



A wind of change for urban freight transport in La Rochelle

Summary of the Integrated Action Plan for La Rochelle Urban Community

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Context

As a local Public Transport Authority, La Rochelle Urban Community has, for forty years, progressively developed an integrated and sustainable mobility policy, aimed at favouring soft / clean and innovative modes. Today, this includes deliveries of urban goods by electric vehicles.



Tested through its participation in the ELCIDIS (**EL**ectric **C**ity **D**istribution **S**ystem 1998-2002) EU project, La Rochelle Urban Community has been implementing a last mile urban freight delivery service using electric vans and trucks for more than 15 years, based on receiving conventional heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and transferring goods to electric vehicles to make the last mile delivery (Elcidis urban consolidation centre).

Initially, the operation was organized through the technical services of the local authority, occupying an inner-periphery goods transfer facility close to the historic harbour and central area. Since 2006, the distribution service and consolidation centre has operated within the framework of a delegated management of public services – a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) – for the period 2006–2018.

The action has been accompanied from the inception, by the adoption of a local decree restricting the access of trucks over 3.5 tonnes to between 6.00 and 7.30 am in the central urban area of La Rochelle. To a certain extent, the ELCIDIS project and extension of the initiative has underpinned thinking on urban freight transport policy in La Rochelle, reinforced by another local decree authorizing use of bus lanes by Elcidis vans and trucks.

The current Urban Community SUMP (2011-2021) has listed four actions related to urban freight under the axis “Constructing a traffic calm urban area”. Elcidis urban consolidation centre was described as a tool to facilitate this, with benefits in terms of quality of life and potential impact on reducing emission levels in the city, which justify rolling out this solution. However, there are questions regarding the business case which still need to be resolved.

Moreover, the decision - taken in 2015 - to exclude all motorised traffic from the Old Port area at the heart of La Rochelle city centre (restricting access to only electric vehicles for deliveries, electric car-sharing, public buses, bicycles and pedestrians) strongly highlighted the lack of a framework or dedicated platform for exchanges between the local authority and local stakeholders of the logistics chain (among which shopkeepers/retailers, concerned about maintaining delivery patterns and profitability of their activities). This deficit has nevertheless turned into a dynamic that generated a broad and constant representation of stakeholders in each consultation body set up within the framework of the URBACT Freight TAILS project.

The end of the existing Public-Private Partnership contract period in 2018 has been recognised as an opportunity to consider the operational and environmental improvements of the Urban Freight Transport system in the Agglomeration. A chance to bring a new coherence by developing a comprehensive strategy for the delivery sector – notably through the production of a Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan (SULP), based on a continuous dialogue with all stakeholders of the logistic chain.

Stakeholder Engagement through Establishment of an URBACT Local Group

From March 2016, La Rochelle Urban Community organized a series of URBACT style Local Group (ULG) meetings. This group has brought together a wide range of stakeholders: shopkeepers, freight operators, hospital, chamber of commerce, county, cities, La Poste, Trade unions, elected representative, University, Engineering school, businesses and private companies. These meetings formed a crucial consultative framework, permitting frank assessment of the current local situation and consideration of a refresh for the urban freight delivery strategy in La Rochelle.

These meetings were also fed and inspired by the ideas and experiences presented by the European city partners and experts during URBACT Freight TAILS transnational meetings and thematic workshops. The ULG stakeholders proved to be supportive to the approach developed within URBACT and they expressed interest and enthusiasm, providing new ideas and topics for discussions in a very constructive way.



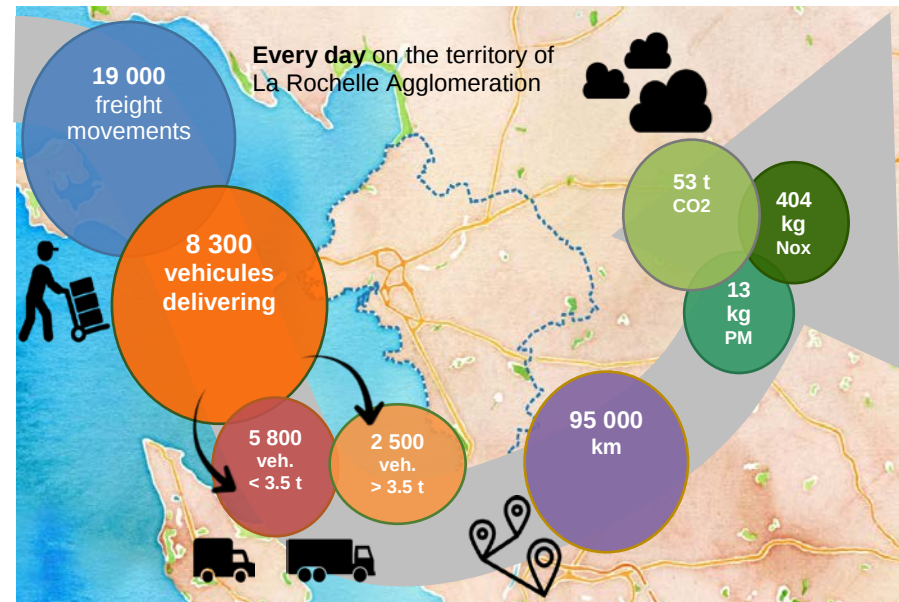
The group first discussed the current situation in La Rochelle, collaborating to establish a diagnosis of the urban freight transport situation and encompassing:

- Analysis of existing urban freight data for the territory of La Rochelle;
- Modelling through application of the FRETURB tool which generated complementary studies and additional data;
- Targeted survey of delivery bay location and operation;
- Individual interviewing of the local stakeholders.

Joint analysis : a necessary inventory of the current practices in order to consider potential improvements

A better picture of the freight movements

- Findings identify a territory with a high intensity of freight movements (101,300/week on the territory of La Rochelle Urban Community). These freight flows are especially important in La Rochelle municipality, where most businesses are concentrated -53%, with 13% in the city centre (where certain streets are highly impacted by delivery issues).
- A distribution mainly based on small vehicles, especially in the city centre where 67% of deliveries are made with light duty vehicles of less than 3.5 tonnes, authorized loaded weight.
- Only 33% of deliveries in the city center are carried out by professional carriers. The “own account” deliveries represent therefore a significant part of the freight movements. The diagnosis and interviews showed that these actors will be less inclined and adaptable to new actions compared to professional carriers. They need to be supported through changes – especially in case of a dramatic change in the regulation.



An under-performing urban freight regulation

- Current regulation systems are complex and unclear, with a lack of harmonization (up to 6 different tonnage thresholds are set, sometimes in very close proximity; 6 specific regulations apply for the city of La Rochelle, only one covering the city centre (vehicles of more than 3.5 tonnes are allowed to deliver only between 6 to 7.30 am and deliveries are allowed in the pedestrian area only from 6 to 10.30 am).

- Transport professionals are aware that local regulations related to urban logistics, applied in cities in the years to come, will be more and more designed to tackle air quality and congestion challenges. They are aware that city regulations will have to adapt to this new deal and they indicated readiness to go further in that sense.
- The organization of street delivery is less than optimal: of 68 delivery bays in the city centre, 80% are undersized and non-compliant, impractical, with heterogeneous signage.
- Enforcement of regulation is under-performing (complex control procedures, lack of manpower resources).

There is significant potential to make progress towards better compliance of an adapted regulatory framework (less complexity as regards regulation, re-dimensioning bays and repositioning them according to the density of movements measured by street, better enforcement).

Elcidis Urban Consolidation Centre (UCC): struggling to be competitive and meet targets?

The UCC is conceived as a freight management tool, focal in the definition of the agglomeration urban freight strategy, because of its potential in terms of environmental performance and consolidating the image of the territory as one of the frontrunners in terms of urban freight deliveries.

However, the assessment on the freight movements captured by the Elcidis Urban Consolidation Centre revealed that the service is not fully delivering the expected environmental and financial gains (capturing 100 freight movements per day out of 670 (15%) in the city centre generated by freight carriers - or 4% of 2,288 movements per day overall). As such, the business model is proving to be unprofitable, and unsustainable. Among the barriers and drivers, let's quote:

- the location of the Urban Consolidation Center (UCC) . Currently, the Elcidis UCC is located in La Rochelle city centre - where land is scarce and expensive -, not on the natural routes of the carriers. In addition, the train station and surrounding area (where Elcidis UCC is currently located) is programmed for comprehensive redevelopment. The area is programmed to be a residential zone. Elcidis UCC would therefore have to move in any case.
- the existing regulatory framework does not function as an incentive or controlling instrument to stimulate use of the UCC and, on a broader point of view, neither as an incentive to use 'low emission' vehicles.
- the activity of the Elcidis UCC is essentially focused around the distribution of goods and does not offer additional services to attract complementary target groups such as retailers, which could consolidate its role as an effective urban freight management tool.

Vision and Objectives

Following the diagnosis and the exchanges carried out within the ULG, shared objectives have been defined, which provide a structure to design the action set of the plan.

These objectives come from the commitment of La Rochelle's Urban Community to fully integrate freight transportation in its global mobility policy and enable the Agglomeration to keep its primacy on the thematic.

From this commitment, **four specific objectives** were set:

1. Objective 1: Improve air quality and reduce the impact of urban freight on congestion and road safety in La Rochelle City Centre
2. Objective 2: Design a coherent, well-accepted and enforceable urban freight regulation
3. Objective 3: Propose performing and innovative logistics facilities and services for professionals and citizens to boost the economic dynamics of the territory
4. Objective 4: Inform all stakeholders on urban freight and co-construct and monitor a continuous improvement strategy

Actions

A set of actions will be implemented to achieve low impact distribution of goods and services in La Rochelle Urban Community.

Action 1: Design an urban freight regulation framework favouring low emission deliveries

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 1 and 2
- Scope: limit the access of the city centre to low emission delivery vehicles: differentiated delivery time windows; limited access for conventional vehicles (step-by-step implementation); simplify the regulation in La Rochelle and its city centre
- Action leader: City of La Rochelle (local authority) (local authority)
- Main Partners: CdA LR (local authority)
- Expected results: favour access to the city centre to 'clean' vehicles, constrain the deliveries using conventional vehicles; less freight movements
- Period: 2019-2021 (step-by-step implementation)
- Costs: € : human resources, expertise

Action 2: Implement an efficient system of urban freight management based on the principle of consolidation

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 1 and 2
- Scope: The first task will be to take a decision, after the needs expressed by the stakeholders within the ULG, on the future of the urban freight consolidation approach. It will indeed be a key element of the urban freight strategy and may determine to some extent the schedule of some of the accompanying actions.

Two options - in which the role and the involvement level of the local authority will not be the same - are considered:

- Concentrate on improving the existing UCC through a new public-private partnership, establishing a viable business case, maximising the services it offers to businesses and customers, and fixing a new location on the territory of La Rochelle Urban Community;

and/or

- Implementing new policy aimed at accompanying other (existing) freight operators to comply with consolidation/'clean' vehicle delivery objectives and access requirements (provision of land, implementation of logistics areas within the city centre, vehicle procurement assistance, advice etc.).

- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: Carriers, (eventual) operators
- Expected results: More deliveries using low emission vehicles (+ 18 % (in the first year of effective implementation) to 26%(in the second and third years of effective implementation) of the freight deliveries in the city centre by low emission vehicles), less congestion (-8 % (in the first year of effective implementation) to -30% (in the second and third years of effective implementation) of delivery vehicles per day in the city centre compared to the current number)
- Period: Gradually implemented from the end of 2018 until 2021
- Costs: €€€ / €€ : The costs will depend on the option retained: investments (construction/works, vehicles, human resources), land, subsidies for the operation

Action 3: Harmonize freight regulation across the territory of La Rochelle Urban Community

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 2
- Scope: Review existing freight regulation measures and revise in accordance with new regulatory framework. Upstream communication actions in order to mitigate risks.
- Action leader: La Rochelle city (local authority)
- Main Partners: all stakeholders
- Expected results: compliance with the regulation thanks to a better understanding
- Period: 2019-2021 (step-by-step implementation)
- Costs: € : Human resources, expertise

Action 4: Urban Vehicles Access Restriction: implement an effective control/enforcement system to ensure the efficiency of the freight regulation framework

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 2
- Scope: Making sure that the control and enforcement is effective is a prerequisite to ensure that the new regulation is efficient
- Action leader: City of La Rochelle (local authority)
- Main Partners: CdA LR + Chamber of Commerce + Carriers + municipal police
- Expected results: compliance with the regulation from the carriers; comparative asset for the ones using/resorting to 'clean' vehicles
- Period: 2019-2020
- Costs: €€ : Control/Enforcement tools

Action 5: Design and implement a strategic scheme to manage and provide adequate location, supply, dimension of delivery bays

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 3
- Scope: Recalibrating the offer, location, adaptation of dimensions, signage, harmonization of the rules taking into account the actual uses
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: City of La Rochelle (local authority)
- Expected results: Make a dynamic delivery bay scheme, adapted to demand. A regulation more adapted to the deliverers/carriers, less illegal parking, less on street loading/unloading
- Period: 2019-2020
- Costs: €€ : related to the creation, cancellation, adaptation, interactive mapping of the delivery bays

Action 6: Services for professionals (carriers, suppliers and shopkeepers) of the city centre

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 3
- Scope: Reforming waste management practice, packing management/handling (returnable palettes), external joint storage / stock locations for shopkeepers, concierge local multi-services for businesses (advice and organization of business deliveries, clean light commercial vehicle rental, e-cargo bikes...)
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: Chamber of Commerce + shopkeepers/ carriers, suppliers
- Expected results: Enhance the business dynamics
- Period: 2019-2021
- Costs: €€

Action 7: Services for citizens of the city centre

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 3
- Scope: installation of package delivery deposit boxes and relay points, “concierge” local multi-services for citizens (home deliveries, laundry, ...), advice on home deliveries, associated communication campaigns on good delivery and receiver practice.
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: City of La Rochelle (local authority)+ Chamber of Commerce + district associations
- Expected results: accompany the development of e-commerce
- Period: 2019-2021
- Costs: €€

Action 8: Perpetuate the co-construction approach initiated with stakeholders within the URBACT Freight TAILS project

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 4
- Scope: Define the role of the stakeholders group, plan regular meetings, thematic focuses, define the governance framework
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: all stakeholders
- Expected results: perpetuation of a sustainable framework for exchanges on urban freight deliveries in La Rochelle
- Period: 2018
- Costs: € : human resources devoted to the animation of the group

Action 9: Follow-up the Integrated Action Plan

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 4
- Scope: Define the role and the governance of the stakeholders group, build shared and precise indicators to monitor and evaluate the Integrated Action Plan. Better take into account needs and constraints of each actor
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: all stakeholders
- Expected results: a better acceptance of the actions taken, reach a win-win situation, anticipation of the risks, alternative measures in case of serious barriers encountered or serious deviation
- Period: 2018 and beyond
- Costs: € : human resources devoted to the continuous follow-up of the action plan

Action 10: Inform and communicate on urban freight in La Rochelle

- Objectives addressed: Obj. 4
- Scope: A one-stop shop (unique website portal) for urban freight issues in La Rochelle (regulation, delivery bays interactive map, routes, aid for the purchase of low emission vehicles, online services)
- Action leader: CdA LR (local authority)
- Main Partners: City of La Rochelle – Chamber of commerce
- Expected results: clear and interactive information on freight. Satisfaction of the users.
- Period: 2019-2020
- Costs: €€ : website, update of the information

Monitoring the impacts

To monitor and evaluate the actions described below, and to measure their fits to the defined objectives, a range of indicators per action will need to be measured and followed in time. These will be compared to a baseline – notably based on the diagnosis carried out in 2017 mentioned above.

Action 1: Design an urban freight regulation framework favouring low emission deliveries

- ✓ Air quality gains - notably on CO₂, NO_x and PM emissions reduction
- ✓ Number and tonnage of deliveries using low emission vehicles within La Rochelle city centre
- ✓ Number of deliveries using low emission vehicles / conventional (measure the evolution in time)
- ✓ Number of “own account” deliveries done by low emission vehicles
- ✓ Number of final clients delivered by low emission vehicles (and level of awareness of this delivery)

Action 2: Implement an efficient system of urban freight management based on the principle of consolidation

- ✓ Air quality gains - notably on CO₂, NO_x and PM emissions reduction
- ✓ Number and tonnage of deliveries using low emission vehicles within La Rochelle city centre
- ✓ Number of freight vehicles within the city centre

Action 3: Harmonize freight regulation across the territory of La Rochelle Urban Community

- ✓ Evaluation of carriers, suppliers and shopkeepers viewpoint on the understandability of the new freight regulation framework (qualitative feedbacks)

Action 4: Implement an effective control/enforcement system to ensure the efficiency of the freight regulation framework

- ✓ Number of freight vehicles fined per year (due to illegal delivery behaviour)
- ✓ Acceptance of carriers, suppliers and shopkeepers of the new framework (qualitative feedbacks)

Action 5: Design and Implement a strategic scheme to manage and provide adequate location, supply, dimension of delivery bays

- ✓ At the level of a single delivery bay : number of freight vehicles per day (baseline / ex-post)
- ✓ At the level of a street : number of delivery vehicles using a delivery bay vs number of vehicles double-parking

Action 6: Services for professionals (carriers, suppliers and shopkeepers) of the city centre

- ✓ Number of businesses using the services

Action 7: Services for citizens of the city centre

- ✓ Number of citizens using the services

Action 8: Perpetuate the co-construction approach initiated with stakeholders within the URBACT Freight TAILS project

- ✓ Governance scheme settled (role, responsibilities...)
- ✓ Number of meetings organized per year
- ✓ Number of organizations represented per meetings
- ✓ Number of decisions or recommendations ratified

Action 9: Follow-up of the Integrated Action Plan

- ✓ Collection of data to be compared with the objectives targeted
- ✓ Number of alternative measures in operation

Action 10: Inform and communicate on urban freight in La Rochelle

- ✓ Level of awareness on freight policy and actions implemented in La Rochelle Agglomeration (qualitative and quantitative surveys)

Status / Next steps

The Integrated Action Plan, as a document, needs to be validated by the political bodies (Urban Community Council and Municipal Council) in the second semester 2018.

As described in the “Actions” section of this document :

- Some of the actions have already been initiated, notably actions 1 and 5
- Some other actions will be initiated after the formal political approval : actions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8