Integrating freight and logistics into urban mobility planning in the Global South

Topic Guide



MobiliseYourCity

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Executive *summary*

Urban logistics is a core function of cities. It supports the supply of households, businesses, and essential services, but it also contributes to congestion, road safety risks, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and competition for scarce urban space. In Global South cities, rapid urbanisation, changing consumption patterns, and e-commerce growth make proactive freight planning increasingly important.

This Topic Guide provides a practical framework for integrating freight and logistics into urban mobility planning and translating strategic objectives into implementable measures. It is structured around two main questions: how to integrate freight and logistics into urban mobility planning, and how to implement an urban logistics policy. This publication comes along with the compilation of case studies on urban logistics. **Each case study is introduced in the document through a dedicated blue box providing a concise overview.**

Freight and logistics can be integrated directly into a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), addressed through a dedicated Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan (SULP), or developed through a thematic planning process linked to the SUMP. In all cases, the planning process should follow four main phases: preparation and analysis; vision, goal setting, and scenario building; measure planning; and implementation and monitoring.

During preparation and analysis, cities should establish clear governance arrangements, including a dedicated Urban Logistics Task Force and a public–private consultative forum. They should also build a freight data baseline, develop pragmatic data-sharing arrangements and prepare a robust diagnosis linking flows, logistics nodes, key generators and receivers, and operational constraints.

Strategy development should translate this diagnosis into long-term priorities. This includes integrating corridor-based planning where relevant, strengthening resilience to external shocks, safeguarding logistics space across planning scales, and defining measurable targets and indicators.

Measure planning should then convert these priorities into concrete actions. Prioritise measures by effectiveness, feasibility, acceptability, and value for money, with clear responsibilities, timelines, resources, and funding arrangements. Monitor implementation over time, compare indicators against targets, and adjust the action plan as conditions evolve.

The guide identifies four main areas for implementation:

Infrastructure development

Improve freight-critical road networks, develop infrastructure for small delivery modes, and provide well-designed loading and unloading space.

Regulation

Define access, circulation and loading rules, manage restricted areas and delivery windows, and establish appropriate rules for reuse and circular logistics flows.

Decarbonisation

Create enabling conditions for fleet electrification, support vehicle transition through incentives and phased regulation, and establish emissions baselines.

Human resources and governance

Strengthen logistics skills and public-sector capacity and coordination, improve working conditions, support digital competencies and promote more inclusive employment.

Overall, urban logistics should be planned strategically, implemented progressively and adapted over time. By combining sound planning with practical infrastructure, regulation, decarbonisation, and workforce measures, cities can improve freight efficiency while supporting broader objectives of accessibility, resilience, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

Why integrate freight and logistics into urban *mobility planning?*

Freight and logistics are a core urban function. They ensure the continuous supply of households, shops, and businesses, making them the backbone of urban economic activity. Their efficiency is key to urban productivity. They also manage critical flows, including food, healthcare products, construction materials, and urban services such as waste collection and maintenance.

This role is becoming increasingly important as freight demand grows rapidly in emerging cities. Urbanisation, e-commerce, and changing consumption patterns are intensifying goods movement within urban areas. In some regions, freight activity could more than triple by 2050 (ITF, 2023), making it essential for cities to anticipate, organise and manage these flows.

At the same time, freight and logistics generate significant negative externalities in urban areas. Because of the traffic volumes they create and the types of vehicles they often use, they contribute to road safety risks, air pollution, noise, and greenhouse gas emissions. Without adequate planning and regulation, these impacts are likely to increase as freight flows continue to grow.

Urban logistics is also a major land-use and public space issue. Without planning, logistics activities often concentrate in central areas, increasing congestion and conflicts over scarce public space. Conversely, when logistics facilities locate spontaneously on the urban periphery, they can contribute to urban sprawl, longer delivery distances and higher externalities.

Resilience is another growing concern. Globalisation and increasingly interdependent supply chains have improved logistics efficiency, but they have also made urban supply systems more vulnerable to external shocks. Many cities depend on logistics networks that extend far beyond their administrative boundaries, and sometimes beyond national borders. This vulnerability is particularly acute for landlocked territories or cities that rely on a limited number of ports, corridors or gateway nodes. . Geopolitical tensions, economic crises, fuel price volatility, climate events, and pandemics can disrupt infrastructure, operations, and labour availability at the same time, leading to delays, higher costs, and risks of supply disruption.

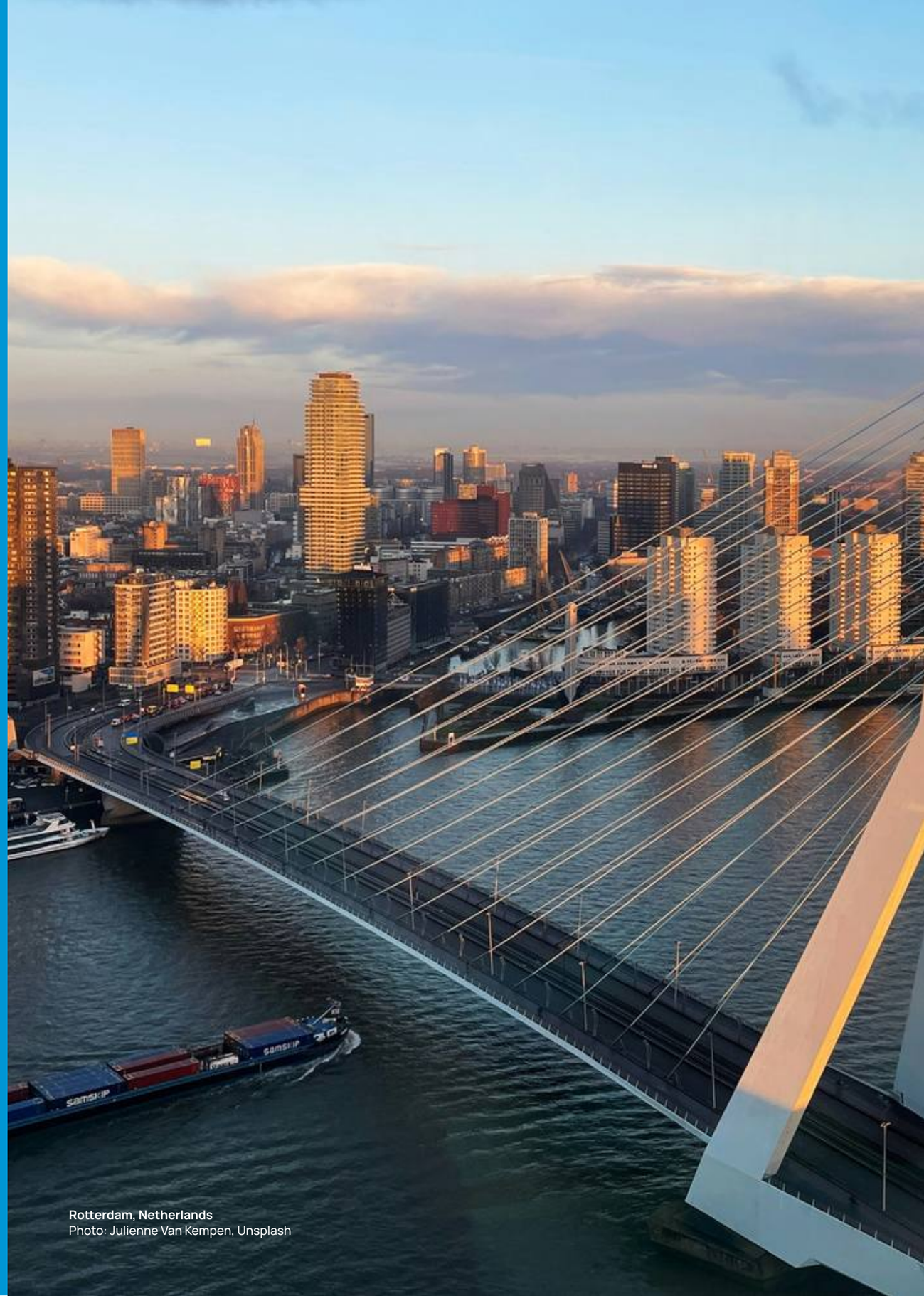
Finally, urban logistics represents a strategic economic opportunity. It supports many jobs and, if modernised, can formalise employment for low-skilled workers while creating new opportunities for qualified professionals in a rapidly transforming sector. Because logistics vehicles travel high annual mileage and can often be organised around captive fleets, the sector also offers a strong lever to accelerate transport decarbonisation and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Urban logistics should therefore be treated as a strategic component of sustainable urban mobility planning. It connects economic efficiency, access to essential goods, public space management, resilience, employment and decarbonisation. Integrating it into urban planning is not only a response to current pressures; it is a condition for building more liveable, productive and resilient cities.

National Urban Mobility Policies and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans should therefore integrate urban freight and logistics as much as possible to improve both logistics efficiency and cities' overall efficiency in the coming years.

Gateway nodes are major entry, exit or transfer points connecting urban logistics systems to wider national, regional or global transport and trade networks.

How to integrate freight and logistics into urban *mobility planning?*



Rotterdam, Netherlands
Photo: Julienne Van Kempen, Unsplash

Introduction on planning and logistics

Why urban logistics needs to be planned?

In many Global South cities, urban logistics remains fragmented and reactive, relying on ad hoc traffic restrictions, isolated pilots, or enforcement actions. These interventions often lack a shared understanding of freight demand, strategic corridors, logistics nodes, markets, warehouses, and last-mile delivery requirements, including essential flows such as food distribution.

Weak institutional anchoring often reinforces this fragmentation. Responsibilities may be dispersed across several public authorities, freight data are limited, and competing demands for urban space make it difficult to reconcile logistics requirements with broader mobility and urban development objectives.

Cities therefore need an approach that is both strategic, by establishing long-term priorities, and operational, by defining implementable measures, responsibilities, investment needs, enforcement arrangements and monitoring mechanisms.

Urban freight should consequently be embedded in the city's broader mobility and urban planning framework. This includes ensuring consistency with land-use planning, economic development, public space management and environmental policies. At the strategic level, planning should identify where key logistics functions can be accommodated, how they connect to major gateways and markets, and how urban development can preserve the accessibility required for goods distribution.

Mobility and logistics planning frameworks

A **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)** is a strategic and integrated approach to urban mobility planning. It is based on a long-term vision; an assessment of existing conditions and future trends; the definition of objectives and targets; and the preparation of coordinated regulatory, financial, infrastructure, and operational measures. It addresses the mobility needs of both people and businesses and combines planning with implementation, monitoring and evaluation. MobiliseYourCity has adapted the SUMP methodology to the institutional, financial, and mobility conditions of cities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including constraints related to local capacities, governance arrangements, and data availability. (MobiliseYourCity Partnership, 2023).

At the national level, **National Urban Mobility Policies and Investment Programmes (NUMPs)** provide a strategic framework to support sustainable urban mobility planning and investment. Developed by national governments, they aim to strengthen cities' capacity to plan, finance, and implement sustainable mobility measures. NUMPs may take the form of national policies, sectoral strategies, investment programmes or a combination of these. They help align regulatory frameworks, institutional responsibilities, funding mechanisms and national priorities, while supporting the development and implementation of SUMPs at the local level. They can also promote integrating urban freight and logistics into mobility planning.

A Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan (SULP) applies a similar strategic planning approach specifically to the movement and management of goods in urban areas. It provides a framework to improve the efficiency, sustainability, and reliability of urban logistics while reducing its environmental and social impacts. Depending on the local context, it may address food and retail distribution, construction logistics, waste flows, freight vehicles, logistics facilities, kerbside management and other freight-generating activities. It also requires strong engagement with private stakeholders, as businesses rather than public authorities operate and finance a large share of logistics activities.

A SULP should therefore be understood primarily as **a means of giving urban freight sufficient strategic and operational attention within the wider planning framework**. It may take the form of a dedicated plan, a thematic component of the SUMP, or a subsequent planning exercise derived from the SUMP.

How to articulate SUMP and SULP?

There is no single model for integrating freight and logistics into urban mobility planning. The appropriate approach depends on the maturity of the planning framework, the scale and complexity of freight issues, institutional capacity and the level of coordination between public and private stakeholders. Three main configurations can be considered:

Separated planning process

A dedicated freight or logistics plan is prepared independently from the SUMP. This may occur when freight is addressed through a sectoral approach at the national level or through an infrastructure-led process. However, it increases the risk of weak coordination with broader mobility, land-use, and public-space objectives and is therefore generally less desirable.

Full integration into the urban mobility planning process

Freight is addressed throughout the SUMP, from diagnosis and stakeholder engagement to scenario development, measure selection, financing and monitoring. Fully integrating logistics into the urban mobility planning process has pros and cons. On the one hand, this ensures strong consistency with the overall mobility strategy; on the other, freight-related issues may receive limited attention within a process that covers a broad range of passenger mobility priorities.

Downstream thematic planning process

The SUMP establishes the overall mobility diagnosis, vision and strategic objectives, after which a dedicated SULP develops freight-specific analysis, stakeholder engagement and measures in greater detail. This approach combines strategic consistency with greater analytical and operational depth.

The choice between the latter two approaches should reflect local institutional and planning conditions. Where urban freight represents a major challenge or requires substantial technical analysis and stakeholder engagement, a dedicated SULP developed within or downstream of the SUMP framework can provide greater depth while maintaining consistency with the wider mobility strategy.

A comparative review of MobiliseYourCity SUMPs shows that most plans address urban logistics and freight, but with significant differences in the level of integration. Twelve cities illustrate these varying levels of integration, ranging from relatively comprehensive strategies to more limited consideration of urban logistics. In Ahmedabad (India), Antofagasta (Chile), Douala (Cameroon) and Trujillo (Peru), freight and logistics are treated as important components of the overall mobility strategy, with relatively developed packages of measures. In Abbottabad (Pakistan), Ambato (Ecuador), Arequipa (Peru), Guadalajara (Mexico), Havana (Cuba), Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), Dire Dawa (Ethiopia), and Dakar (Senegal), urban logistics is also addressed, though less in detail. In other cases, the diagnosis identifies freight-related challenges but translates them only weakly into the SUMP vision and concrete measures. This illustrates a "problem-action disconnect", highlighting the need to integrate urban logistics more consistently throughout the planning process, from diagnosis and strategic vision to measures and implementation.

Case study

Ahmedabad, India
Integrating urban logistics into mobility and land-use planning

Ahmedabad illustrates the importance of treating urban freight as a land-use and planning issue, not only as a traffic-management challenge. Long-term spatial changes, major markets located in dense central areas and the lack of dedicated loading and parking space have contributed to freight conflicts that cannot be resolved through access restrictions alone. The city's SUMP approach links freight flows with land use, street design and logistics infrastructure, while prioritising data collection and institutional coordination before major investments. The case shows how cities can progressively integrate freight into planning frameworks, although the transition from planning to funded implementation remains a key challenge.

See Case Study: Ahmedabad, India – Integrating urban logistics into mobility and land- use planning



Delhi, India
Photo: Dmitry Rukhlenko

A logistics planning cycle aligned with the SUMP approach

Whether freight is fully integrated into a SUMP or addressed through a dedicated SULP, the planning process can follow the same four-phase logic:

01

Preparation and analysis
Establish the institutional and stakeholder framework, define the geographical and thematic scope, collect freight data, and assess existing logistics patterns, infrastructure, regulations, impacts and key challenges.

02

Strategy development
Develop and assess future scenarios, establish a shared vision and objectives with public and private stakeholders, and define indicators and targets.

03

Measure planning
Identify and assess packages of measures, allocate responsibilities, define implementation arrangements, and identify funding and financing requirements.

04

Implementation and monitoring
Implement the selected measures, monitor their effects, adjust actions where necessary, communicate progress and incorporate lessons into subsequent planning cycles.

Figure 1 **SUMP planning cycle**



Planning Cycle for urban freight and logistics

Preparation and analysis

First, establish a governance foundation to support and drive urban logistics initiatives and actions. This will serve as the basis for all subsequent measures.

Set up a dedicated public Urban Logistics Task Force to lead coordination

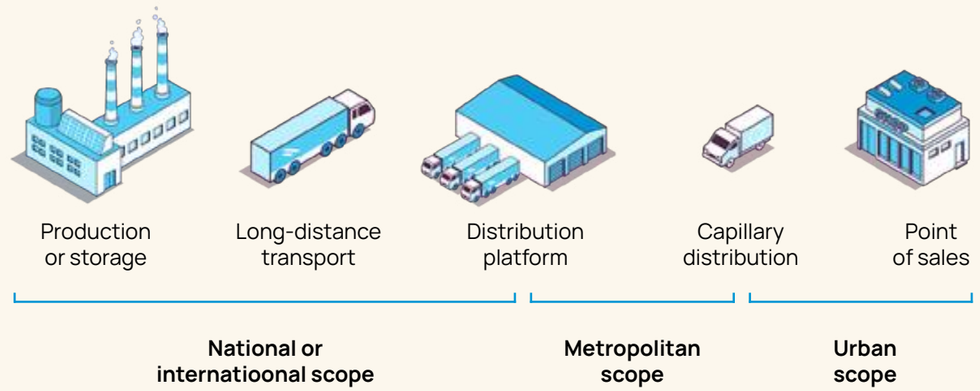
Establish a dedicated public task force for metropolitan and urban logistics with a clear mandate to lead, coordinate, and sustain action over time. This function should sit within (or be formally connected to) the core urban governance system so it can bridge transport, public space management, land-use planning, economic development, enforcement and environment.

The task force should be anchored in a clearly designated public nodal agency with the mandate and capacity to coordinate urban logistics across institutions and territorial levels. Where a metropolitan transport authority (MTA) exists, it can provide a natural institutional home, particularly for metropolitan-scale issues. Because the MTA oversees mobility planning, it should also develop a long-term vision for urban freight. Furthermore, the MTA is well placed to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders at different levels. Otherwise, the municipality, transport department, or urban development authority may host the task force, depending on the local governance structure. In all cases, it should ensure coordination between metropolitan-scale and inner-city logistics management.

In Kochi, India, an Urban Freight Committee integrated into the metropolitan transport authority coordinates cross-institutional efforts on freight-related issues. In Bogotá (Colombia), the Mobility Department, under the deputy directorate responsible for private transport, oversees urban logistics. In São Paulo (Brazil), the Divisão de Transporte de Cargas (DTC), a dedicated freight transport division within the municipal administration, handles freight issues. Johannesburg has established a “Mobility & Freight” function within its transport department, including a dedicated Freight Logistics function.

The task force should coordinate with relevant public authorities, including ministries, public agencies, transport and urban planning departments, and local governments. It should align institutional responsibilities, policy priorities, and implementation efforts across the sectors that influence urban logistics. Its mandate should cover both metropolitan and local scales, ensuring consistency between strategic planning, infrastructure development, regulatory measures and street-level logistics management. It should also coordinate with the Urban Logistics Consultative Forum to ensure public decision-making is informed by operational needs and stakeholder feedback. The Urban Logistics Task Force should operate from the metropolitan scale down to proximity areas, ensuring continuity between strategic planning and street-level delivery conditions.

Figure 2 **Illustration of the territorial scales of a logistics chain**



Source: CAF (2019) Estrategia CAF en Logística Urbana Sostenible y Segura. Caracas: CAF, p45

Core output

A formally mandated **Urban Logistics Task Force** with defined roles and coordination routines, policy objectives and measurable KPIs, supported with adequate staff, budget and operational tools.

Case study

New York City, USA
Setting up a municipal freight unit

New York City strengthened its capacity to address urban freight by establishing a dedicated freight function within the municipal transport administration. The unit supports freight planning, data collection, stakeholder engagement and the development of citywide programmes and pilots. The case illustrates the value of giving freight a clear institutional home within local government, helping move freight policy from isolated measures towards a more coordinated and long-term approach.

See Case Study: New York City, USA – Setting up a municipal freight unit

Establish a public–private Urban Logistics Consultative Forum

Urban logistics involves stakeholders with different priorities and constraints. Cities focus on safety, air quality, public space management and equity, while operators prioritise reliability, cost control, asset use and contractual performance. When these objectives don't align, technically sound measures may face low compliance, weak enforcement, or operational resistance.

- Complementing the public-sector coordination role of the task force, the Urban Logistics Consultative Forum (often called a Freight Forum) should provide a structured platform for dialogue and cooperation with logistics stakeholders. In many Global South cities, where logistics activities are highly fragmented and informal operators play a significant role, the forum should ensure representation of small businesses, independent carriers, market traders, and informal workers, alongside larger logistics companies, shippers, and receivers. The forum should help bridge the gap between public authorities and these diverse actors, identify operational constraints and jointly develop practical solutions adapted to local conditions. The task force should prepare the forum through targeted stakeholder consultations and logistics network mapping. This includes identifying key actors and representative organisations, assessing their interest and engagement, understanding their expectations and constraints, and mapping service provision, main origin–destination flows, logistics nodes, hotspots, and accessibility conditions. The findings should inform the forum's composition and ensure adequate representation of relevant stakeholders.
- Meetings should be held twice a year, with additional sessions when major reforms or pilots are being prepared. Each meeting should be decision-oriented and conclude with clear outputs, such as a prioritised problem list, an agreed sequence of actions, a pilot design with scaling criteria, or a compliance and enforcement pathway with realistic timelines.
- Between meetings, the task force should mobilise thematic working groups to develop practical measures, define implementation steps, agree monitoring arrangements and clarify stakeholder roles. These groups can support public–private collaboration on issues such as data sharing, kerb management, consolidation sites, charging access and operating conditions. A dedicated working group should also address gender and inclusion challenges throughout the process..

Several levers can support negotiation between public authorities and private operators:

- Public authorities can act through access regulations, kerbside allocation, delivery windows, pricing, incentives and infrastructure provision;
- Private operators can contribute through data sharing, operational adjustments, fleet investment, consolidation and compliance commitments.

These levers can be combined to balance public objectives with operational efficiency.

Freight forums should include stakeholders located along strategic freight corridors connecting major logistics gateways, as well as representatives of informal logistics operators.

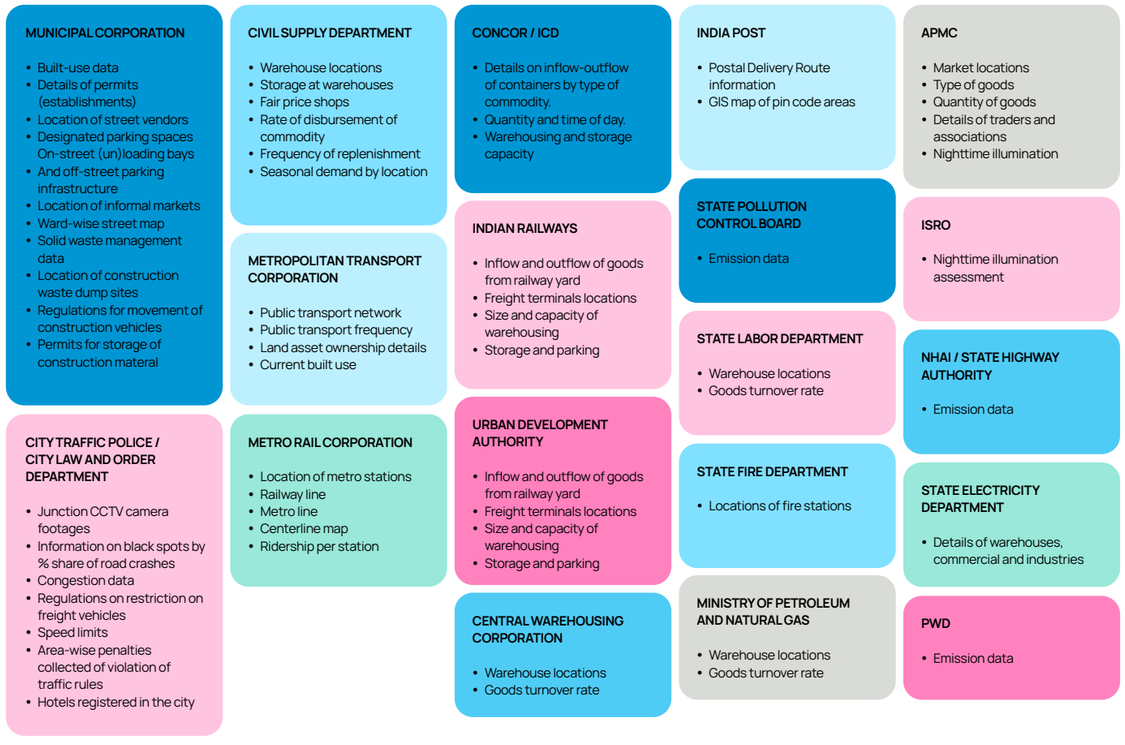
Core output

A functioning **consultative forum** convened at least twice a year, with documented decisions and active working groups delivering implementable action notes.

Building the freight data baseline

Reliable freight data is essential, but urban freight remains difficult to observe. Data are often fragmented across institutions and private operators, while informal logistics, own-account transport and small-scale deliveries may remain largely undocumented. The first step should be to establish a baseline by reviewing and consolidating existing information before launching additional data collection. This should cover transport and traffic data (all types of vehicles), economic activity, environmental indicators, road and logistics infrastructure, commercial flows and sector-specific information.

Figure 3 **Data sources from various government agencies, example from India (Guidelines for preparing city logistics plan for Indian Cities, GIZ 2024)**



Where important gaps remain, complementary data collection can combine two perspectives:

A top-down approach

A top-down approach can analyse freight movements at network or area level, for example through cordon surveys, roadside interviews, vehicle observations or licence-plate surveys around major freight-generating areas. This helps distinguish through-traffic from vehicles serving the area and identify major freight corridors and traffic patterns. However, such methods may underrepresent urban streets and logistics performed by light vehicles, motorcycles or other informal modes.

A bottom-up approach

A bottom-up approach should therefore complement network-level observations by engaging directly with freight generators and operators. Surveys and interviews with retailers, wholesale and informal markets, logistics companies, independent carriers, manufacturers and distributors (shippers), shops and restaurants (receivers), and e-commerce platforms can provide information on delivery volumes, trip frequencies, routes, operating constraints and supply-chain organisation. This is particularly important for documenting informal logistics and own-account freight that may not appear in administrative or digital datasets. To capture the diversity of urban logistics activities and limit representativeness biases, sampling should cover different operator types, sectors, and geographic areas.

Core output

A consolidated urban freight data baseline combining existing datasets with targeted top-down and bottom-up data collection to capture freight flows, key logistics activities and major information gaps, including informal and own-account transport.

Case study

Medellín, Colombia
Urban freight data collection

The Medellín Metropolitan Area developed a multi-source freight data collection framework combining roadside surveys, establishment surveys and interviews with freight operators. Conducted at metropolitan scale, the approach captured both commodity flows and the vehicle movements they generate, providing a more complete picture than conventional traffic counts alone. The case shows the value of combining complementary data sources, working beyond municipal boundaries and linking data collection directly to planning needs such as loading management, access regulation, freight modelling and emissions assessment.

See Case Study: Medellín, Colombia: Urban freight data collection

Establishing pragmatic data-sharing and monitoring frameworks

Once cities establish an initial baseline, they should progressively develop mechanisms for regular data sharing and freight monitoring. The digitalisation of urban logistics creates opportunities to build a more complete and dynamic understanding of freight activity through three complementary sources:

Data generated

Data generated by publicly managed systems, such as parking and access control systems, automatic number plate recognition cameras, tolling systems and kerbside management tools;

Data acquired

Data acquired from commercial providers, including floating car data, GPS traces and telematics datasets;

Data or indicators shared

Data or indicators shared by private operators, including logistics providers, e-commerce companies and digital delivery platforms, such as delivery volumes, locations and frequencies.

Combined with traditional surveys, these sources can provide more regular insights into vehicle movements, delivery patterns, fleet characteristics, and public space use, helping public authorities move from occasional diagnostic exercises to continuous freight monitoring.

However, multiplying data sources does not automatically produce better knowledge. Data remains fragmented, unevenly accessible and often biased towards formal and digitised operators. To support planning and regulation, they need to be organised through clear methodologies, shared definitions, governance rules, interoperability standards, and data-sharing frameworks. These frameworks should clarify what data is needed, who provides it, under what conditions, how it is financed for collection and maintenance, and how it can be transformed into simple, regular, actionable indicators. Informal logistics, own-account transport and small independent operators may therefore be underrepresented or absent from digital datasets. Data frameworks should explicitly identify these coverage gaps and, where possible, include informal activities, depending on available information and the feasibility of collection.

These arrangements should ultimately translate heterogeneous datasets into a limited set of regular, actionable indicators for planning, regulation, and evaluation. They should also retain periodic surveys and targeted fieldwork to avoid excluding informal operators and other poorly digitised segments of the logistics system.

Local universities and research teams can play an important role in this process. As methodological anchors, they can support survey design, data interpretation, and documenting poorly visible segments, including informal logistics and own-account freight. Partnerships between public authorities, operators, and researchers can also strengthen trust, improve data quality, and turn fragmented information into a practical evidence base for urban logistics planning.

Core output

Data-sharing and methodological frameworks enabling public authorities to monitor urban logistics activity more comprehensively.

Example

Changsha, China
Linking data sharing to public incentives

Changsha developed a municipal monitoring platform for selected pilot urban logistics operators, requiring participating companies to register vehicles, drivers and operational assets and to transmit fleet and activity data to the local authority. Entry into the programme was relatively open, while continued participation was subject to regular performance assessments under an "open access, strict exit" approach: operators could lose their pilot status if they no longer met programme requirements.

In return, participating operators could access public support including subsidies for low-emission vehicles and logistics facilities, priority treatment for certain circulation permits, and recognition through the municipal performance-rating system. The city also introduced wider measures such as more flexible access rules for eligible electric delivery vehicles, preferential parking tariffs, dedicated loading and unloading spaces, and charging infrastructure. Several of these benefits, however, were not restricted to pilot companies and were available more broadly to qualifying freight operators.

The data allows the municipality to monitor fleet use, assess operator performance and verify that publicly supported vehicles and infrastructure are effectively used. The case illustrates how data sharing can be encouraged through a reciprocal model, where greater operational transparency is linked to access to incentives and regulatory facilitation rather than imposed through a universal licensing requirement.

Build a robust diagnosis that links flows, places and constraints

The diagnosis should treat urban logistics as a whole system, covering the full chain from gateways and storage to distribution, last-mile operations and reception conditions, and the interactions between formal and informal arrangements. It should also identify stakeholders and representation structures, building on the stakeholder identification and engagement process set out in the previous recommendation (consultative forum and working groups).

At minimum, the diagnosis should combine:

01 Mapping of logistics-intensive generators and receivers (markets, retail clusters, hospitals, industrial areas, warehousing clusters);

02 Characterisation of the main types and volumes of goods transported, with particular attention to food distribution and other essential supply chains ;

03 Identification of critical nodes and interfaces (gateways, terminals, consolidation points);

04 A basic flow picture (key Origins-Destinations pairs, peak periods, dominant vehicle types);

05 An assessment of binding constraints (curb space conflicts, access bottlenecks, safety hotspots, enforcement gaps).

Where data allows, freight-related emissions should also be assessed to understand the environmental impacts of urban logistics better and identify decarbonisation priorities (see Section 4.3.4).

Core output

A robust diagnosis providing the evidence base for urban logistics planning.

Strategy development

Agree on a shared vision

Start strategy development by establishing a common long-term vision for urban logistics. Public authorities, logistics operators, shippers and receivers, business representatives and other relevant stakeholders should agree on the type of logistics system the city wants to achieve and on the main objectives underpinning this vision.

The process should reconcile potentially competing priorities, such as logistics efficiency and affordability, economic development, accessibility, road safety, public-space management, decarbonisation, and freight workers' working conditions and health. The vision should also be consistent with wider mobility, land-use, economic development and climate objectives (as described below), and progressively translated into a limited set of measurable objectives and targets.

The following strategic considerations should inform the development of this vision and its translation into planning priorities and measures. Adapt them to local logistics needs, land-use pressures, and institutional capacities. Safeguard and plan for logistics space across planning scales. Urban logistics requires physical space, from warehouses and logistics parks to proximity facilities. However, these spaces often compete with higher-value uses. This displaces them to more peripheral areas, increasing delivery distances to the city centre and generating negative externalities such as more km travelled, higher fuel prices, GHG emissions, and ultimately higher delivery prices borne by consumers.

Cities should therefore safeguard and programme logistics space as a strategic urban resource, while balancing it with other land-use functions. The objective is not to maximise logistics land, but to locate and design logistics activities where they provide operational benefits without creating disproportionate impacts on surrounding residential, commercial or public-space uses. Master planning should therefore balance proximity to delivery destinations with potential spillovers such as noise, traffic, emissions and land-use conflicts.

Secure logistics space or land at three complementary planning levels:

At the regional level

Development master plans should identify and protect strategic logistics areas (business parks, logistics parks, economic activity zones) and guide investment decisions that structure regional distribution and gateway access.

At the metropolitan level

Metropolitan mobility and land-use planning should steer the spatial organisation of logistics facilities across jurisdictions and counter "logistics sprawl", so that warehouse location outcomes are not driven solely by fragmented municipal decisions. Cities like London have developed industrial land policies for this purpose as part of the wider London Plan Guidance, updated every 5 years, which gives local authorities in the Greater London area clear, actionable mandates for industrial land management and coordination.

At the local urban level

Zoning ordinances can help translate this guidance into enforceable rules for logistics sites. For example, this can be done by systematically requiring off-street loading capacity in developments where delivery activity is structurally significant. Safeguarding logistics land should prioritise developing consolidation sites that can act as urban consolidation centres (UCCs), distribution centres, or shared transhipment facilities, helping reduce last-mile distances and improve load factors.

Mobilise public assets and procurement to unlock space. Cities should complement regulation with an active land and asset strategy, using tenders, concessions or temporary occupancy agreements to make public or semi-public spaces available for logistics uses. This can include repurposing underused assets such as petrol stations, vacant sites, or parking facilities, as well as mixed-use arrangements that integrate logistics functions into existing commercial premises. In the UK, for example, some high street shops combine retail functions with parcel storage or collection activities, showing how logistics uses can fit within the existing urban fabric where dedicated space is limited.

Core output

A safeguarded logistics land programme (mapped priority sites + zoning/development tools) enabling consolidation functions (e.g., UCCs) and proximity logistics.



Paris
Photo: Shai Pl, Unsplash

Case study

Paris, France
Integrating logistics land use into municipal zoning

Paris has used its local land-use plan to preserve existing logistics sites and facilitate the development of new urban logistics facilities. Specific plots were identified for logistics functions, recognising freight facilities as essential urban infrastructure rather than residual land uses. The case demonstrates how planning regulation can address the progressive displacement of logistics activities from dense urban areas and secure space for more efficient last-mile distribution.

See Case Study: Paris, France – Integrating logistics land use into municipal zoning

Integrate corridor-based urban logistics planning

City authorities should address gateway logistics as both a critical network function and a territorial planning issue. Cities need to maintain reliable freight access to strategic nodes while ensuring that gateway-related flows are reflected in urban mobility planning, land-use management and local economic development.

For cities where major gateways or regional corridors strongly structure freight movements, urban logistics planning should adopt a corridor-based perspective. Municipalities should identify, map and actively manage the main corridors connecting ports/airports, logistics zones, wholesale markets and urban distribution areas. These corridors should be treated as urban logistics systems, not only as national transport links. The relevance of this approach will vary by context. In some African cities, major international corridors are clearly identifiable. In other regions, freight flows may spread across several gateways and routes rather than concentrate along a single corridor.

Cities should not be expected to plan these corridors in isolation. Where freight routes extend beyond municipal or national boundaries, urban authorities should coordinate with metropolitan, national and, where relevant, regional or transnational corridor institutions. Corridor management bodies can provide information on freight flows, infrastructure investment and regional bottlenecks, while cities contribute knowledge on local access conditions, congestion, public-space constraints and last-mile distribution.

This corridor lens can help align routing, curb and loading management, access regimes, delivery time windows, traffic enforcement and safety interventions in bottleneck areas. It also provides a practical basis for coordinating freight efficiency with urban liveability objectives.

Plan for resilient urban freight systems

In many Global South cities, urban supply chains depend on interconnected ports, borders, corridors, wholesale markets and last-mile networks. This interdependence improves efficiency in normal conditions, but increases exposure to shocks. The risk is particularly high where cities rely on a limited number of gateways, corridors or cross-border interfaces. Disruptions at these points can quickly affect transport costs, delivery schedules, stock availability and consumer prices, especially for essential flows such as food, fuel and medical goods (SLOCAT, 2024).

Cities should therefore plan urban freight with these wider interdependencies in mind. Urban logistics plans should identify the critical interfaces between the city and external supply systems, assess their exposure to climate, geopolitical and operational shocks, and map the goods and areas most vulnerable to disruption. This analysis should be undertaken in coordination with ports, border authorities, transport agencies, infrastructure operators and private supply-chain actors.

Morocco's mobility roadmap illustrates this approach by treating transport infrastructure as a system that must adapt to flooding and other risks, rather than planning only for normal operating conditions (Ministère de l'équipement, du Transport, de la Logistique et de l'Eau et al., 2018).

Core output

Critical risks and an urban logistics contingency plan to anticipate disruptions and ensure the continuity of essential flows during crises.

Case study

Lomé, Togo
Investing in freight infrastructure in a gateway city

Lomé illustrates the freight challenges faced by rapidly growing gateway cities, where international transit flows interact directly with urban mobility. Investments around the port, inland logistics facilities and strategic transport connections aim to increase logistics capacity while reducing congestion generated by heavy freight movements. The case shows the importance of planning port and corridor infrastructure together with the metropolitan transport system, particularly where a city serves both local demand and regional hinterlands.

See Case Study: Lomé, Togo – Investing in freight infrastructure in a gateway city

Translate shared vision into scenarios

Once the vision is agreed, develop alternative scenarios to explore different pathways to achieve it. Scenarios are not meant to predict a single future, but to make strategic choices explicit and let stakeholders compare their implications. A business-as-usual scenario should first establish what is likely to happen without significant additional intervention. You can then compare this with alternative scenarios based on different assumptions about freight demand, economic and population growth, vehicle fleets, technological change, infrastructure development, and regulatory conditions, or that reflect different strategic concepts, levels of ambition, and degrees of implementation.

Scenarios may, for example, compare the impacts of access restrictions, delivery time windows, logistics facility locations or fleet electrification. Pay particular attention to interactions with passenger mobility, including competition for road and kerbside space, congestion, safety, and accessibility.

The scenarios should then be assessed against a common set of criteria, including logistics performance, congestion and public-space impacts, emissions, safety, accessibility of essential goods, investment and operating costs, institutional feasibility and implementation capacity. Stakeholders should discuss the comparison to identify trade-offs and agree on a preferred strategic scenario, which then provides the basis for setting targets, selecting measures, and developing integrated action packages. This maintains continuity between stakeholder engagement, strategic choices and implementation rather than treating scenario building as a purely technical exercise.

Ahmedabad (India) provides an example of how urban freight can be incorporated into broader SUMP scenario development. The study assessed four alternative scenarios against a business-as-usual projection, combining different road network, public transport, and land-use strategies with a common package of measures covering freight, parking, traffic management, and electrification. While freight measures were not assessed as separate alternatives, the approach illustrates how urban logistics can be considered alongside passenger mobility in strategic scenario development.

Set measurable targets and indicators

Urban logistics strategies should translate their objectives into a limited set of measurable targets and indicators.

Targets should be SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound - and indicators should directly reflect the intended outcomes while relying on data that can be collected consistently over time. Relevant benchmarks, historical trends and modelling can support realistic target-setting, while stakeholder consultation helps ensure that targets are operationally feasible and consistent with existing policies and responsibilities.

Indicators should cover the main dimensions of urban logistics performance, such as vehicle-kilometres, travel and loading times, logistics costs, load factors, emissions, clean vehicle uptake, road safety (including delivery drivers' road accidents), availability of logistics space and stakeholder participation. Define baseline and target values from the outset so progress can be monitored and measures adjusted as needed.

S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Achievable
R	Relevant
T	Time-bound

Table 1 **List of indicators recommended in "Guidelines for preparing city logistics plan for Indian Cities" GIZ 2024**

Key Targets	KPIs
Reduce vehicle/km	• Vehicle empty running • Fuel efficiency • Emissions/tonne-km
Reduce time taken	• Turn-around time • Time taken for (un)loading activities • Manoeuvring time to find empty parking / (un)loading area
Reduce overall cost	• Cost of (un)loading goods • Operational cost of storage
Collaboration	• Regular interactions and feedback from FPCs
Improving efficiency	• Load factor • Traffic flow and speed of vehicles • Transparent traffic management • Technology enabled freight nodes • Optimum storage utilisation
Regulatory mechanisms	• Reservation of land for freight activities in master plans/ development plans • Availability and frequency of Public Transport around freight nodes identified • Availability of spaces for Pickup- Dropoff (PUDO) services
Improving sustainability	• CO2 emissions caused by freight vehicles • Cases of overloading of LGVs • Adoption of cleaner vehicles and technologies Use of sustainable modes for last-mile delivery • Average age of freight vehicles on road • Average volume of solid waste collected from city markets (from commodity spoilage / packaging)
Improving safety	• Cases of freight vehicle involved road crash • Share of usable pedestrian infrastructure in freight nodes of the city • Share of women in the labour force

Develop an action plan

Define and prioritise measures

Developing an effective package of measures is essential to achieve the objectives and targets set out in the urban logistics strategy. Identify measures in consultation with key stakeholders, and assess them transparently for expected effectiveness, feasibility, acceptability, and value for money. Experience from other cities can also help identify proven solutions and avoid repeating approaches that have underperformed elsewhere.

Once measures have been selected, they should be translated into concrete and implementable actions. **For each action, the plan should specify what needs to be done, where and when it should be implemented, which institution or stakeholder is responsible, the expected implementation timeframe, and the required resources.** A strategic document can deliver results only if it clearly defines responsibilities, financing arrangements, and staffing needs. Identifying sustainable funding sources is therefore essential to support action plans over time and ensure that implementation responsibilities are matched with adequate financial and human resources.

Urban logistics measures can combine several types of intervention:

Infrastructure — Develop or adapt logistics facilities and physical assets, including consolidation centres, loading and unloading areas, pick-up points, charging infrastructure and dedicated signage.

Policy and regulation — Define access and operating conditions through delivery windows, dedicated routes, restricted areas, vehicle requirements and loading rules.

Logistics Decarbonisation — Support the transition towards cleaner vehicle fleets, optimise freight flows through operational and digital solutions (including dispatching, routing, tracking and delivery management), and develop data collection and monitoring systems to assess freight-related emissions.

Human resources — Strengthen public authorities' capacity to understand, plan and regulate urban logistics, while supporting logistics companies and workers in developing operational, managerial and digital skills, including the use of basic optimisation and payment tools. Improve working conditions, occupational safety and inclusive employment through targeted training and progressive labour standards.

Combine measures where appropriate into integrated packages, rather than implementing them in isolation, and sequence them across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons. This helps maximise synergies, improve implementation feasibility, and ensure that individual actions contribute to a coherent, adequately resourced logistics strategy.

Section 4 presents concrete implementation measures in "How to implement an urban logistics policy?"

Figure 4 **Possible solutions suitable for different local needs**

Infrastructure
- UCC - Urban Consolidation Centers
- Amenities and circulation at markets
- Develop micro-hubs
- Spaces with time restrictions
- Reserved lanes
- 3rd party warehouses

Planning
- Limited Traffic Zone
- Low Emission Zone
- Off-street Parking facilities
- Night Deliveries (Restrictions)
- Limited access based on vehicle size/fuel

Mode of transport
- Low Emission Vehicles (LPG, CNG)
- Zero Emission Vehicles (FEV)
- Electric trolleys
- Cargo bikes (last-mile delivery)
- AVM machines for fleet monitoring

Policy and regulations
- 100% public owned companies
- PPP Cooperation
- Promote Logistics
- Service Aggregators
- Permissions for warehouse operations timings

Technology
- Automated access control system
- Road pricing
- ITS Logistics Platform
- Info-Mobility Systems
- Parking Management Systems
- Integrated data platform

Source: Prepared from literature review of proposals done by The Urban Lab for Bengaluru CLP.

Figure 5 **Compilation of measures found in MobiliseYourCity SUMPs regarding urban logistics and freight (source: MobiliseYourCity, 2025)**

	Regulation & Management	Logistics Infrastructure	Urban Planning Integration	Governance, Knowledge & Capacity Building	Environmental Impacts
Objectives	• Reduce informality • Increase efficiency • Decrease congestion and environmental externalities	• Create and modernise infrastructure to facilitate logistics flows and (last mile) distribution	• Integrate logistics into urban and transport planning for a holistic and sustainable approach	• Integrate logistics into urban and transport planning for a holistic and sustainable approach	• Reduce noise and air pollution • Increase road safety • Avoid conflict between passenger transport and logistics
Measures	• Implementing time and space regulations for deliveries (loading zones) • Restricting heavy vehicle use on certain road classes • Introducing freight routes and plans • Ensuring compliance with regulations • Formalising the logistics system	• Create logistics hubs (large centres on the periphery, last-mile distribution centres in city centre) • Establish loading Zones • Adapt urban streets • Update infrastructure	• Weave logistics considerations into urban and land use planning • Establish integrated mobility strategies taking logistics into account • Link logistics with urban development projects	• Create a governance system • Stakeholder consultations • Knowledge building (Monitoring, evaluation, data collection) • Capacity building (trainings for drivers, city administration, other stakeholders)	• Decarbonisation and electrification of logistics vehicles • Increase efficiency of logistics system (regulation and infrastructure) • Last-mile solutions

A comparative review of urban logistics measures in MobiliseYourCity Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) assesses how cities address freight and identifies the most common and least developed intervention areas.

Regulatory measures are the most widely represented approaches to urban logistics. Time- and space-based delivery regulations are the most common intervention, appearing in SUMPs, alongside freight route planning, restrictions on heavy vehicles, enforcement measures and, in some cases, actions to formalise freight operations.

Infrastructure measures are also prominent, including logistics hubs and peripheral platforms, loading areas, truck parking facilities and adaptations to streets and freight corridors.

By contrast, **the integration of logistics into broader urban and land-use planning remains less developed**, although cities such as Ahmedabad provide more comprehensive examples.

Governance, stakeholder coordination, data collection and capacity building are addressed in some SUMPs but are **not yet systematic.**

Environmental measures are particularly underrepresented: while noise, air pollution and other environmental impacts are widely identified in diagnostics, most plans address them only indirectly through greater logistics efficiency and reduced congestion. Only a few cities include explicit measures for freight decarbonisation or vehicle electrification, including Ambato, La Habana, and Ahmedabad, while dedicated last-mile solutions remain limited.

Implementation and monitoring

The key challenge of any action plan lies in its implementation.

Capitalising on planning phase

The planning process should be used to build lasting governance and monitoring arrangements, not only to prepare a strategic document. Therefore, maintain and formalise structures established during the SUMP or SULP process to support implementation over time. This includes institutionalising the Urban Logistics Task Force as the permanent public coordination body and the Urban Logistics Consultative Forum as a regular interface with private, informal and other relevant stakeholders.

The same principle applies to data. Baseline surveys, stakeholder data contributions and data-sharing arrangements developed during planning should progressively become part of a routine freight monitoring system, with clear responsibilities, protocols and resources for regular updates. Capitalising on these structures helps maintain institutional knowledge, sustain stakeholder engagement, and ensure continuity across planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Implementation

Effective implementation requires clear institutional responsibilities, adequate financing, dedicated human resources and sustained cooperation with logistics stakeholders. The Urban Logistics Task Force should oversee implementation across public authorities, coordinate related infrastructure and regulatory measures, and ensure that the institutions responsible for each action have the necessary resources and mandate.

Particular attention should be given to securing funding and preparing priority measures for implementation. This may involve developing detailed project designs, mobilising public budgets or external financing, and establishing appropriate procurement, contractual or partnership arrangements. Because private businesses operate many logistics activities, implementation also depends on their participation and commitment, particularly for measures involving operational changes, fleet investment, data sharing, or compliance with new regulations.

Measures should be implemented in a coordinated manner. Infrastructure investments, including those supported by development partners, should be accompanied by the regulatory, operational, and capacity-building measures needed to ensure effective use and long-term sustainability.

Case study

Kigali, Rwanda
Building a Logistics Gateway through Progressive and Coordinated Infrastructure Development

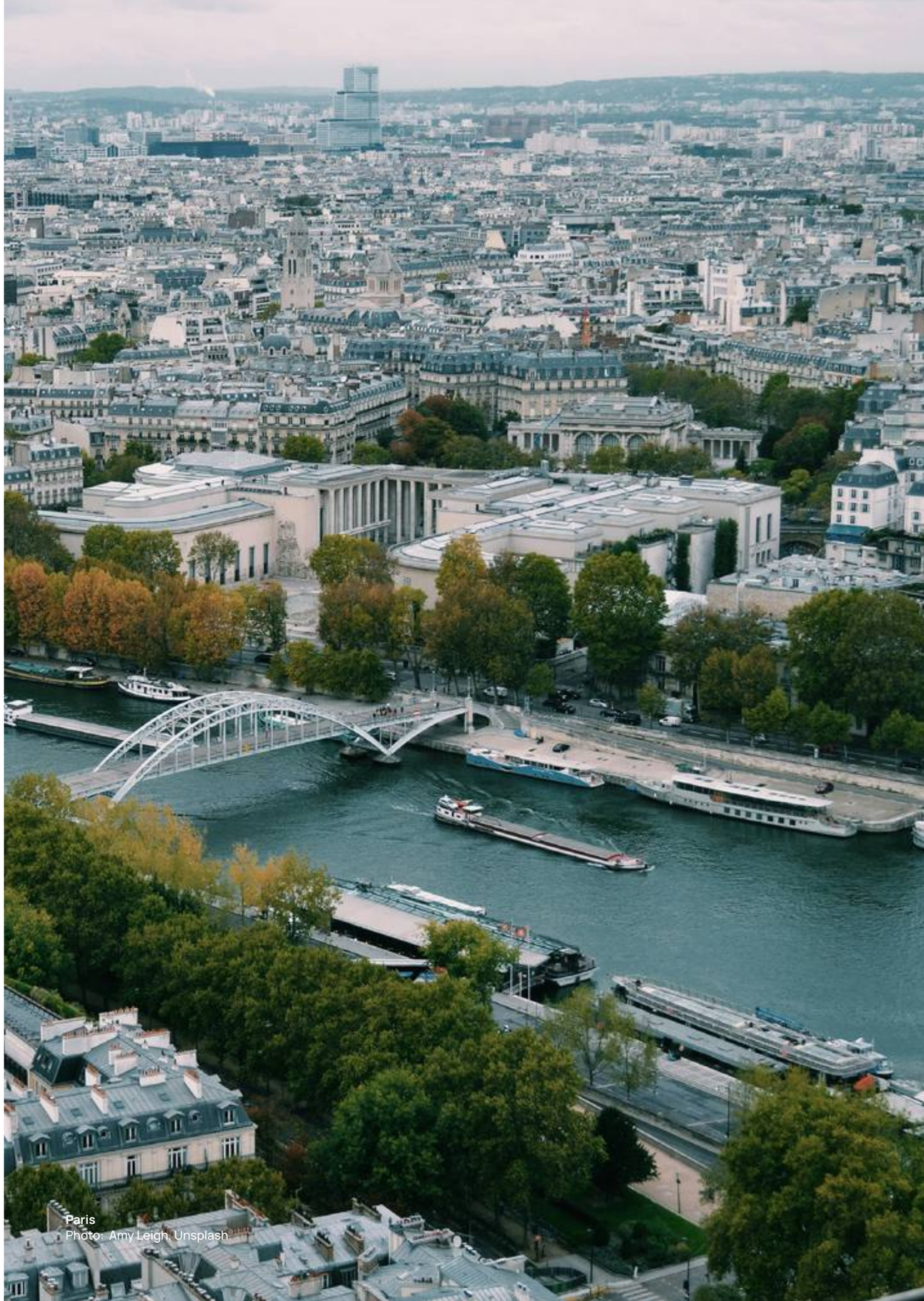
Rwanda aim to develop Kigali as a regional logistics gateway to overcome the constraints of its landlocked location and improve access to international trade corridors. This strategy combines national transport planning, infrastructure investment and public-private cooperation. A key milestone was the development of the Kigali Logistics Platform, inaugurated in 2019.The platform has contributed to reducing truck turnaround times from 10–14 days to approximately three days, according to its operator.

See Case Study: Kigali, Rwanda – Building a Logistics Gateway through Progressive and Coordinated Infrastructure Development

Monitor and adapt

Implementation progress and outcomes should be closely monitored. Calculate monitoring indicators annually, compare them with the defined targets, and analyse the results. Results should be communicated to the relevant stakeholders, and the action plan adjusted and updated accordingly.

Implementation rarely follows the initial timetable exactly. The Urban Logistics Task Force should therefore regularly review progress, identify delays and operational constraints, and adjust the sequencing, responsibilities and resources of planned measures where necessary. Particular attention should be given to maintaining consistency between interdependent actions, especially infrastructure projects and their accompanying regulatory or operational measures. The SUMP or SULP action plan should therefore remain a flexible implementation framework, updated in response to progress, practical constraints, new investment opportunities and changes in the local context. Periodic reviews should assess whether the implementation strategy remains aligned with the agreed vision and objectives and, where necessary, lead to adjustments to the action plan.



Paris
Photo: Amy Leigh, Unsplash

How to implement an urban logistics policy?



Sao Paulo
Photo: Vinicius Low, Unsplash

Infrastructure development

Strengthen road infrastructure through enhanced maintenance and connectivity

In many Global South cities, poor road maintenance, inadequate drainage, vehicle overloading, and limited technical capacity constrain urban logistics performance. Roads serving markets, ports, industrial areas and peri-urban supply corridors may deteriorate faster than they can be rehabilitated, increasing vehicle wear, transport costs and travel-time variability. Seasonal damage can also disrupt access to essential goods and markets (Ngezahayo, Burrow and Ghataora, 2019; Thusi and Mlambo, 2023).

Cities should therefore identify and prioritise a freight-critical network connecting major generators and destinations, including ports, wholesale markets, industrial areas, logistics hubs and peri-urban production zones. A freight circulation plan should complement this network by defining preferred freight routes, access conditions and connections between key logistics nodes. The objective is not only to target investment toward the roads most critical for freight, but also to ensure freight vehicles are effectively channelled onto the infrastructure designed to accommodate them.

Maintenance programmes should focus on these routes and their main operational bottlenecks, rather than relying only on general road classifications. **Priorities should include preventive pavement maintenance, drainage, bridge and junction improvements, safe turning space, and reliable all-weather access.** Where resources are constrained, targeted improvements to critical links and recurring bottlenecks may deliver greater benefits than extensive road expansion. Freight-flow data, road-condition assessments, and climate-risk mapping can be combined to identify the interventions that most improve network reliability.

Maintenance should also be supported by measures that protect road assets. These may include axle-load monitoring, proportionate enforcement against overloading, clearer responsibilities between road agencies and municipalities, dedicated maintenance budgets and performance-based maintenance arrangements. Coordination is especially important where freight routes cross multiple administrative jurisdictions or where port and industrial traffic puts concentrated pressure on the urban network.

Core output

A Road Investment Plan establishing clear priorities for road maintenance interventions and the enhancement of network connectivity.

Develop multimodal freight infrastructure and intermodal connectivity

Road investment should form part of a wider multimodal strategy. While railways, inland waterways, and coastal shipping primarily serve regional and interurban freight flows, they can help reduce heavy goods traffic on major roads connecting cities to ports, production areas, and logistics gateways. Where these alternatives are available, cities, regional authorities and port operators can work together to shift suitable high-volume flows away from congested regional corridors and urban access roads. This requires relevant traffic plans, reliable intermodal terminals, adequate handling equipment, land for logistics activities and efficient road connections for the first and last legs. Modal shift is most viable for consolidated, regular and sufficiently large freight flows; road transport will remain necessary for local distribution and should therefore be integrated rather than treated as a mode to be eliminated.

At the urban scale, the objective should therefore be to improve both network condition and network organisation. Cities should maintain reliable access for essential freight movements, remove critical bottlenecks, and, where conditions allow, develop multimodal alternatives that reduce heavy traffic concentration on a limited number of urban corridors.

Example

HAROPA PORT
Paris, France

HAROPA PORT illustrates this integrated approach along the Seine corridor (Paris Region). Its strategy combines the modernisation of rail and river access, the development of multimodal platforms close to major markets, cooperation with national and local public authorities, and commercial incentives to increase the use of rail and inland waterways. Planned port platforms are intended to transfer part of the freight volume from roads to mass transport modes, while maintaining road connections for onward distribution. The example shows that reducing pressure on urban roads requires coordination across infrastructure, land use, service provision and institutional responsibilities, rather than investment in a single mode (HAROPA PORT, 2026).

Design delivery space

Cities should reserve loading and unloading areas where delivery demand is consistently high, such as commercial streets, markets, and mixed-use districts. Design these spaces to limit misuse and ensure rapid turnover. Their layout should clearly signal their intended function and discourage long-stay or non-delivery parking. Their location and capacity should reflect actual freight activity rather than general parking supply. Cities can use land-use information, observations of delivery activity, vehicle types and dwell times, and an inventory of existing public and private loading facilities to identify areas where insufficient provision contributes to double parking, circulation while searching for space, or obstruction of sidewalks and traffic lanes.

New developments should also plan delivery space, rather than relying only on the public realm. In rapidly growing cities, new shopping centres, markets, mixed-use developments, office complexes and other major freight generators should incorporate their servicing needs from the design and planning approval stages. Depending on the development's scale and function, requirements may include off-street loading and unloading areas, appropriate vehicle access and manoeuvring space, service yards, internal goods-handling areas, and safe separation between freight operations and pedestrian movements. This is particularly relevant in Global South cities experiencing rapid urban development, where incorporating such requirements into planning regulations and building permits can help avoid future constraints. Providing adequate servicing space at the design stage is generally easier and less costly than retrofitting it once development is complete. It can also reduce pressure on kerb space and avoid situations where large developments rely on streets and sidewalks for routine servicing. The French planning framework offers a useful precedent: local planning regulations can require delivery areas based on a development's logistics needs, and Paris applies these requirements to several types of new buildings, including commercial developments.

Design and manage loading areas to support safe operations and rapid turnover. Their dimensions should accommodate the vehicles commonly used in the area and provide enough space for loading and unloading without conflicting with pedestrians, cyclists, or general traffic. Clear road markings and signage should identify their function, while operating hours, maximum dwell times and eligibility rules can be adapted to local delivery patterns. Effective enforcement is important to prevent long-stay parking and use by non-delivery vehicles. Where institutional and digital capacity allows, occupancy monitoring, booking systems or digitally managed loading zones can support more flexible use of scarce kerb space and provide data for subsequent adjustments.

Implementation can start with targeted pilots in streets or districts where delivery conflicts are most acute. In cities with limited resources, relatively simple measures—including mapping delivery activity, reallocating existing kerb space, providing clear markings and introducing proportionate enforcement—can be tested before investing in more complex systems. Where delivery volumes are sufficiently concentrated, logistics providers may also develop nearby micro-hubs or consolidation points, allowing goods to be transferred from larger vehicles to cargo bikes, small utility vehicles or walking deliveries. Cities can support these initiatives by identifying suitable locations, adapting land-use regulations, and providing access to available public assets where appropriate. Logistics providers should remain primarily responsible for operational arrangements and financial viability. Such facilities should therefore complement, rather than replace, well-designed loading and unloading areas.

Core output

Dedicated infrastructure enabling reliable deliveries

Case study

Barcelona, Spain
Innovative curb management for loading and unloading

Barcelona introduced dedicated loading and unloading spaces supported by digital management tools. Professional drivers validate their use of designated freight spaces through an application, while time limits encourage turnover and help the city monitor how curb space is used. The case shows how relatively simple digital tools can improve the management of scarce street space, strengthen enforcement and generate useful data for future freight planning.

See Case Study: Barcelona, Spain – Innovative curb management for loading and unloading

Develop dedicated infrastructure for small transport modes

Street design and access rules should actively facilitate space-efficient delivery modes, such as cargo bikes, electric mopeds and motorcycles, and small utility vehicles (electric rickshaws, kei trucks, etc.), which are often better suited to short-distance or last-mile deliveries in dense areas. In many Global South cities, where motorcycles are widely used for urban deliveries, electrification offers opportunities to reduce local air pollution, noise and operating costs compared with conventional motorised two-wheelers. However, road safety, charging access and battery management remain important considerations. Effective deployment depends not only on the availability of suitable vehicles, but also on infrastructure and operating conditions that let them circulate, stop, and load safely and efficiently.

Cities should progressively develop a connected network of routes suitable for light freight vehicles. Depending on local conditions, this can include sufficiently wide, continuous cycle lanes; safe junction treatments; low-speed streets; and access through areas where larger freight vehicles are restricted. Infrastructure design should account for cargo bikes' greater width, length, and turning requirements compared with conventional bicycles. In cities where resources or street space are constrained, improvements can be introduced incrementally, prioritising corridors connecting logistics facilities, commercial areas and major delivery destinations.

Dedicated stopping and loading space is equally important. Cargo bikes and small utility vehicles need conveniently located areas where operators can park, load, and unload without obstructing sidewalks, cycle infrastructure, or general traffic. These spaces can be smaller than conventional loading bays but should be clearly identified and protected from other uses. Where delivery volumes justify it, they can also connect to micro-hubs or consolidation facilities, where goods are transferred from larger vehicles to smaller modes for the final delivery leg.

Infrastructure measures should be combined with appropriate access rules. For example, cities can allow small, low-emission freight vehicles to access pedestrianised areas, restricted streets, or low-emission zones under conditions that protect pedestrian safety. The objective is to create a coherent operating environment in which smaller vehicles benefit from their reduced spatial footprint while remaining integrated into wider urban logistics networks.

Regulation

Urban freight regulation is often implemented through traffic, parking, and public-space rules. Its main purpose is to manage where, when, and how freight vehicles operate to reduce congestion, safety risks, and nuisance while improving the use of scarce road and curb space.

Access and circulation rules

Access and circulation rules regulate freight vehicle movement across the urban network. They define which vehicles may enter specific areas, which routes they should use, and when deliveries are allowed. These measures are among the simplest and most cost-effective interventions cities can implement to improve freight traffic management and urban logistics efficiency, provided they are supported by appropriate enforcement.

Typical measures include designated freight routes, delivery time windows, and area-based restrictions for heavy-duty trucks in city centres. Low Emission Zones and Zero Emission Freight Zones also fall into this category, as they regulate access based on a vehicle's environmental performance.

Vehicle electrification and environmental access requirements

Promote the transition towards electric freight vehicles through differentiated access rules and progressively stricter environmental standards. Electrification should be a priority to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, exposure to energy price volatility, local air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. The rapid uptake of electric two- and three-wheelers in India illustrates the potential for accelerating this transition, particularly for urban delivery operations (IEA, 2026). Cities can support this shift by giving zero-emission vehicles preferential access while progressively restricting the most polluting fleets, considering vehicle availability, charging infrastructure, and operators' investment capacity. For example, Paris applies vehicle access restrictions through the metropolitan Low Emission Zone based on vehicles' environmental categories (Ville de Paris, 2026). Further measures to support fleet electrification are presented in Section 4.3.

Weight, size and axle-load restrictions

Restrict access to specific roads or areas for vehicles above defined weight, length or axle-load thresholds, particularly where road infrastructure is vulnerable, or streets are unsuitable for heavy vehicles. These restrictions should be targeted and proportionate, rather than systematically excluding large freight vehicles from urban areas. Where road capacity, street design and safety conditions allow, well-designed, low-emission heavy goods vehicles should retain access to major urban corridors and appropriate delivery destinations. This can complement road-maintenance measures by limiting damage caused by overloaded or oversized vehicles. In Bogotá, for example, freight vehicles over 8.5 tonnes face access restrictions in defined parts of the city. In comparison, vehicles over 3.5 tonnes are prohibited from circulating in La Candelaria at all times (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2019).

Time-based access restrictions and delivery windows

Limit freight circulation or deliveries during peak traffic periods or define specific delivery windows for particular areas. These measures can reduce conflicts with passenger traffic and pedestrians, although delivery windows should reflect business operating conditions and avoid simply shifting congestion to other periods (ITF, 2022). For example, Delhi restricts commercial vehicles on certain roads and during certain hours, while allowing operators to request specific entry permissions when access is necessary (Delhi Traffic Police, 2026).

Designated freight routes

Direct heavy vehicles towards roads with sufficient capacity and away from residential, sensitive or physically constrained streets. New York City operates a designated truck route network that distinguishes local and through routes; its 2026 redesign aims to concentrate more truck movements on highways and in industrial areas and reduce their presence on local streets (NYC DOT, 2026).

Restricted freight zones

Restrict the circulation of larger freight vehicles within defined parts of the city, while providing appropriate exemptions or alternative access conditions. For example, São Paulo uses Zonas de Máxima Restrição de Circulação (ZMRC) to regulate truck movements in areas with high concentrations of commercial and service activities (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2026).

Preferential access for small and low-emission freight vehicles

Provide more favourable access conditions for cargo bikes, small utility vehicles and zero-emission vehicles, particularly in dense, pedestrianised or otherwise restricted areas. Such rules can complement dedicated infrastructure for small modes by allowing these vehicles to operate closer to delivery destinations, subject to appropriate speed and pedestrian-safety requirements. For example, São Paulo has used specific provisions allowing Veículos Urbanos de Carga (VUC – small urban freight vehicles) to circulate in otherwise restricted freight areas (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2002).

Permits and exemptions for specific activities

Establish permit systems or exemptions where restrictions would otherwise disrupt essential services or particular supply chains. Exemptions can cover emergency services, utilities, perishable food deliveries or other priority flows, while permits can provide controlled access to restricted areas. Bogotá includes exemptions for emergency vehicles, perishable food transport and public-utility operations, among others (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2019).

Loading and unloading rules

Regulate where freight vehicles may stop, for how long and under what conditions to improve turnover of scarce kerb space. Barcelona's DUM system, for example, provides authorised professional vehicles with designated loading and unloading spaces and enables drivers to register and record their use digitally through the SPRO municipal application, including a standard 30-minute loading/unloading period (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2026).

Introduce access regulations progressively and as part of a coherent package, not as isolated restrictions. Implementation should begin by establishing a clear legal framework and assigning responsibilities for permitting, enforcement, and monitoring among relevant municipal, transport, and police authorities. Before introducing the measures, cities should consult freight operators, businesses, receivers, and other affected stakeholders to identify operational constraints and anticipate possible unintended effects. Where appropriate, cities should first test new rules through targeted pilot projects or trial periods before applying them across the entire city (ITF, 2022).

Communicate the geographical scope, operating hours, vehicle requirements, exemptions, and penalties through clear signage, accessible information, and integration into digital navigation and mobility applications, particularly in Global South cities where app-based mobility solutions are rapidly expanding. Restrictions should also be supported by practical alternatives wherever possible, including alternative freight routes, off-street loading areas, adjusted delivery schedules, consolidation facilities, or transferring goods to smaller vehicles for final delivery.

Enforcement should combine appropriate mechanisms, such as roadside inspections and municipal patrols, with digital permits, fixed or mobile cameras, automatic number plate recognition and controls at loading and parking areas. Where automated systems are not affordable or technically feasible, staffed checkpoints and targeted inspections can provide lower-cost alternatives. Sanctions should be proportionate and applied consistently, while exemptions should remain limited, transparent and easy to verify (European Commission, 2024; World Bank, 2022).

Enforcement should be phased in gradually, with advance communication, clear phasing, simple registration procedures and an initial warning or transition period to help operators adapt before penalties are fully applied. This is particularly important for small and informal operators, who may have limited capacity to respond immediately to new regulatory requirements. Once the scheme is in operation, enforcement and traffic data should identify recurrent infringements and assess its effects on freight efficiency, congestion, road safety, and environmental performance. Stakeholders should then adjust the rules, exemptions, and enforcement arrangements as needed, in consultation with affected parties (ITF, 2022).

Core output

Vehicle access and circulation rules (weight, size, routes, time, areas, etc.)



Sao Paulo
Photo: auroraangeles

Case study

São Paulo, Brazil
Off-hour deliveries

São Paulo tested shifting deliveries from congested daytime periods to off-hours through a pilot involving public authorities, shippers, carriers, and receivers. The initiative demonstrated the potential for faster, more reliable deliveries while identifying noise, security, and receiver participation as key implementation conditions. The case illustrates how delivery-time management can reduce freight traffic pressure on congested urban networks without requiring major infrastructure investment.

See Case Study: São Paulo Off-Hour Delivery Pilot.

Logistics decarbonisation

Health and environmental concerns are key entry points for promoting cleaner urban freight vehicles. In dense urban areas, electrifying delivery fleets can deliver immediate, visible benefits by reducing tailpipe emissions, exposure to local air pollutants, and associated health impacts.

This "health-first" framing can be particularly effective in Global South cities, where delivery trucks and vehicles fall furthest short of emission standards. Nevertheless, in emerging economies, public support may be stronger when policies address visible local impacts rather than long-term climate objectives alone.

Fleet electrification should be a key priority for decarbonising urban deliveries. Electrification eliminates tailpipe emissions, reduces local air pollution and noise, and can lower operating costs and lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions compared with conventional vehicles. However, the scale of these benefits depends on electricity generation, charging infrastructure, grid reliability, vehicle utilisation and maintenance. Electrification should therefore be supported by appropriate enabling conditions and complemented by measures to improve logistics efficiency and reduce unnecessary vehicle movements.

Cleaner fleet policies should therefore combine electrification with measures to improve logistics efficiency, including better vehicle loading, shipment consolidation, and route optimisation, so fewer vehicle-kilometres are needed to move the same volume of goods.

A sequenced approach is needed, combining energy infrastructure, vehicle renewal, access to finance, operational incentives, and progressive regulation, while also addressing logistics organisation, informal market structures, and the demand-side drivers of freight growth.

Create enabling conditions for fleet electrification

Fleet electrification can scale only if electric vehicles fit day-to-day logistics operations. Public policy therefore needs to address the wider operating environment, not only vehicle acquisition costs. This includes reliable charging (or battery-swapping) infrastructure at the right locations and times, particularly at depots, markets, consolidation hubs and major freight nodes. It also requires road access, parking and kerbside rules that create an operational advantage for compliant vehicles rather than adding constraints. In practice, vehicle technology, charging infrastructure, access regulation and logistics operations need to be planned together.

Cities can support this transition through different combinations of public and private action. Public authorities can facilitate access to land, permitting, grid connections and strategic freight locations, while private operators can invest in vehicles, charging infrastructure and new service models. Depending on local market maturity and institutional capacity, public intervention, public-private collaboration, or private-sector investment supported by an enabling regulatory framework may drive fleet electrification.



Shenzhen
Photo: IZF

Example

Shenzhen
Public-sector impulse

Shenzhen illustrates how strong public intervention can create the conditions for market deployment at scale. By the end of 2019, the city had more than 70,000 electric logistics vehicles and around 83,000 charging points. Municipal authorities supported the transition through vehicle and operating subsidies, charging-infrastructure support, preferential road access and parking measures. Commercial actors then played a major role in implementation: around 98% of electric logistics vehicles were owned by leasing companies, which reduced upfront investment requirements and often bundled vehicle rental with maintenance and charging services. Shenzhen therefore shows how public policy can create a sufficiently favourable operating environment for private investment and service provision to scale.

Example

India
Public-private collaboration – Laneshift

The Laneshift programme, implemented by C40 Cities and The Climate Pledge, illustrates a partnership-based approach in which public authorities, shippers, carriers, manufacturers, charging operators and financiers jointly address the barriers to electric freight deployment. Trials on the Bengaluru–Chennai corridor involved 20 battery-electric trucks across six logistics use cases and 600 commercial trips, covering more than 208,000 km. Around 77% of trips were completed within 12 hours, but longer routes experienced additional delays where fast-charging infrastructure was insufficient. The programme therefore developed a corridor charging plan, screening 238 potential locations and identifying 15 high-potential sites based on freight demand, land availability, electrical infrastructure and driver amenities. The project also highlights the complementary roles of cities in integrating freight into transport and charging strategies, national and state governments in supporting vehicles and infrastructure, and private operators in demonstrating demand and investing in fleets and charging networks.

Example

Amazon in India
Private-sector impulse

Private fleet investment can also act as a catalyst where the regulatory and infrastructure environment allows electric trucks to operate effectively. Amazon has worked with vehicle manufacturers, including Eicher, to introduce electric trucks for middle- and last-mile logistics in Indian cities, with deployment initially concentrated in major metropolitan markets such as Delhi NCR, Bengaluru and Mumbai. Such deployments generate operational experience on vehicle range, charging time, route design and fleet utilisation, while creating more predictable demand for charging infrastructure. Their scalability nevertheless depends on public enabling measures. In Delhi, for example, exemptions from certain access restrictions for qualifying electric goods vehicles can increase operating flexibility and vehicle utilisation. The case therefore illustrates how private investment can lead deployment, while public authorities retain an important role in ensuring that access rules, charging provision and permitting do not constrain adoption.



Delhi, India
Photo: Anshul Paruchuri, Unsplash

Example

Delhi, India

Delhi supports the electrification of last-mile delivery through targeted purchase incentives for small electric vehicles. Under the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy, electric cargo bicycles are eligible for a subsidy covering up to 33% of the purchase price, capped at INR 15,000, while e-carts, e-rickshaws and electric light commercial vehicles can receive fixed purchase incentives of INR 30,000 per vehicle. Additional interest-rate support is available for some financed electric three-wheelers. By differentiating support by vehicle type, the policy directly reduces the upfront cost of modes particularly suited to short urban trips and last-mile deliveries, rather than focusing only on passenger cars.

Core output

Key enabling conditions required for successful fleet electrification : reliable and strategically located charging or battery-swapping infrastructure, supportive access and parking regulations, and coordinated planning of vehicle technology, infrastructure and logistics operations.

Support vehicle transition through incentives and phased regulation

Incentive-based policies should reduce upfront costs, de-risk investment and progressively tighten requirements as infrastructure and market readiness improve. In Global South cities, this approach matters most for micro-operators, informal fleets, and subcontractors, whose capacity to invest is often limited.

For urban logistics and delivery to dense areas, prioritise low-carbon, high-utilisation light fleets, such as cargo-cycles, electric two- and three-wheelers, light commercial vehicles, and urban delivery vans. These segments can deliver early benefits in air quality, noise, and operating costs, while requiring less complex infrastructure than heavy-duty freight.

Key measures include time-bound purchase incentives, VAT or import-duty relief, concessional finance, and replacement schemes tied to verified de-registration of the oldest, most polluting vehicles. Fiscal instruments can also align with emissions and vehicle age, while removing tax or import rules that encourage continued use of older, high-emitting vehicles.

Incentives should be complemented by measures that reduce vehicle-kilometres, such as consolidation, managed loading areas, micro-hubs and higher load factors. Where street conditions allow, higher-capacity or better-adapted vehicles can also improve operational efficiency.

Finally, local incentives work best when aligned with broader regulatory signals. Public procurement and municipal fleet mandates can help aggregate demand, while national or supranational CO_2 standards and zero-emission vehicle sales requirements can accelerate vehicle supply and reduce costs. New York City's municipal fleet electrification pathway, EU vehicle emission standards and California's Advanced Clean Trucks regulation illustrate how multi-level policy signals can support local freight decarbonisation.

Core output

Incentives and regulatory measures implemented to support vehicle transition

Case study

Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Decarbonising delivery vehicles

Rotterdam has combined regulatory measures and stakeholder engagement to accelerate the transition towards zero-emission urban freight vehicles, notably through the introduction of a zero-emission zone for city logistics. The transition has been prepared progressively to give operators time to adapt their fleets and operations. The case shows that vehicle regulation is most effective when accompanied by a clear timetable, sustained dialogue with the freight sector and broader support for operational change.

See Case Study: Rotterdam, the Netherlands – Decarbonising delivery vehicles



Bogotá, Colombia
Photo: Victor Rosario, Unsplash

Example

Bogotá, Colombia
A phased approach to freight decarbonisation

Bogotá is pursuing a more incremental approach to urban freight decarbonisation, reflecting a market characterised by older vehicles, fragmented ownership and limited access to finance. Rather than relying primarily on restrictive measures such as a zero-emission zone, the city combines fleet renewal, consolidation centres, cargo bikes and light electric vehicles. Through the FONCARGA programme, small freight vehicle owners can receive financial support to replace older vehicles with low- or zero-emission alternatives. The case shows that in more constrained contexts, decarbonisation may require phased measures that combine targeted financial support, operational pilots and cleaner vehicles, while progressively building the conditions for stronger regulation.

Optimizing flows

Decarbonising urban freight cannot rely on fleet electrification alone. While cleaner vehicles are essential to reduce emissions per kilometre, improving logistics efficiency can also help reduce unnecessary vehicle movements and make better use of existing transport capacity. Logistics companies and operators have a central role in this process, particularly through improved vehicle load factors, reduced empty running, delivery consolidation and route optimisation. Cities can support these improvements through business modernisation programmes, targeted training, incentives and regulatory measures that facilitate more efficient delivery operations.



Malaysia
Photo: Esmonde Yong, Unsplash

Case study

Klang Valley, Malaysia
Consolidating freight and passenger transport

The Klang Valley case explores opportunities to make better use of transport capacity by integrating freight and passenger movements rather than planning them as entirely separate systems. Such approaches can reduce the need for dedicated freight trips and improve the utilisation of existing transport infrastructure. The case highlights the potential of integrated planning while also illustrating the operational and governance requirements involved in combining flows with different schedules, handling needs and service requirements.

See Case Study: Klang Valley, Malaysia – Consolidating freight and passenger

Support reverse and circular logistics

Flow optimisation should also extend beyond conventional delivery operations to include reverse and circular logistics. Reuse, repair, refurbishment, take-back, redistribution, and second-hand activities generate freight flows that can be better integrated with existing delivery networks, helping avoid additional trips and use return journeys and available vehicle capacity.

Integrating these activities into urban logistics planning can help reduce unnecessary transport movements, support local economic activity and improve the organisation of urban freight.

A comprehensive decarbonisation strategy should therefore combine the transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles with measures that improve the efficiency, consolidation and circularity of urban freight flows.

Where operationally feasible, logistics operators can integrate reverse flows into existing distribution networks, making better use of return journeys and available vehicle capacity. However, these arrangements depend on the nature of the goods, collection volumes, handling requirements, and supply chain organisation.

Cities can support reverse and circular logistics by identifying suitable locations for collection, sorting, repair and redistribution activities, facilitating access to these facilities and integrating their needs into land-use and mobility planning. Particular attention should be given to informal waste collectors, repair businesses and second-hand markets, which play an important role in circular economy activities in many Global South cities. Planning measures should seek to improve their operating conditions while limiting conflicts with residential areas and public space.

Case study

Thailand
Optimising construction logistics

The Thailand case focuses on construction logistics, an important but frequently overlooked component of urban freight. Better coordination of material flows, delivery schedules, storage and site access can reduce unnecessary vehicle movements while improving construction productivity. The case demonstrates the value of treating construction freight as a specific planning issue and of integrating logistics requirements earlier in project preparation, rather than managing delivery impacts only once construction has started.

See Case Study: Thailand – Optimising construction logistics

Reuse flows to be organized

Clear regulations should be established for reuse flows to foster safe, traceable and economically viable practices. These regulations should clarify which products and materials can be channelled for reuse rather than treated as waste, set minimum requirements for collection, storage, repair, and refurbishment, and establish appropriate quality, safety, and traceability provisions. Where relevant, simplified registration or certification schemes can help recognise reuse and repair operators while avoiding excessive administrative burdens for small businesses and informal actors. In Global South cities, regulation should therefore progressively integrate existing informal and small-scale activities rather than displacing them, while improving working conditions, safety, and environmental performance.

Economic incentives can complement regulation by improving the competitiveness of reuse activities. Measures may include reduced local fees or taxes for certified reuse and repair activities, targeted grants or concessional finance for repair and refurbishment equipment, access to affordable premises, and preferential conditions for social enterprises or small operators. Public procurement can also create demand for repaired, refurbished or reusable products where appropriate. These measures can help overcome the higher upfront costs and limited access to finance that often constrain circular business models.

Take-back and producer-responsibility mechanisms can further strengthen reuse flows. Producers and retailers can be required or encouraged to organise the return of selected products and packaging and to contribute to their collection, repair, refurbishment or recovery. Such schemes can start with high-volume or high-impact streams such as packaging, electronics, batteries and textiles. Extended Producer Responsibility provides an established framework for assigning producers financial or operational responsibility for the post-consumer stage of their products. Still, its design must reflect local institutional and market conditions.

Finally, regulation should align with the physical and logistical conditions required for reuse. Cities can facilitate access to collection points, repair spaces, storage facilities and consolidation areas, and ensure that reuse flows are considered within waste, freight and land-use planning. Without adequate space and logistics arrangements, regulatory and financial incentives alone may have limited effect.

Core output

Implement incentives or develop infrastructure for the private sector to help ensure vehicles are better filled, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the urban network and thus limiting negative externalities.

Produce emissions baselines for urban logistics

Data is also essential for measuring and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions from urban freight. Robust emissions inventories of urban logistic systems require basic information on vehicle types, energy sources, mileage, payloads and operating conditions. Yet this data is often unavailable, fragmented, or difficult to collect at the city level, especially where small operators or informal practices dominate logistics activity.

A key barrier is access to privately held operational data. Carriers, platforms, and vehicle manufacturers often hold the most relevant information, but data sharing remains limited because of commercial sensitivity, cost, privacy concerns, and a lack of trust. As a result, many cities struggle to establish reliable emissions baselines or to assess the impact of freight decarbonisation measures.

In low-capacity contexts, simplified approaches can make emissions assessment more feasible. Self-monitoring tools, subsidised baseline surveys and minimum reporting requirements can help generate core datasets without imposing excessive burdens on operators. Where more detailed operational data are available, such as carrier telematics or OEM data, cities can also analyse vehicle use patterns, charging behaviour, and cost-performance indicators.

The need to produce emissions baselines can therefore become a lever for improving freight data systems more broadly. Environmental accounting can justify investment in measurement, strengthen sector visibility, support policy evaluation and help mobilise climate-related funding for monitoring capacity.

Core output

Baseline datasets enabling cities to measure, monitor and evaluate greenhouse gas emissions from urban freight.

Example

Changsha, China
Linking data sharing to public incentives

Changsha developed a municipal monitoring platform for selected pilot urban logistics operators, requiring participating companies to register vehicles, drivers and operational assets and to transmit fleet and activity data to the local authority. Entry into the programme was relatively open, while continued participation was subject to regular performance assessments under an "open access, strict exit" approach: operators could lose their pilot status if they no longer met programme requirements.

In return, participating operators could access public support including subsidies for low-emission vehicles and logistics facilities, priority treatment for certain circulation permits, and recognition through the municipal performance-rating system. The city also introduced wider measures such as more flexible access rules for eligible electric delivery vehicles, preferential parking tariffs, dedicated loading and unloading spaces, and charging infrastructure. Several of these benefits, however, were not restricted to pilot companies and were available more broadly to qualifying freight operators.

The data allows the municipality to monitor fleet use, assess operator performance and verify that publicly supported vehicles and infrastructure are effectively used. The case illustrates how data sharing can be encouraged through a reciprocal model, where greater operational transparency is linked to access to incentives and regulatory facilitation rather than imposed through a universal licensing requirement.

Example

New York City, USA
Linking operational privileges to data sharing

New York City provides a direct urban freight example of linking operational privileges to data provision. Under the Commercial Cargo Bicycle Pilot, participating delivery companies were authorised to use commercial loading spaces and designated cargo-bike corrals. In return, they provided fleet GPS data to the New York City Department of Transportation, enabling the city to analyse routes, operating times, distances travelled and delivery patterns. The case illustrates how access to scarce curb space can be used as a regulatory incentive to obtain operational data for planning, monitoring and programme evaluation.

Human resources and capacity building

Urban logistics performance depends not only on infrastructure, regulation and technology, but also on the availability of qualified workers, capable operators and public institutions able to manage a changing sector, including the capacity to collect, analyse and use logistics data for planning, operational management and monitoring. In many Global South cities, capacity gaps affect both formal and informal logistics: limited professional training, weak digital adoption, poor working conditions, safety risks and the under-representation of women. Human resources policies should therefore combine workforce development, public-sector capacity building, decent work objectives and inclusion.

Build logistics skills and public-sector capability

National authorities should develop structured logistics skills pipelines, focusing on roles that directly affect reliability, safety, and compliance. Priority occupations include drivers, dispatchers, warehouse supervisors, route planners, fleet coordinators and compliance-oriented administrative staff. Training pathways should link to recognised qualifications and be organised across operative, administrative, supervisory, and managerial levels. Hence, skills development translates into better service performance rather than short-term labour absorption (McKinnon et al., 2017).

- Curricula should be co-designed with private-sector actors, professional bodies and consolidated industry organisations to reflect real operating conditions. Apprenticeships, workplace placements, competency standards and certification should be built into programmes from the outset. Digital competencies should also be a core requirement, covering dispatching, routing, tracking, payment tools, and customer interfaces. This is essential to ensure that digitalisation improves sector-wide capability rather than benefiting only a small number of formal firms.
- Public-sector capability is equally important. Training should target planning departments, enforcement bodies, procurement and contract management units, and agencies responsible for logistics implementation. National authorities, city networks and development partners can support this through sustained capacity-building, practical guidance and peer-learning formats that help integrate urban logistics into mobility planning and implementation.

Core output

A national logistics training programme that upgrades both industry skills and public-sector capability, through certified courses co-designed with employers and targeted modules for public officials.

Urban logistics skills and capacities are essential to ensure coherent governance and effective leadership.

Improve labour conditions

Upgrading efforts should combine operational improvements with better working conditions, including safety, working time, fatigue management, basic protections, access to facilities and reduced exposure to road risk, especially for workers in the informal sector and "new" workers in digital delivery app companies (platform delivery).

Rather than assuming new rules will automatically lead to compliance, authorities should provide operators with practical support. This can include short modular training on safe driving, basic vehicle maintenance, dispatching, routing, customer management, messaging-based coordination, simple tracking tools and digital payments. The aim is to generate quick operational gains, such as fewer empty runs, more predictable routines, improved reliability and more stable incomes, without requiring full formalisation upfront.

Introduce labour and vehicle standards progressively, in consultation with operator groups and worker representatives. Where appropriate, access to incentives, contracts, loading areas or support programmes can be linked to basic standards on safety, service quality and working conditions. This creates a pathway for collective upgrading while avoiding punitive approaches that could exclude small and informal operators.

Core output

Practical support for operators (training, skills development and technical assistance) coupled and **progressive labour and vehicle standards** (access to incentives, contracts, loading areas or support programmes).

Case study

Abu Dhabi, UAE
Structuring the platform delivery sector

Abu Dhabi has progressively introduced a regulatory framework for the rapidly growing platform delivery sector. Measures combine operator and vehicle requirements with rider training, certification, safety standards and digital registration. The approach illustrates how public authorities can formalise an emerging logistics activity while clarifying the responsibilities of platforms and operators. It also highlights road safety and working practices as integral components of urban freight regulation.

See Case Study: Abu Dhabi, UAE – Structuring the platform delivery sector

Work towards inclusive employment

Logistics workforce strategies should integrate inclusive employment from the outset. Gender inclusion remains less mature in logistics than in passenger transport, despite emerging initiatives such as targeted eco-driving training for women or dedicated "women in logistics" programmes. Barriers include social norms, safety concerns, unequal access to training and the lack of appropriate workplace facilities (SLOCAT, 2024; Tran, interview notes).

Practical enabling conditions are therefore essential. These include safe facilities, toilets, appropriate equipment, targeted training pathways, anti-harassment measures and support for career progression. Governance arrangements should also address inclusion. Urban logistics task forces can establish dedicated working groups on gender and inclusion to co-develop practical actions, define implementation steps, monitor progress, and link employment measures to wider logistics planning.

Overall, human resources policy should be treated as a strategic lever for urban logistics reform. Better skills, safer working conditions and more inclusive employment can improve operational performance while supporting a fairer transition for workers and small operators.

Core output

Inclusive training opportunities, workplace facilities, equipment and preventive measures to support inclusive employment.

Case study

Lima, Peru
Relocating a wholesale market

Lima relocated wholesale activities from the congested La Parada market to the purpose-built Gran Mercado Mayorista in Santa Anita. The intervention sought to improve sanitary and operating conditions and reorganise major food flows within the metropolitan area. The relocation also revealed the complexity of transforming long-established commercial ecosystems, with significant resistance and social impacts. The case highlights the importance of combining infrastructure investment with stakeholder management and transition measures.

See Case Study: Lima, Peru – Relocating a wholesale market

Conclusion

Urban logistics is essential to sustainable urban mobility, yet many cities still fail to integrate it into planning. Freight movements sustain economic activity, access to essential goods, and the functioning of urban services, but they also put significant pressure on transport networks, public space, and the environment. As urbanisation, consumption, and delivery activity continue to grow, cities need to shift from fragmented, reactive interventions to a more strategic, coordinated approach.

This does not require a single planning model. Freight can be fully integrated into a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, addressed through a dedicated Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan, or developed through a thematic process linked to the wider mobility strategy. What matters is that urban logistics receives sufficient attention throughout the planning cycle, from diagnosis and stakeholder engagement to measure selection, financing, implementation, and monitoring. Planning should also recognise that urban freight systems extend beyond municipal boundaries and depend on wider corridors, gateways, markets and supply chains.

Several enabling conditions are particularly important :

01

Clear institutional leadership and sustained public-private dialogue are necessary.

Private actors largely operate urban logistics. Still, public decisions on infrastructure, land use, access, and public space strongly shape it. Reliable data and a robust diagnosis are needed to understand flows and constraints, while recognising that informal logistics and small operators may remain poorly represented in conventional datasets. Land and infrastructure planning must preserve the physical conditions required for efficient freight movements, from strategic corridors and logistics facilities to loading areas and infrastructure for smaller delivery modes.

02

The critical step is translating strategic objectives into a realistic, implementable action plan with clearly prioritised measures, designated responsibilities, funding requirements, and measurable targets.

Consider infrastructure, regulation, decarbonisation, and human-resource measures together. Key priorities for implementing sustainable urban logistics policies include:

Modernise road infrastructure and strengthen freight connectivity
Prioritise maintenance of freight-critical roads, address major bottlenecks and improve connections between urban distribution networks, regional freight corridors, ports and logistics gateways.

Safeguard land for logistics activities
Preserve suitable locations for logistics parks, distribution facilities and proximity logistics services, while integrating freight needs into urban and land-use planning.

Improve loading and unloading conditions
Provide dedicated delivery spaces in commercial areas and major developments, supported by clear operating rules, appropriate signage and effective enforcement.

Support smaller and more efficient delivery vehicles
Adapt street infrastructure and access conditions to cargo bikes, electric two- and three-wheelers and small utility vehicles, while ensuring safe circulation and delivery operations.

Accelerate freight fleet electrification
Facilitate charging infrastructure, access to finance and targeted incentives to support the transition towards electric delivery vehicles, particularly among small operators and ageing fleets.

Introduce appropriate freight regulations
Implement proportionate access restrictions, designated freight routes, delivery windows and environmental requirements that balance logistics efficiency, road safety and public-space management.

Promote logistics efficiency and digitalisation
Support logistics companies in improving vehicle utilisation, delivery coordination and route optimisation through business modernisation programmes, training and access to digital tools.

Support reverse and circular logistics
Integrate collection, reuse, repair, refurbishment, redistribution and recycling flows into logistics and land-use planning, including the needs of informal and small-scale operators.

Support reverse and circular logistics
Develop professional training programmes for logistics workers and businesses, while improving public authorities' capacity for freight planning, data management, regulation and monitoring.

03

For Global South cities in particular, implementation should be progressive and pragmatic.

Limited public resources, fragmented institutional responsibilities, infrastructure gaps and the importance of small and informal operators can make rapid application of highly restrictive or technology-intensive models unrealistic. Cities should therefore prioritise measures that address their most critical constraints, use existing assets where possible, and introduce more complex systems as institutional, financial, and technical capacity develops. Pilot projects can test new regulations, delivery arrangements, digital tools, or infrastructure solutions before scaling them up.

04

Urban logistics policy should be treated as an iterative process rather than a fixed end-state.

Monitor implementation results against clear indicators, discuss them with stakeholders, and use them to adjust measures over time. The action plan should therefore remain flexible enough to respond to changing freight patterns, technologies, economic conditions and emerging risks.

The aim is not to create obstacles to the movement of goods within the city, but to organise it better: to ensure that goods can move reliably while using less space, generating fewer externalities and contributing more effectively to wider urban objectives. Integrating freight into mobility planning, strengthening implementation capacity and adapting measures to local conditions can help cities build logistics systems that are more efficient, resilient, low-carbon and inclusive.

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- Amedokpo, Y. and Mawussi, A. (2026) Interview notes (unpublished).
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MobiliseYourCity is a global partnership supporting cities and countries in developing and emerging economies to turn sustainable urban mobility planning into concrete investment and action. Backed by the European Union, France and Germany, and working with implementing, finance and knowledge partners, it helps members develop investment-ready mobility pipelines aligned with climate ambition, urban development priorities and local needs.

Over the past decade, the Partnership has grown to 82 member cities and 16 member countries, supporting 75 projects across 38 countries, identifying over EUR 30 billion in sustainable urban mobility investment needs and leveraging EUR 4.4 billion for SUMP and NUMP implementation. As it enters its second decade, MobiliseYourCity is shifting from proof of concept to scaled delivery by accelerating implementation, strengthening investment alignment, expanding practitioner knowledge and mobilising broader support for sustainable mobility.