



ORGANISING AND MANAGING URBAN FREIGHT PARTNERSHIPS

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THIS BRIEF TARGETS

- Transport authorities at the city and local (sub-city) levels.
- Urban freight-transport stakeholders.
- Researchers, practitioners and consultants interested in urban freight and stakeholder involvement in urban freight transport.

KEY MESSAGES

- Partnerships are valuable for engaging urban-freight stakeholders.
- Partnerships require effective management and organisation.
- In addition to achieving objectives, disseminating results is also important.
- Outcomes are not limited to physical objects and projects; relationships and knowledge exchange between participants provide a foundation for further improving urban freight.
- A focus on long-term possibilities is important.

Partnerships can contribute significantly to solving urban freight problems; they provide a good opportunity to consider the various perspectives of stakeholders and thereby identify possible solutions. This policy brief presents a framework for organising and managing urban freight partnerships.

Until recently, urban transportation authorities often overlooked freight, concentrating their attention on the movement of people. Even when motivated to tackle urban freight, many city authorities find it difficult to address the complex set of differing views of a large variety of stakeholders. Historically, the role of city authorities, or local authorities within cities, has been confined largely to one of regulation. Correspondingly, until recently there has been limited engagement of private companies in the local-authority transport-planning process.

One way to involve stakeholders in urban freight transport planning is to initiate so-called freight partnerships. A freight partnership brings together representatives from the public and private sector to discuss and identify actions to improve freight planning and operations, frequently in an urban context. With the term freight partnership, we refer to a long-term partnership between freight stakeholders concerned with urban freight that involves meeting regularly to discuss and seek solutions to problems and concerns.



In The Greater Lyon it has been observed that it is difficult for private practitioners to understand the structure of multi-layered administrative organizations. Public-private partnership provides an opportunity for transport operators to identify who to contact when a problem occurs. Partnership also helps the public authority to stay informed of the new practices, organisations, aims, and constraints of private transport operators.

- ▶ Establishing a freight partnership can lead to a better understanding of freight problems and also a change in the nature and usefulness of interactions between public- and private-sector stakeholders, beyond the traditional focus of such interactions on complaints (noise, kerb space, etc.). Sharing knowledge can be highlighted as among the most important effects of such partnerships. Freight partnerships are developing constantly. In a recent survey we identified over 20 in 8 countries around the world. In another survey, 94 percent of the respondents found that freight partnerships had improved public-private cooperation.

Framework

To establish a freight partnership it is important to consider configuration, management and outcomes.

Configuration: Identifying relevant stakeholders is important. Different cities have different prerequisites, but it is almost always a good idea to involve many different stakeholders, such as transport operators, retailers, trade associations, property owners, authorities etc. Each city should first consider their specific situation and area of focus, and then identify relevant actors that have a specific interest in that area. This helps to ensure that the objectives of the partnership are relevant to the stakeholders.

Management: When a partnership is established, evidence has shown that effective project management is needed in order to sustain the partnership. An action plan or similar document should be created, in order to structure discussions and maintain a long-term perspective. The participants need to be kept to a manageable number (10 to 25) to keep discussions amongst stakeholders lively. It is equally important that stakeholder representatives have a mandate to impose change within their respective organisations.

Outcomes: Outcomes of partnerships are valuable to all stakeholders involved, and it is likely that concrete achievements will be essential to maintaining the momentum of freight partnerships in the longer term. Measures should be considered as business propositions, and it is necessary to accept that urban

freight transport issues are complex: avoid seeking single solutions.

Outcomes can be grouped into 'soft' and 'hard' categories. 'Hard' achievements refer to concrete, tangible outputs (which can usually be quantified and measured), while 'soft' achievements include general improvements in working processes and recognition and understanding of the issues involved (which are more qualitative in nature).

Research has shown that the expectations of different partnerships are varied, and interest in shorter- versus longer-term improvements is not necessarily the same in all cities. Experiences from freight partnerships are becoming increasingly available through dissemination activities such as those by the VREF Centres of Excellence.

The Central London Freight Quality Partnership (CLFQP) supported the preparation of guidelines that reduce some of the friction between businesses and public authorities in regulating parking for loading and unloading. These guidelines were subsequently used nationally.

The CLFQP has also provided a forum for exchanging views regarding strategic developments, such as introducing segregated cycle lanes (which impacts loading arrangements).

Main considerations

Partnerships cannot solve all of the freight-related problems within a city but should be considered as an important piece of the puzzle. The benefits from the outcomes of partnerships are not only valuable for local authorities, but also for private-sector partners who both receive information early about on-going processes and are invited to take part in discussions about forthcoming policies. Freight partnerships can make a significant contribution to solving urban freight problems. They provide an excellent opportunity to consider the many and varied perspectives of stakeholders and, thereby, identify solutions that can address the needs of different groups.

AUTHORS

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