

GREENZONE

The urban foundation of any truly successful inter-modal network for sustainable freight movement

At **HOOF&CYCLE**, we view the implementation of a sustainable, intermodal transportation network as the most pressing, addressable issue facing the economic and ecological future of our planet.

Breaking unsustainable habits - step #1 - admitting culpability

Southern Ontarians, are particularly well-positioned to rethink our primary methods of moving people and their goods, as we have made so many, now obvious mistakes, in how we have organized both our communities, and our lives within them.

Rampant urban sprawl; one or more, huge, personal motor-vehicles for almost every adult; our acknowledged addiction to the burning of admittedly unhealthy, eco-damaging, and ever more costly fossil fuels - all reflect the misguided mobility ethos that has gripped densely populated areas of North America, for more than half a century.

Up to three quarters of this province's jobs are directly or indirectly tied to the manufacturing and marketing of motor vehicles. Because of such related short-term economic realities, previous governments have long downloaded any truly effective responsibility for addressing transportation-attributable ills - climate change, smog, traffic congestion, road carnage, et al - to individual citizens, by encouraging us all to make personal, sustainably correct mobility decisions, all the while propping up

the auto sector and its confederates, with taxpayer dollars. (Apparently not enough of them however, given yesterday's auto workers' 38,000-strong demonstrations in Windsor and Oshawa.)

And while the current groundswell of public opinion suggests that many of us now identify our unsustainable, collective lifestyle's damaging impact upon the environment as a primary concern, it remains to be seen just how much of a perceived behavioral sacrifice, Canadians are willing to make to actually fix the problem.

Helping globally by acting locally

Many Ontarians can no longer envision life without a car, and for some unfortunate souls, they are indeed correct in the belief that their accustomed lifestyle is integrally dependent upon the unsustainable, and still relatively unfettered privilege of *driving*. And as unsettling as it might be, that daily routine may well be an outmoded luxury facing imminent and dramatic restriction, most notably in major urban centers, both here in Canada, and in other progressive cities throughout the rest of the developed world.

Commonly accepted solutions

Most pundits tout better designed motor-vehicles and cleaner fuels as obvious partial solutions, and much money has been earmarked for research and development of new technologies to provide such choices, going forward. This approach, while somewhat effective in addressing operational emission issues, ignores many other problems inherent in the manufacture, use and misuse of automobiles.

Other sensible suggestions include enhanced public transit service and infrastructure - with an emphasis on various forms of rail traffic - to move a) large groups of people, en masse; and b) all the materials, objects, packages, documents, hard-copy information and expert-provided services, that we require in the course of our private and professional lives.

Still, in our laudable zeal to discover some future technological remedy for the residual threats still imposed by many of the previous century's technological marvels, we should not ignore more traditional transportation practices, which already contribute greatly to solving that which today would otherwise, be an even larger problem.

GREENZONE - *Sustainable mobility in the urban core*

For the past ten years **HOOF&CYCLE** has been suggesting to anyone who would listen, and many who wouldn't, that the key to the successful operation of any efficiently sustainable, inter-modal transportation network for freight, involves the maximum participation of the *active transport* component, for any and all delivery of appropriately sized shipments, within Toronto's central business district, during peak congestion periods - possibly 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM.

Larger vehicles with necessarily larger loads would be asked to drop them outside those hours.

Urgent commercial and private motor vehicle incursions would remain possible at any time, but a purposefully stiff congestion tax

during peak hours would be attached to dissuade future, similarly ill-timed drops or pickups.

Emergency and public transit services access would remain unchanged, and ease of delivery of said services would actually benefit from lessened motor-vehicle congestion on downtown streets. Other possible vehicle exemptions would be allowed according to consensus needs.

Human and human-powered vehicles

Active transport delivery vehicles include the bikes and trikes used by cycle messengers, as well as the actual workers who operate on foot. We also employ a variety of other tools such as knapsacks, shoulder bags, hand-carts, wagons, and trailers, etc. to increase our load-bearing capabilities.

And for the purposes of this discussion, we further include the use of *existing* public transportation services to assist us in the efficient, yet safe completion of our deliveries, depending on dictates of the specific job at hand. We acknowledge that in using the transit option it could be argued that we are unsustainably responsible for a portion of the emissions from the occasional, regularly-scheduled streetcar, subway or bus, but suggest that the fact that those emissions would be released whether a messenger is on board or not, renders such quibbling moot.

These ecologically sensitive delivery methods, while understandably limited in their range and load capacity, allow the ***active transport*** sector to remain, by far, the most sustainable in the transportation industry.

With every delivery achieved using *active transport*, in whole or in part, we position an admittedly tiny, but still very real piece of the sustainability puzzle that this *TRANSFORUM* is bent on solving. And we do so at source, eliminating the problem before it even exists.

Does it not also then follow, that the greater the urban delivery market share, efficiently and cost effectively handled by the city's *active transport* fleet, the less of a burden remains, for the rest of the currently unsustainable members of any proposed inter-modal transportation network, to address?

It should also be noted that maximizing the use of *active transport* means much more than just dealing with small to medium load, point to point deliveries, within the city center.

Existing active inter-modal involvement

Foot and bicycle messengers are also often used as first and last kilometer delivery vehicles for currently available, inter-modal delivery networks, that already handle longer distances. Indeed, many local courier companies use *active transport* workers as *sweepers* who comb the city core all day, gathering the greater distanced national and international overnight deliveries, that are then collected at a single nearby location before being passed off to still largely unsustainable road, and in turn often air, freight carriers. The process is of course, reversed next morning with the distribution of incoming overnights, shipped out by the rest of the world, the previous day.

And while our actual ‘distance’ contribution in this inter-modal relay may be minor, the overall impact of these *active transport sweepers* is still highly beneficial locally, as they eliminate the need for many more idling, often illegally parked, motor vehicles, that would otherwise further clog - all day, every weekday - the heart of the urban core.

Shifts in policy and paradigm

To begin the implementation of the basic **GREENZONE** concept demands only a shift in thinking, and as such, could start today. (Interestingly, we understand a similar proposal is being reintroduced by a local councillor at city hall, as I speak.)

As this project need not wait for the usually cited delays - future technology, environmental assessments or pilot projects, etc. - all that organizations or individuals hiring delivery services need do, is use reputable courier companies, who already follow these sustainable practices. (At least one full-service, local rush messenger firm now handles, more than seventy percent of all their daily local, national, and international deliveries using active transport methods, to some effectively productive extent.)

This is not to say that additional, specifically-targeted, supportive actions from a number of so-mandated sources, both in business and government, would not be welcomed as we all strive to further enhance both the scope and the sustainable effectiveness, of any evolving **GREENZONE**.

For a comprehensive list of such possible enhancements, please feel free to contact us at hoofandcycle@rogers.com

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