

Urban Goods Movement and Local Climate Action Plans: Assessing Strategies to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Urban Freight Transportation

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Freight movement accounts for a significant and growing share of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Although many cities have developed climate action plans (CAPs) to address their transportation GHGs, freight transportation has received little attention. The overarching question that we answered throughout this research has been the following: How can cities better incorporate innovative strategies to reduce GHG emissions from freight transport through climate action planning?

Cities need to do a better job of addressing greenhouse gas emission reductions from freight transportation in their climate action plans.

Study Methods

This research involved three phases. First, through a review of the literature, we identified innovative strategies to reduce freight emissions. Second, by analyzing the content of 27 advanced local CAPs in the United States, we uncovered gaps in local climate action planning efforts related to freight emissions reduction. Third, by comparing local CAPs with several freight plans, we found potential areas where local CAPs and freight plans can be linked together for better effectiveness of strategies to reduce freight GHG emissions.

Findings

Findings indicate that there is a disconnect between local climate action planning and freight planning efforts in most cities. More specifically, although

most plans mention freight or indicate the impact and importance of freight, only six out of 27 advanced local plans explicitly address freight transport in their GHG emission reduction strategies or actions. Likewise, most of the freight plans we analyzed do not directly address the reduction of GHGs or set a goal for GHG emissions reduction. To the extent that environmental goals, such as the reduction of local air pollution and/or GHG emissions, were included in the freight plans, they were addressed largely through recommended improvements in freight mobility. The environmental improvements from proposed freight strategies and actions were included mostly as ancillary benefits.

Policy Recommendations

We recommend that all CAPs explicitly discuss GHG emissions from freight transport specifically and develop targeted strategies and actions for reducing freight emissions. Since cities do not control all aspects of a freight transportation system, planners working on municipal level CAPs should coordinate more closely with planners working on city, regional, and state freight plans to identify and include freight initiatives that will reduce GHG emissions.



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