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Urban Logistics for Ambitious Climate Cities

POLICY BRIEF

Background

On 6th September 2024, over 50 delegates from the City of Oslo, local and international businesses, and city officials from Stockholm, Gothenburg and Munich attended the *Urban Logistics for Ambitious Climate Cities* event at Oslo City Hall. The roundtable event provided a space for public and private sector attendees to speak openly on challenges to, and opportunities for, zero emission and efficient freight logistics across the Norwegian capital. The forum aimed to strengthen public-private collaborations, build momentum toward an aligned vision for effective urban logistics, and advance concrete next steps for policy action.

The event was hosted by;

- [MOVE21](#) - an innovation project funded by the European Commission, and led by the City of Oslo, that aims to transform cities and their surroundings into smart zero emissions nodes for mobility and logistics;
- [ALICE](#) - the Alliance for Logistics Innovation through Collaboration in Europe which is set up to develop a comprehensive industry lead strategy for research, innovation and market deployment of logistics and supply chain management in Europe; and
- [C40 Cities](#) - a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis.



Credit: Rikke Dahl Monsen City of Oslo



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Policy recommendations

1. Review spatial planning and traffic regulation levers to optimise the flexible use of space and traffic networks. Identify the biggest obstacles to flexible use of urban space and land use.
2. Standardise engagement with the private sector to facilitate focussed and inclusive knowledge exchange on urban logistics that will feed into fit-for-purpose policies. Focus on the three Cs: collaboration, communication, and consolidation.
3. Create internal cross-departmental capacity to work on urban logistics and dedicated resources within the city administration.
4. Be ambassadors of innovation – facilitate R&I activities that align with overarching city objectives to understand what is, and is not, effective. Disseminate findings with stakeholders.
5. Explore the feasibility of a public-private framework and platform to capture real-time, and anonymised, urban logistics data.
6. Safeguard existing functionality and maintenance areas that serve the wider urban logistics network and are crucial for city operations, but that are at risk of redevelopment or relocation.
7. Collaborate with the private sector to scope and ring-fence suitable locations for new urban logistics infrastructure, such as parcel lockers, micro hubs, mobility hotels, loading zones and charging stations.
8. Ensure urban logistics activity is an intrinsic element of transport and land-use plans for new residential and commercial property developments, redevelopments and rezonings, ideally from the outset.
9. Dedicate resources to explore the opportunities of leveraging waterways for specific zero emission and autonomous urban logistics activities.
10. Create long-term targets and principles for urban logistics as part of the Green Mobility Plan, providing the certainty the private sector needs for future-forward investments.



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Panel discussions

During the event, two insightful panel discussions brought together experts from government and the private sector to explore key issues related to integrating land use and urban logistics, and ways in which we can advance zero-emission and efficient urban logistics.

“The private sector can teach Oslo a lot about freight, and there will be opportunities for businesses to approach the city with ideas. Collaboration with the private sector is the key to success.” - **James Stove Lorentzen, Oslo Vice Mayor of Urban Development**

“Urban logistics is the last piece of the puzzle that hasn't had enough attention. We are creating a Green Mobility Plan that will include urban logistics - now is the time to invite the private sector to join the discussion and feed in advice.” - **Marit Kristine Vea, Oslo Vice Mayor for Environment and Transport**

“Today's discussions have highlighted the urgency of action and the willingness among us to find solutions to challenges. Putting freight on the agenda, fostering innovation among the private sector, aligning the right vehicle for the right need, and tackling challenges to allocate space for logistics have been dominating topics.” - **Johan Leveque, Director of Research and Innovation at La Poste, and Co-Chair of ALICE Urban Logistics group**

Key themes

Throughout the day, delegates had the opportunity to share their thoughts on pressing urban logistics topics in constructive roundtable discussions. Below is a summary of the topics discussed:

Smarter freight

Adopting the right-sized vehicle to the specific needs of urban logistics is crucial for efficiency. Cargo bikes can be a cost-effective choice in dense urban environments, and businesses should prioritise smaller electric vehicles as they can navigate populated areas effectively. Larger trucks should be used pragmatically in city centres and are more suited to transporting heavy and bulky loads long distances. Participants also discussed reducing empty miles by adopting multi-purpose uses for trucks, though identifying the right uses requires better collaboration among stakeholders, potentially through a shared data platform.

Sharing of underused assets – such as vehicles and infrastructure like charging stations – holds significant potential, though there is a need for an open marketplace or neutral facilitator. Data sharing between companies and cities also remains a challenge, with no standardised framework in place. Aggregating



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and anonymizing data could help reduce empty miles and improve logistics, but more incentives are needed to encourage collaboration.

Micro logistics hubs can operate efficiently in existing urban real estate that is retrofitted. The key is finding the right space, at the right time, at a cost-effective price for the logistics operator. Coupled with larger consolidation hubs outside of a city centre, this would enable a network of hubs to exist that could reduce the number of large freight vehicles on the road. Parcel lockers can also strategically assist in consolidation of deliveries and reverse logistics, with the right amount of lockers in the right places in order to maximise effectiveness.

Finally, discussions highlighted the great potential to shift freight activity from the road network to the underutilised waterways, and there was a general consensus that there should be increased use of the Oslofjord for freight movements.

More freight, less space

Space is at a premium in urban city centres, and different vehicles naturally need different types of space. Delegates highlighted that space has to be closely correlated with the means of freight transport, and land use for each sub-sector of freight logistics will likely be different, with solutions needing to be tailored. An element of flexibility is required that is sometimes not easy to enact.

Cities play a critical role as an enabler and facilitator of collaboration to explore opportunities for opening up space for freight uses, as well as preserving existing areas that are crucial for freight operations. Though the municipality itself might not own significant amounts of space, it can assist with searching for and ring-fencing vacant land or buildings that are underutilised and could meet freight needs. Safeguarding existing functionality and maintenance areas which serve the wider urban logistics network are crucial for city functionality and must be prevented from being pushed further out.

Optimising space through shared and flexible use is essential, especially in urban centres. Spaces should be dynamic, with shared micro hubs, dynamic curbs, and flexible loading zones as examples which could support better managed logistics throughout the day. Although many delivery service providers are not in support of consolidating deliveries, there are opportunities to share spaces. Receivers especially have decision-making power to foster collaboration and consolidation.

Finally, when considering new developments, mobility and land use plans should account for logistics activity from the outset and not only consider people mobility. Urban logistics need to be integrated early in the planning phase, involving all relevant stakeholders.



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Smarter cities

Cities can face limitations in managing urban logistics due to limited capacity and resources. Instead of directly managing logistics, cities should act as neutral facilitators, guiding the sector and creating an environment conducive to innovation. Cities must integrate logistics into Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP), and create sufficient internal capacity to manage freight relations with the private sector. They should embrace pilot projects that align with city objectives and create platforms for dialogue between logistics stakeholders, ensuring that decisions are based on unified industry input and long-term targets unaffected by political shifts. Additionally, cities need more designated loading zones and real-time data sharing systems that securely aggregate anonymous data from logistics operators.

In land development, municipalities should safeguard urban logistics spaces at risk of redevelopment and strategically position hubs on the city outskirts, with transshipment units closer to urban areas. Land-use planning should prioritise flexible approaches and earmark a certain amount of space for unspecified land-use needs to allow for dynamic space management. Existing regulations should be reassessed to enable flexible use of spaces, such as using underground parking for logistics hubs or leveraging waterways with less infrastructure requirements for urban logistics activities.

Optimising freight logistics also includes promoting off-peak deliveries, particularly at night when autonomous deliveries could become the norm by 2040/2050. Encouraging **collaboration, communication, and consolidation** among logistics operators and the municipality will be key to maximising efficiency and minimising environmental impacts.

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