

The Heart of the Urban Freight World



■ Trade and Transportation

By Thomas O'Brien

Southern California is a trade gateway not only because of the presence of North America's largest maritime port complex. The density of warehousing, transloading and other cargo processing activities also distinguish our region. All of this activity has a positive effect on education and training for logistics and supply chain management as well. Students want to be prepared for career opportunities in the industry. This translates into a market for a wide range of educational offerings. Southern California is also a hotbed for trade and transportation related research which hopefully finds an audience with our partners in industry, government and the non-profit sectors.

These partnerships will be on display in late October when Long Beach plays host to the 6th International Urban Freight Conference (I-NUF). Sponsored by the METRANS Transportation Center - a partnership of CSULB and USC - and held every two years, INUF provides a forum for sharing state-of-the-art research on all aspects of goods movement within and through metropolitan areas. The conference features a little something for everyone with an interest in freight. This includes how you accommodate truck deliveries through better zoning regulations, the impacts of e-commerce and home shopping on urban delivery patterns, environmental impacts, better use of technology, the economics of freight movement, and Best Practices from around the world.

As a region, we can all be proud that I-NUF is recognized as the leading gathering of professionals of all kinds interested in urban freight. As proof, this year's conference will have presentations from participants representing 18 different countries. That's not surprising. Urban freight is a growing area of interest for industry, the academic community and policy makers alike. As the population becomes increasingly urbanized and urban cores revitalized, the movement of both people and goods becomes more difficult to manage.

You don't have to look any further than downtown Los Angeles to see the conflict played out. New economic activity and a rejuvenated housing sector have been great for the area. But they have also generated more traffic and congestion, and more noise. All of those restaurants, sports venues and businesses mean more (and more frequent) deliveries of supplies and small packages. At the same time, some of the solutions that solve passenger transport problems, such as more use of non-motorized modes or alternative fuel vehicles, are much more difficult to apply to freight transport. Other ways to manage the complex interplay between freight and people need to be identified.

The I-NUF conference will attempt to look at the potential for new ways to better manage freight demand, to make possible more efficient freight flows, and to deploy new technologies in the service of both of these. Experts will discuss local and last mile pickup and delivery; the impact of ports, airports, and distribution hubs on urban development and the demand for services; the rise of e-commerce; and the relationship between freight and the sustainability of the urban environment.

We get to show off a bit as well. Special sessions will showcase the efforts of the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to coordinate on system-wide supply chain strategies that eliminate bottlenecks in and around the ports. These efforts involve some home grown industry partners, like Venice-based Cargomatic, which uses innovative technology solutions to match shippers and truckers. A site visit will take participants to the still-under-construction Long Beach Container Terminal at the Port's Middle Harbor. The facility will set the standard for technologically advanced and environmentally friendly marine terminals moving forward. It should be a highlight for those from outside the region as well as those of us who are local.

I-NUF also provides an opportunity for local goods movement stakeholders to hear about how the rest of the world is tackling similar problems. A team from Paris will be presenting the findings from one of the world's largest urban freight surveys, a survey which reveals much about the dynamics of logistics in the French capital. The findings will be of interest to anyone who hasn't looked at Paris from the perspective of the shipper (which I assume is most of us).

Planners, policy makers, engineers, and modelers will also find a home at the conference. As a host university and host city, Long Beach should be proud of the role we play in bringing this world class group together. It speaks volumes about the contributions of our region to global trade.

For more information on the 6th International Urban Freight Conference, visit

<https://www.metrans.org/2015-i-nuf-overview>

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