

Urban Transport Policy in Europe: “Meeting City Demands for Green Logistics”

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In its latest published research, Urban Transport Policy in Europe, Analytiqa takes an in-depth look at the current initiatives and legislation currently being planned and implemented across twenty cities in twelve European countries across both West and Eastern Europe.

From Amsterdam to Warsaw, the report identifies details of existing and future legislation and policy that will impact upon the operations of commercial vehicles. The issues addressed are those that will have the greatest impact on providers working within the express, logistics or supply chain arena and include:

- Tracking parking controls and strategies for loading restrictions
- Understanding access and vehicle size regulations
- Benchmarking approaches to road pricing and toll schemes
- Comparisons of emission regulations and vehicle standards
- Innovative City logistics and urban freight schemes

Urban Transport Policy in Europe

For the 27 somewhat diverse countries and cultures which now collectively form the EU, the problems and issues that delivery vehicles encounter across their major cities are surprisingly common and, unfortunately, widespread – the lack of parking places, both on-road and off-road, for unloading; illegally parked vehicles; and congestion caused by increasing passenger and freight transport, made worse by the (in)capacity and quality of road networks.

Varied, inconsistent approach to City Logistics across Europe

What is significantly different however, are City approaches to tackling these issues. With public and private transport policies so irrevocably entwined, the influence of many different stakeholders, each with their own agendas, means reaching agreeable conclusions on which to base policy is an unenviable task.

Common solutions such as parking controls and access regulations are used to reduce congestion, emissions and improve traffic flows, whilst road pricing and toll schemes look to pass the cost of congestion and pollution directly to those attributable for them. But how evident are they? Whilst many cities, eager to be seen as more proactive, are tackling the problem head on, others remain reactive and are taking a ‘back-seat’.

For all commercial vehicle operators, be they courier and express companies, road hauliers, logistics operators (in-house or outsourced operations) or even the municipal fleets of the cities themselves, City policies on vehicle access regulations and emissions standards will have a significant bearing upon future transport strategy and investment in fleet.

With legislation, restrictions and future proposals varying by city, by country, Fleet Managers face greater responsibility and a tougher than ever challenge to get their fleet investments right.

The consequences of making incorrect decisions now will be far-reaching. Fleet operators do not want to discover that impending legislation, be it on vehicle size, weight or emissions, will incur financial costs for them, or at worse prohibit their vehicles from entering certain parts of a City in the coming years.

Lowering emissions: top of the agenda

Whilst at first glance, improvements in technology and fuel management in new vehicles have led to the continuous lowering of vehicle emissions many believe, rightly or wrongly, that these benefits are being partly offset by fleet trends to utilise larger vehicles (and capacity engines) which generally use more fuel.

It is widely understood that innovative new strategies and solutions must be adopted, and quickly, if cities are to function more cleanly and efficiently as demands on their transport infrastructures increase. As a result, across Europe, fleet operators are investing in 'environmentally friendly' vehicles. Among the more high profile examples are:

- DHL Express running 170 natural gas vehicles for express deliveries in Germany
- UK retailer Tesco plans to run its 2,000-strong fleet of lorries on biodiesel
- TNT is trialling 7.5-tonne zero emission electric vehicles in London
- Carrefour, Ooshop, L'Oréal and Monoprix using 'clean' vehicles in Paris

For their part, a number of cities have already put in place measure to limit vehicle emissions, with schemes running in Amsterdam, Paris, Prague, Rome and Stockholm.

Elsewhere, introducing and then enforcing emissions regulations are perhaps the highest items on the agenda for transport planners at many City Councils across Europe. Munich expects to introduce an environmental zone within the area in the middle ring road at the beginning of 2008, whilst Berlin proposes to introduce a traffic restriction zone for high emission vehicles in the central city area in stages, from 2008-2010.

In the UK, consultation on the proposed London-wide Low Emission Zone started in November 2006. It is proposed that from as early as February 2008, diesel engine lorries, coaches and buses that fail to meet minimum pollution standards will have to pay a charge if they drive within Greater London. Such plans have been condemned, however, not least by the UK's Freight Transport Association (FTA) which commented that "Plans to enforce the LEZ are nothing short of a shambles, are grossly unfair", suggesting that the plans "could not be more misguided".

Freight Consolidation: German cities lead the way

As urban populations grow, the number of City freight movements is forecast to increase on a B2B basis. It is envisaged that locating freight consolidation centres outside of city centres, so that they become the 'final' destination for logistics operators, would see 'last mile' deliveries to city centre locations made in smaller vehicles and retailers, in particular, made to be more acutely aware of the impact that their deliveries have on city environments. Transport planners must increase their awareness regarding the development of shared and consolidated load solutions if their network and route optimisation strategies are to remain competitive.

In B2C markets, the rising popularity of internet shopping across Europe contrasts with low first time delivery success rates, often facilitating repeat trips for courier and parcel companies. Adequate 'home' delivery strategies, such as the development of wide-scale 'drop-boxes' are yet to be implemented that will maximise efficiencies in fulfilling such orders and reduce 'delivery miles'.

In the B2B sector, despite the success of innovative sector specific schemes in Stockholm and London, it is arguably the German cities that lead the way in Europe, with sustained efforts for cross-sector city logistics terminals.

In Frankfurt, despite a number of city logistics projects stopping after financial backing ended, the Cargo City freight village at Frankfurt airport continues to be a success.

In addition to schemes already in operation in the City, Munich is developing a decentralised freight distribution system with six trans-shipment centres across the metropolitan area. Each logistics terminal will be capable of handling 800 tonnes of freight per day and are planned to be operational by 2010.

On a wider scale across Germany, a sustained effort to implement urban freight schemes overcame long and problematic planning and implementation processes, to see a network of Freight Villages established. Located away from areas with 'conflict potential' the Freight Villages allow round the clock operations and provide sufficient access to both the long-haul transport network, as well as to delivery points in urban areas.

Road pricing: one size does not fit all...

The acceptance of road pricing is not merely an environmental or even economic decision, as a large number of socio-political factors also have to be considered. To appease both private and public road users which merely see such charges as an additional tax, Councils are at pains to stress that revenues generated by such schemes are, or would be, directed at implementing initiatives which improve a City's transport infrastructure.

As city road pricing is expanded in London (the Congestion Charge extends over a wider part of London from February 19), arguments for and against such charges continue to rage. The Stockholm Trial, which ended in July 2006, resulted in a public referendum which saw the majority of citizens vote in favour of road pricing. Subsequently the Swedish government has decided to reintroduce charging during the first half of 2007.

After six years of consultation Copenhagen appears no closer to implementing a scheme, whilst the Belgian Federal Government has plans to introduce a cordon road pricing scheme at the entrance to the Brussels region (although plans are vague at present). Elsewhere, Milan's detailed investigations for road pricing on a city-wide scale have been put on hold, with priorities switching to tackling vehicle emissions. In Berlin, it was considered that gains in social welfare from the introduction of charges 'probably' do not cover the direct costs (installation and operation) of an urban road pricing system for commercial vehicles. Spanish cities have rejected proposals for such schemes, citing cultural non-acceptance, whilst in Stuttgart charging plans have been vetoed.

Notes for Editors:

"Urban Transport Policy in Europe: Meeting City Demands for Green Logistics" investigates historic, present and future urban transport policies and their impact upon logistics, parcel and courier operators in 20 cities across Europe. The report specifically analyses four topics:

- Parking controls and access regulations
- Congestion charges or toll schemes
- Emission regulations
- City logistics, freight and distribution schemes

To discuss the issues raised in this article, or any of the products and services offered by Analytiqa please call us on +44 (0) 1707 37 22 11 or Email: info@analytiqa.com

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List of Key Industry Participants:

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