

Planning Process for Urban Goods Movement

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ABSTRACT

Urban transportation plans are often prepared in accordance with a city or region's planning mandate (e.g., in Ontario, as part of the regular update to a city's Official Plan), or are predicated by a specific issue that requires a comprehensive, holistic treatment before planning and investment decisions can be made. Although these transportation plans usually identify actions that individual residents and employers could take to manage projected growth in travel, at the core they largely focus on identifying the requirements for new public investment in the urban area's transportation infrastructure. The need for such plans generally is accepted by the authorities that are responsible for delivering urban passenger transportation services.

In contrast, with some exceptions the need for urban goods movement plans is not as well established among these authorities. Although the movement of people clearly is the dominant usage of an urban transportation system (hence it is the appropriate focus of urban plans), many plans either ignore goods movement or mention the subject seemingly only in passing. This lack of attention is due to at least two reasons: the multitude of governmental mandates that oversee and regulate goods movement services and infrastructure (meaning that a clear urban mandate does not exist for any particular level of government) and the competitive nature of the (mainly) private sector operators (meaning that the impetus for any cooperative, multi-modal planning tends to be market-driven). These reasons are related to other problems, such as the lack of contextual analysis, hard data and forecasting tools. They are further compounded by the complexity inherent to the logistics associated with the movement of goods in all economic sectors, which in turn are linked to complex systems of local, national and international decisions regarding facility location, modal use, tariffs and so on.

Still, many authorities have begun to recognize the importance of addressing a growing number of urban goods movement problems and – perhaps more important – the relationship between efficient goods movement and a region's economic prosperity. The challenge is that there is very little guidance and experience on how to develop a plan. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to identify the components that should constitute an urban goods movement plan, drawing from a recent study in Central Ontario (the Toronto-centred region) and from other sources.