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Summary Report

Technical Report ENG-TR.028

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University of Westminster

November 2022

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FREIGHT TRANSPORT AND THE KERBSIDE: THE FUTURE OF LOADING AND UNLOADING IN URBAN AREAS

The range of transport and place functions requiring kerbside space and time is growing rapidly in urban areas in the UK. This is being accelerated by transport decarbonisation strategies, the growth in active travel, efforts to improve the liveability and safety of local neighbourhoods and place-based activities that emerged during the social distancing requirements of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the kerbside has become increasingly competed over with demand for its space and time outstripping its capacity.

These various activities that require kerbside space are typically considered on an individual and piecemeal basis without consideration of the uses of the kerbside as a whole. It is important that a more strategic view is taken by policymakers of this valuable asset, in order to best provide for these important activities and manage its use in the most appropriate way possible for the location concerned.

In discussions of the kerbside needs of each of the activities that require its use, little consideration is typically given to the use of kerb space and time by freight transport operations. These take place for the purpose of loading and unloading goods and carrying out servicing tasks. Urban freight surveys from the last twenty years indicate that in urban retail locations typically 70-100% of goods vehicle deliveries take place with the vehicle having to stop on-street at the kerbside due to a lack of off-street stopping space at the building being served (exceptions include large retail outlets, supermarkets, shopping centres, large office blocks and industrial sites, and hospitals). The most detailed survey work ever taken in the UK into loading and unloading (on four urban high streets in London in 2005) indicated that this activity accounted for 3-7% of all vehicle stops at the kerbside and 6-11% of total vehicle time spent at the kerbside depending on the high street in question.

While freight transport loading/unloading and servicing activities are of great importance to the economic success and liveability of UK towns and cities and the quality of life of their inhabitants, workers and visitors, there are various ways in which the use of the kerbside by goods vehicles can be improved. Some of these approaches involve the use of alternative logistics operating methods by freight transport operators, others involve changing behaviours and practices of those sending and receiving goods from urban buildings, while some require changes to the design of off-street stopping space at large buildings with such provision.

The kerbside in urban areas is not currently well organised and managed and efforts need to be taken by policymakers to improve this for commercial, transport efficiency, safety, greenhouse gas emissions and quality of life reasons. This involves putting in place kerbside management strategies that consider all the competing demands for kerbside use by street type and allocate kerb space and time in the most appropriate manner for the location in question.

The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF) has carried out an evidence-based review of the use of the kerbside and the growing demand for kerb space and time in the UK, and, from this, has produced insight and advice for the stakeholders involved in kerbside use and management. The following resources are available:

- A summary slide set that provides an overview of the growing demand for kerb use for a variety of activities. It also contains insight into use of the kerb for freight transport operations and provides summary conclusions concerning improvements to current kerbside management.
- A longer report providing more detailed coverage of the growing demand for kerb space and time in the UK, together with insight into the use of the kerb for freight transport operations including loading, unloading and servicing. It provides a review of studies and trials into kerb use by freight transport and discusses the approaches that could be taken to increase its efficiency. It also discusses technology that is emerging for kerbside management and approaches to developing a kerbside management plan based on a hierarchy of uses to aid kerbside space and time allocation decision-making. It provides a set of recommended actions together with attribution of all the reference material consulted in the course of the work.