

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING GRANTS

### ESTABLISHING A VREF CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

#### FOR

### MANAGING FREIGHT IN THE URBAN TRANSPORT SITUATION

#### PURPOSE OF CALL

Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) invites city and university authorities to submit joint applications for planning grants to establish the next VREF Centre of Excellence (CoE) for *Managing freight in the urban transport situation*.

VREF currently supports eight Centres of Excellence that, together, represent a powerful academic research network in line with the VREF mission statement of *How to cope with the complexity of urban transport*. The role of the next CoE will be to deal with issues relating to freight in the urban transport situation.

Academic studies of urban transport are concerned primarily with passenger\* transport in the broad sense of the expression. The delivery of goods in urban areas – sometimes called the problem of the last kilometre – is a more recent area of study within the well-established field of freight logistics. While long-haul freight movements now appear to be relatively efficient, urban operations are probably much less so.

The new CoE is intended to focus on the interaction between goods and passenger transport within the urban transport system. Management strategies for increasing the efficiency of both of these activities should be of particular interest to academic researchers, logistics companies and city decision-makers alike.

Management strategies should be addressed jointly by practitioners and academics. The academics should be guided by the problems and policy challenges experienced by the practitioners, while the latter should be guided by the opportunities that academic research can offer practitioners and policy-makers.

\* In this document, a passenger is defined as a traveller in or on a public or private conveyance

**QUESTIONS AND TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED**

The city (or cities) should address the following two issues in the application:

**Question No. 1: What is the city's view of freight within the urban transport system?**

What aspects of urban freight movements are most important in terms of their impact on the urban transport system? This refers to congestion, noise, climate change and general pollution, land use and other considerations. How is freight regarded in the context of sustainable development?

**Question No. 2: What resources will the city commit to supporting and implementing the academic research programme?**

How does the city see itself supporting and participating in the research programme? To what extent is it prepared to invest staff time in cooperation with the research group? How does the city intend to utilise the outcomes of the research programme? Is the city willing to accept PhD internships?

The application may, although not necessarily, address the following themes regarding cooperation between the city/cities and the academic research group(s):

**Theme No. 1: Understanding the interaction between goods and passenger transport in the urban transport situation**

Many cities maintain satisfactory, or at least adequate, data on urban passenger transport, and also possess the analytical capacity to develop practical policies based on this information.

The situation is generally different in the area of urban freight. Figures are scarce, as are methods of analysing the interaction between goods and passenger transport in the urban situation. What should be included in the definition of freight is also an open question.

In particular, little study appears to have been made of the interaction between goods and passenger transport, including the contribution of urban freight to traffic congestion. While freight movements are affected by this problem, the extent to which they contribute to the situation is less clear.

The application may cite empirical studies, as well as modelling of the impact of freight in the urban transport system on overall urban congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, noise and traffic safety.

**Theme No. 2: Role of private players in managing freight in the urban transport situation**

Freight logistics is a well-established field of academic research. City logistics – or the problem of the last kilometre – is a more recent area of study. The economies of scale afforded by long-distance goods transport have not been achieved over shorter distances. This situation could conceivably be addressed by integrating information technology in urban freight logistics. In addition, although the potential for cooperation between various players involved in city logistics has been discussed extensively, practical applications and data appear to be rare.

The issue is illustrated by an experiment carried out by a Swedish city which, in collaboration with the local university, established cooperation between freight distributors delivering goods to city-centre destinations. This resulted in significant economies of scale, with reductions in vehicle numbers, kilometres travelled, and so on. However, the experiment ended when one distributor decided that the loss of its on-street profile outweighed the benefits of cooperation.

The application may describe opportunities for, or practical experience of, voluntary cooperation between the private city logistics players that has increased the efficiency of urban freight and reduced its impact on the overall urban transport system.

### **Theme No. 3: Implementation challenges and the role of public policy in managing freight in the urban transport situation**

Public players have traditionally taken a major role in influencing and managing urban transportation systems, with the aim of balancing the interests of different stakeholders and social groups. Considerable investment has been committed and political pressure is high. However, the situation is much more varied in the area of urban freight.

Many cities have introduced ordinances governing loading and unloading, building restrictions, time limitations, zones for low-emission vehicles, and so on. Further scope exists for separation in time and street space through measures such as traffic regulations, congestion charges or even mileage charges. Detailed studies followed, perhaps, by tests of various kinds to ease competition for street space could be considered. The EU's POLIS project is focused particularly on urban freight.

Freight logistics play an important role in property development. The impact on passenger transport receives less consideration since this is not the main concern of the investor. The interaction between freight, passenger transport and land use, and how this interaction is regulated, is of primary interest.

The application may discuss the extent to which innovative public policies can improve the interaction between goods and passenger transport systems in such manner that the urban transport system as a whole is improved. The application may, furthermore, elaborate on the barriers and challenges to the implementation of innovative new approaches, and on the role of public policy in meeting those challenges.

#### **PLANNING GRANT**

The planning grant is intended to facilitate the preparation and production of the full CoE proposal. The amount of the grant will typically be of the order of SEK200-300 thousand (approximately EUR23-34 thousand or USD31-46 thousand), depending on the nature of the project.

#### **APPLICANT**

A VREF Centre of Excellence (CoE) has traditionally been established by a reputable, well-established research group or by a consortium of groups acting in concert, addressing a central problem or problem

area within the framework of the Future Urban Transport (FUT) programme.

In this call, VREF invites cities and academic research groups to form project consortia and submit joint planning grant applications. Several cities may cooperate as part of a single consortium, as may researchers from different universities. A consortium may also include other partners, such as freight carriers. The formation of a consortium may be the initiative of a university or a city. Any intellectual property rights issues will have to be addressed within the consortium.

For legal reasons, VREF can fund academic research only. Thus, the application and main applicant (that is, the party designated as project manager) must be associated with and supported by his or her university (see below). For this reason, cities wishing to participate in the consortium will be required to arrange their own funding, as will any other company or organisation wishing to join the project. However, PhD internships in cities and other non-academic organisations may be funded by VREF.

#### **SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION**

An application for a planning grant must be submitted by e-mail to [secretariat@vref.se](mailto:secretariat@vref.se) and must be received **no later than 15 September 2011**. In addition, an original document signed by both the main applicant and the host organisation must be forwarded by ordinary post (see web site for postal address).

The application must

- be structured and delineated in accordance with the guidelines stated below;
- be written in English;
- be laid out in European A4 paper format, with a minimum font size of 12 pt and margins of at least 25 mm;
- consist of a maximum of eight single pages;
- be saved in PDF file format (of ready-to-print quality).

Applications exceeding the specified maximum number of pages will be rejected.

Please e-mail [secretariat@vref.se](mailto:secretariat@vref.se) for further information on the call for applications or for clarification regarding the requirements for application. To ensure maximum transparency in the recruitment process, all questions, and VREF's answers to them, will be published in a Q&A page on the VREF web site.

#### **REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

All qualifying applications will be reviewed by the VREF Scientific Council during October-November 2011. Up to five planning grants will be approved by the VREF board in early December 2011.

Consortia awarded planning grants will be invited to submit a full proposal for a CoE in May 2012. This will be reviewed both by external reviewers and the VREF Scientific Council. In December 2012, the VREF board will decide on funding approval for one CoE to become operational in early 2013.

Further information on VREF, the FUT programme and existing CoEs is available on the VREF web site at [www.vref.se](http://www.vref.se)

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Detailed instructions on drafting the application follow below. The page numbers shown in the instructions indicate the numbering to be used in the final document.

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**FRONT PAGE****Postal address of main applicant**

The main applicant shall be a person, not an organisation. Please note that only one person shall be the main applicant. To ensure prompt communication, it is important to state an e-mail address or fax number in addition to the postal address.

**Project title**

The title should be concise and informative, preferably including keywords characterising the project.

**Names and addresses of consortium partners**

List the names of all consortium partners, including the names and e-mail addresses of each partner's contact person (whose scientific, policy and practical background, as well as current activities, will be presented later in the proposal).

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**Summary**

This should consist of a brief outline of the problem, and the objective(s) and general approach of the project, indicating the factors that give the project a competitive edge.

**Project budget estimate (with annual costs in local currency) and project duration**

Indicate the estimated annual funding sought from VREF for the proposed Centre of Excellence activity to be undertaken should your planning grant proposal be approved. The annual funding for a fully operational CoE is normally of the order of SEK4-6 million (approximately EUR460-690 thousand or USD630-940 thousand). The total funding for the whole project period must not exceed SEK 24 million. Only an approximate summary budget for the proposed Centre of Excellence project, without details, is required at this point. A detailed budget will be required later if and when this 'letter of intent' proposal is awarded a planning grant. All overheads, VAT and similar costs must be included in the provisional budget.

**Requested planning grant**

The planning grant is intended to facilitate the preparation and production of a full proposal. The amount of the grant will typically be of the order of SEK200-300 thousand (approximately EUR23-34 thousand or USD31-46 thousand), depending on the nature of the project. The amount of the grant required to prepare a full proposal over a 3-4 month period should be stated here. This is the maximum amount that will be awarded should the proposal be accepted following evaluation.

**Questions for cities**

The city (or cities) should address the following two questions:

- Question No. 1:** What is your view of freight in the urban transport system?
- Question No. 2:** What resources will you commit to supporting and implementing the academic research programme?

**PROJECT PROPOSAL****Background**

This should provide a summary of the most important current knowledge (or the absence thereof) relating to the project area, and the work of the main international research teams active in the area. Other information should include the current status of policy and practice in the area, with particular reference to aspects of interest in the context of the VREF initiative.

**Vision**

Describe your long-term vision of the project's impact on FUT.

**Objectives/goals**

List the main objective(s)/goal(s) that can be achieved over the specified duration of the project. VREF offers particular encouragement to projects seeking to combine the development of new knowledge with practical action/implementation (either as a linear process starting with problem identification and leading to the implementation of solutions, or as a more circular or helical process). The aim is to promote accessibility and efficiency, as well as values such as equal quality-of-life expectations and long-term societal sustainability.

**Project description and problem formulation**

The specific problem formulation and the specific approach proposed for addressing the problem (or problems) should be described here. The application may, although not necessarily, address the following themes regarding cooperation within the consortium:

- Theme No. 1: Understanding the interaction between goods and passenger transport in the urban transport situation
- Theme No. 2: Role of private players in managing freight in the urban transport situation
- Theme No. 3: Implementation challenges and the role of public policy in managing freight in the urban transport situation

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**Description of main applicant's scientific background and current activities, with brief CV**

This should include a summary of the main applicant's scientific background and other achievements/experience relevant to the success of the proposed research. Current activities will be of particular interest. A very brief CV should also be provided.

**Backgrounds and current activities of consortium partners**

A brief summary of the scientific backgrounds and other achievements/experience of the academic partners in the consortium, as considered relevant to the success of the proposed research, should be provided under this heading. This should be accompanied by a similar summary of the policies/practice context of the non-academic partners, as well as previous achievements/experience in knowledge and capacity building relevant to the proposed research.

The contributions and roles of the various consortium partners, as well as the interaction envisaged between them as part of the project, should also be described. This should include all partners, whether or not they are financed by the project.

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**Factors giving the project a competitive edge**

Factors that give the project a competitive edge in the international arena should be listed here. Although this overlaps partly with *Description of main applicant's scientific background* above, other factors, such as the actual problem formulation, access to unique model systems and/or methods for research purposes, partners' experience and existing networks, may also be of relevance.

**Educational aspects and content**

All projects must incorporate an educational content as a means of disseminating new scientific findings. Educational activities include courses, seminars, workshops and graduate student training, as well as professional training and other capacity-building activities.

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**Relevant literature and key references**

List the most important publications of relevance to the proposed project, originating both from your consortium and from other sources. In the case of *scientific publications* from your own consortium, externally reviewed publications from the last 3 years will be of main interest.