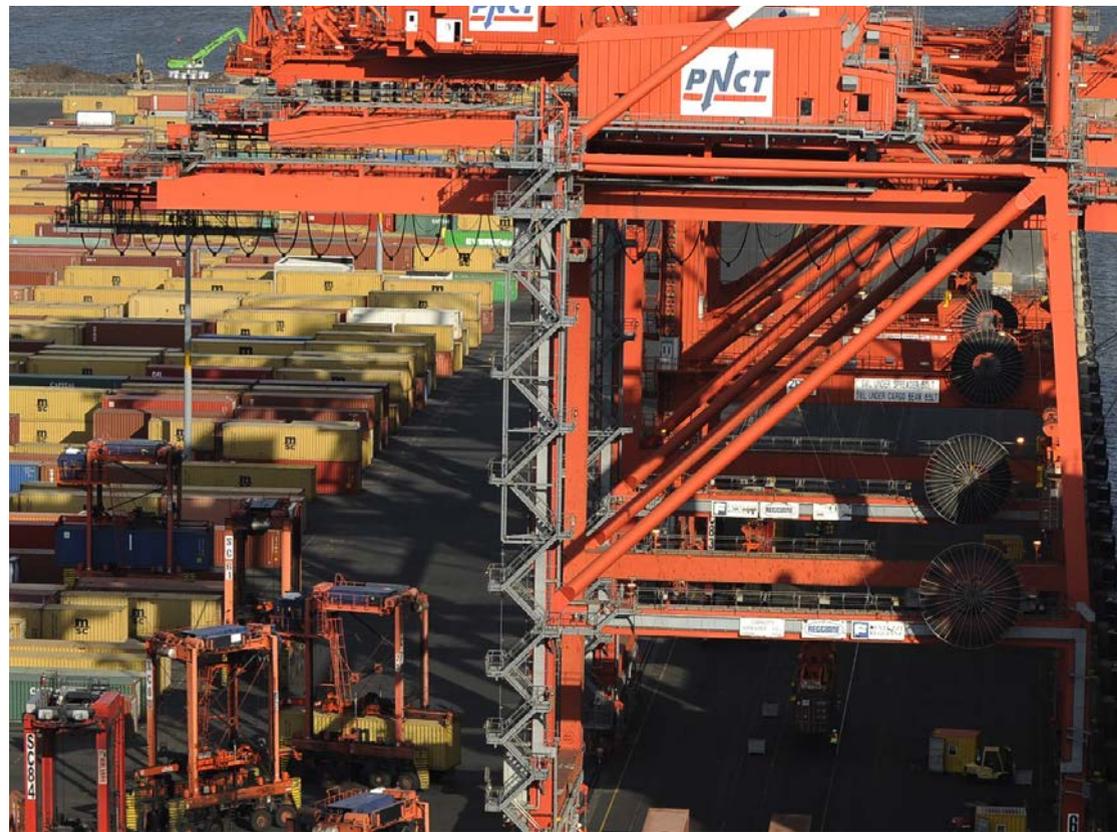


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Port of NY and NJ Inaugurates TIPS System

By Alan M. Field



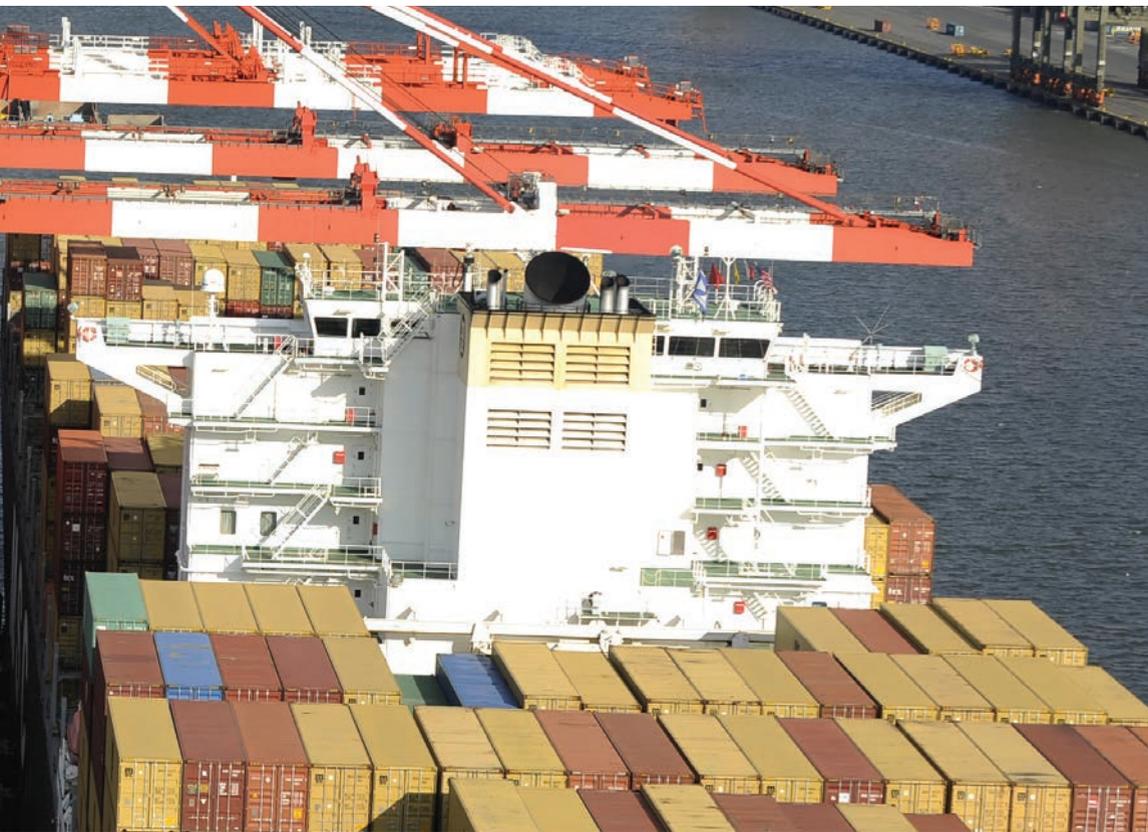
Port of NY and NJ Inaugurates TIPS System

BY ALAN M. FIELD

This autumn brings a new and innovative shipper interface to anyone moving freight into and out of the Port of New York and New Jersey. Launched last month, a unique online tool called the Terminal Information Portal System, or TIPS, will make your working day easier.

The first system of its kind in the United States, TIPS was developed by Sustainable Terminals Services Inc. (STS), a nonprofit company created by a consortium of port terminal operators. The tool compiles information from all six container terminals and makes this data available to qualified users in real-time over the Internet. Container availability, booking status, vessel schedule and empty container return location information — all this and more — are available on a single online platform. TIPS was developed in response to a Port Performance Task Force recommendation to create a port community system.

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Bethann Rooney, assistant director for port performance initiatives at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, calls the launch of TIPS “a major development” in ongoing efforts to ensure the port’s pre-eminent position among the nation’s ports. According to Rooney, the port’s container terminals are fierce competitors that, in past years, have developed various information solutions for providing customer service in the absence of a unified portwide vision.

“Their different information systems made things more complicated for port users,” she said. “A shipper or trucker doing business at one or more of our six terminals had to toggle between various websites to find information they needed throughout the day. Now that information will all live on a single platform. The status of your import container, information about the conditions and timing in which an export container can be returned to the marine terminal – it’s all consolidated on TIPS, regardless of where that information comes from.”

“It’s all about one-stop shopping,” said Brian Clark, managing director of terminal operations of APM Terminals Elizabeth. “The entire port community – trucking companies, beneficial cargo owners or BCOs – every stakeholder will benefit from improved information flow. This portal represents a significant step forward in data consolidation.”

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INITIALLY, TIPS WILL OFFER THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONALITY:

PORT AND TERMINAL INFORMATION: Blocks of news from the port authority, as well as from each container terminal operator, will be posted on the TIPS home page. At a glance, users will be able to read announcements pertaining to early or late closures, traffic conditions, weather-related measures, etc., for each of the six port terminals.

IMPORT CONTAINER AVAILABILITY: Simply enter a container number to view the box's current location, availability for pickup and any applicable holds, as well as the federal agency applying those holds. Status of freight charges and demurrage will also be visible, as well as expiration of free time, if applicable.

EXPORT BOOKING INQUIRIES: TIPS associates each booking number with a quantity of empty containers. Trucking companies may use the platform to see how many containers are booked for a shipment, how many empties and loads have been received, and how many are still outstanding, as well as information about when the containers can be returned.

VESSEL SCHEDULES: Through links to terminal websites, users may review vessel schedules for each of the six terminals.

EMPTY CONTAINER INFORMATION: Through links to terminal websites, users will also be able to view real-time information about when and where empty containers can be returned by size and type.

Ultimately, vessel schedule and empty container information will be provided directly through TIPS.

Among the efficiencies expected from TIPS when drayage operators fully utilize it are reductions in the numbers of trouble ticket transactions. Today, nearly 10 percent of all gate transactions result in a driver being sent to "driver assistance," which is also known as the "trouble window" or being turned away completely by a container terminal. Seven of the top 10 causes of trouble tickets in the Port of New York and New Jersey can be avoided by checking TIPS in advance. For example, one can verify that the container is available before dispatching a driver to the port, ensure that all charges have been paid and releases are in place or that you are within the export receiving cut-off time.

Testing of the platform's first iteration earlier this year won strong reviews from shippers and other port stakeholders. "I'm optimistic about the impact TIPS will make at New York-New Jersey," said Jim Cannella, global logistics senior manager for furniture retailer Raymour and Flanigan. "It'll provide a greater ease of use for us and our

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partnering carriers. I was hoping it would have been in place by now, but I understand the timeline based on the various data sources that need to be pulled together.”

John Atkins agreed. Atkins is the president of GCT USA, parent company of both GCT Bayonne and GCT New York, as well as the chairman of the Council on Port Performance’s gate operations implementation team. GCT USA – through Rich Ceci, vice president of information technology – took a leading role in developing TIPS, an initiative that also included technology and operations experts from all six container terminals in the port.

“There is something for everyone in TIPS,” Atkins said. “But the biggest benefit will involve our collective customers. The BCO can now watch his business from a single location. He will see cargo flowing, regardless of its path, into the port, and this will be huge. I compare it to how Amazon.com works. Amazon doesn’t sell and fulfill all its orders; some get farmed out to their approved partners. But consumers never notice that. When you buy something on Amazon, the experience is seamless. It doesn’t matter whose shelf the item is on or who is transporting it. I can pay for it and check its status right up to my front door without regard for the nitty gritty details. The same experience can now be had at the Port of New York and New Jersey.”

TIPS, Ceci asserted, will allow customers to “watch” containers and be alerted via email in advance if the status of the container changes or an issue crops up. “If it does, you can react to that information within minutes and ensure that your expectations are in line with reality. From the perspective of the terminal operators and their technology personnel, I think the big gain will be fewer trouble-shooting visits and fewer customer service issues.”

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Cannella agreed on the impact TIPS should have on customer service. “As a highly diversified shipper, we spend a lot of time tracking containers in order to maintain our brand and to service our customers at the highest possible level. This portal will save valuable time and keystrokes that are wasted today in determining which terminals our freight is moving through, and in logging onto multiple portals to check vessel and container availability.”

J.J. Coslet is chief operations officer at Advent Intermodal Solutions, the software provider that created TIPS. Coslet said his development team conducted extensive testing of a TIPS prototype. Feedback was used to improve functionality before the site went live.

“The trucking community engaged with the prototype throughout the spring and early summer [of 2015],” Coslet said. “Their comments fed directly into our development process. One of the features they requested was the current notification system where a user can add containers to their ‘Watchlist.’ Email notifications tell them when those containers become available, or if another status change will impact the trucker’s day.”

Coslet and his team are no strangers to working with STS. The nonprofit company engaged Advent to create the technology platform to implement a portwide radio-frequency identification system for use with trucks seeking access to the terminals, which, like TIPS, is a service component of the PortTruckPass program.

“We’ve seen firsthand how competing interests can come together for the greater good of the port,” Rooney said. “The individuals we deal with, both on the technology and terminal operations side, are committed to the task at hand, which is customer service. All the terminals, as well as the port authority, have been active participants in both the design and functionality of the system.”

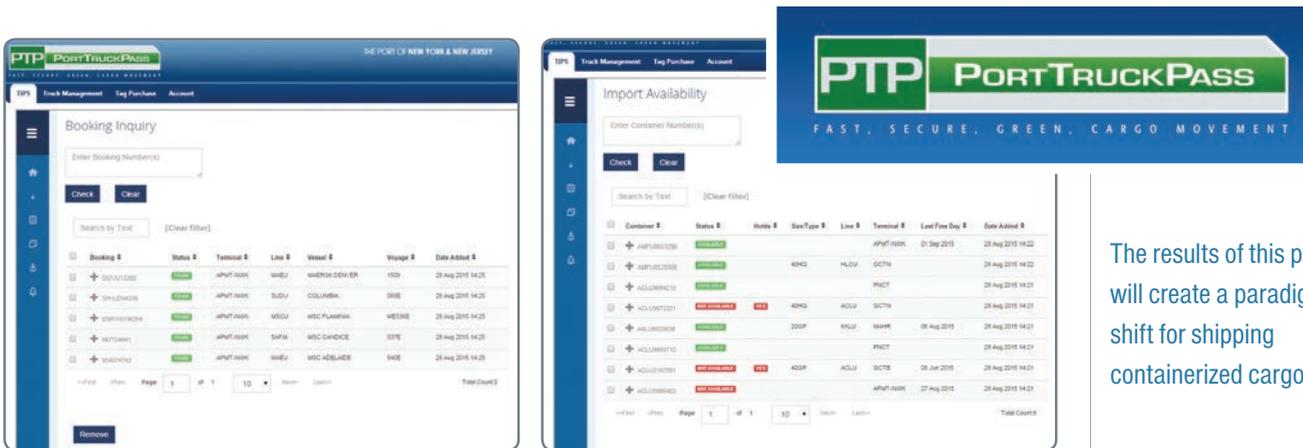
There have been bumps in the road, of course. Coslet pointed out the magnitude of the New York-New Jersey container business. The fact that TIPS draws information from six different terminals, three different terminal operating systems and other sources posed one of the project’s greatest challenges. How could this slurry of data be presented in a unified and consistent format? Eventually, the terminals agreed to use a customized version of the 301 and 315 electronic data interchange messages currently circulating at the port.

For all that progress, many more challenges lie ahead. TIPS is the third module of the PortTruckPass program, implemented after the Drayage Truck Registry and RFID Tag Management. Additional modules may be added in the future, such as a truck management system, which was another recommendation of the Port Performance Task Force, Rooney said.

More work must be done, Ceci acknowledged, yet he retains his excitement. “At GCT Bayonne, we see what will happen in the very near future. The results of this

project will create a paradigm shift for shipping containerized cargo, first in the Port of New York and New Jersey and later [along] the entire East Coast. Five years from now, people are going to look back and wonder how we ever conducted business in the old way for so long.”

Golden Carriers’ CEO Jeff Bader agreed. “TIPS will be easier and more reliable than the old multiterminal systems. At launch, it presents a single source from which availability clerks can check container status. But the real gain will arrive when the system is fully operational, and we accomplish full interoperability.”



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TIPS also houses the recently released Truckers’ Resource Guidebook. The guidebook – another one of the 23 Port Performance Task Force recommendations – contains important information on how to successfully navigate through the port’s six container terminals. The guidebook includes important phone numbers for each of the terminals, Customs Examination Stations and other port services, a list of “Do’s and Don’t’s” to ensure a trouble-free visit, frequently asked questions, terminal maps and tips on how to avoid the most common types of trouble tickets. The Truckers’ Resource Guidebook can be downloaded from <http://www.panynj.gov/port/pdf/PPP-2015-Trucker-Guidebook.pdf> into the book application of a smartphone, and hard copies are available at the port’s Truck Service Center.

Qualified members of the Port of New York and New Jersey community – including truckers, beneficial cargo owners and other service providers – are urged to go online and register for TIPS as soon as they can.

For more information, visit:
www.porttruckpass.com

Council of Port Performance
www.councilonportperformance.com

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