

10th International workshop on sustainable road freight

- Write up: Interactive activity: Sustainable road freight: Roadmap to 2035
- Organiser: Logistics UK
- Tuesday 5th December, 2023

Logistics UK organised the breakout session on day two of the conference, with Mariefi Kamizouli, Head of Economics and Productivity leading the activity.

Delegates were split into six groups in the room, with an additional seventh group for attendees online. Each group had a question which helped to shape discussion and promote thinking on what can be done to further decarbonise the sector. The groups looked at policy and government, the environment, legal frameworks, finance and investment levers, as well as social changes and technology development all through the lens of trying to reduce emissions and meet 2035 decarbonisation deadlines.

One group looked at which technological innovations are expected to have the greatest impact on sustainable road freight. In the short term, the group discussed creating platforms for data sharing and more charge slots, with improved modal interchanges and the use of private wire, being suggested as medium term options. In the long term, attendees discussed the role of autonomous electric trucks and new battery technology. The role of AI, quantum computers and drones were also considered.

Groups focusing on steps the government and policymakers can undertake to ensure the road freight sector achieves its sustainability objectives by 2035 debated a range of potential initiatives. In the short term, ideas included carrying out more research demonstration projects in collaboration with industry and academia. The theme for collaboration was strong throughout the days and many mentioned the need to improve ruling around securing planning permission to access grid connection. Others also touched on the need to better facilitate training programmes to help with skills shortages, specifically across driver and technician roles. Actions for the medium term included developing the National Freight Network, installing charging stations for battery electric vehicles (BEVs), increasing the use of government subsidies and implementing certifications for data and eco-driving to create trustworthiness. Attendees also considered the need for a joined-up approach when it comes to driver rest stops and coordinating these with charging infrastructure to allow for a more efficient system.

At the same time, delegates considered what social attitudes and behavioural changes between now and 2035 are likely to impact consumer and business demand for sustainable road freight. Discussion covered the need for more education on the link between consumption and freight emissions. This was linked to thinking about whether the expectation around 'instant' deliveries are too high and unsustainable in the long term.

A further group looked at financial mechanisms and proposed a range of ideas to ensure the successful funding is available to realise the decarbonisation transition. Attendees discussed reviewing import taxes on BEVs, the role of government subsidy for low carbon vehicles, and infrastructure. With greater

infrastructure for electrification required, effective long term schemes for public funding and taxation are also important. Changes that could be made in the medium term included the idea of a carbon border adjustment mechanism for imported trucks and the roll-out of a universal and accurate carbon pricing system. Long-term ideas focused on the role of insurance and how the industry can help invest in the transition.

When it came to looking at environmental trends, one group discussed increasing low emission zones in cities – which was closely linked to improving emissions data and how important it is to be able to track progress and impact. There was also discussion around carbon allowances and how to ensure a polluter pays principle could gain widespread acceptance. Wider implications included water pollution, considering the second and third life of batteries, and adapting to more extreme weather conditions as a result of climate change.

The online group, looked at legal/regulatory interventions to promote decarbonisation. Ideas included low emission zones, and addressing legislative barriers that make securing new electrical grid connections complicated, expensive and time consuming. There was also discussion on how adjusted weights and dimensions regulations could enable operators to transport a greater payload, one which is otherwise significantly reduced due to battery weight. Delegates also considered how investing in shared multi-service warehouses in cities could help to reduce the transportation of goods.

Overall, there was agreement that lots more needs to be done in order to decarbonise freight, however, many of the conversations focused on initiatives that are either already in motion or due to be. What remains clear is to create a pathway to sustainable road freight, there needs to be much greater collaboration between industry, research, policy and other stakeholders and at both national and international scales.