

FUT Symposium 2012-10-01

Urban Freight for Livable Cities:

-How to deal with collaboration and trade-offs.

Introduction to the symposium

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In a world with ongoing rapidly increasing urbanization, urban transport has come high on the agenda for policy makers, city planners and other practitioners as well as for parts of the research community. By path dependency, urban transport has to large extent dealt with the transport and mobility of people. The understanding of the area, not least public transport, has increased through the vast amount of data collected and models studied. Due to their high populations and extensive commercial activities, urban areas however require the delivery and collection of large quantities of goods and provision of services for commercial and domestic use, resulting in considerable freight activity.

Freight logistics has been studied and developed over a long time. Economies of scale have been successfully exploited, especially the long haul transport component. In most commercial activities logistics is of crucial importance for competitiveness. Business models based upon creative use of advanced logistic management have been developed and progress is measured by instant systematic data collection and processing.

Although freight transport in cities constitutes a very small proportion of the total freight transport length, it invokes a high proportion of the transport cost. According to the Council of Logistics Management this "last mile" in the transport chain accounts for 28 percent of the total transport cost.

Freight transport in cities tends to respond very effectively to the requirements and development of modern urban economies. At the same time, it is also a major contributor to social and environmental impacts, particularly to congestion, local air quality and noise. It is estimated that 10 – 18 percent of all city road traffic and 40 percent of air pollution and noise emissions is directly related to commercial transport in the city environment.

Urban freight activities result in conflicts between economic and social/environmental issues. Addressing such conflicts and trade-offs in urban freight transport requires change and innovation in the public and private sectors.

While there are technological and organisational opportunities to improve the efficiency of urban freight operations, to exploit them fully needs collaboration between companies and also between the public and private sector. Those responsible for urban policies and planning need to work with companies to identify appropriate and transferable solutions. In some cases this will require a major shift in attitude away from seeing freight in cities as just a problem. Companies need to change as well – industry and organisations such as universities need to combine efforts to help policy-makers and the wider public understand urban logistics better.

The Symposium has been organised to consider the challenges and opportunities that currently face urban freight transport, as well as the desired outcomes and targets for those in the public and private sector. The agents of change that are likely to be instrumental in forming, implementing and disseminating new ideas, methods, business models or technology will be of central concern.

The Symposium will consider three main themes that are of central importance to the future development of urban freight transport:

- Partnerships and leadership
- Sharing the urban space
- Multi-level interaction and trade-offs