

August 31, 2021

Patagonia

Bowery

Strategies for Urban Mobility Policy

Case Study: New York City Council Smart,
Safe and Sustainable Delivery Bills

Introduction

Earlier this year, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson [introduced a set of bills](#) to create a smarter, safer, and more sustainable delivery footprint throughout New York. The focus of the bills was directed at the current state of daily logistical operations on the street, at the curb, and in buildings. Many of the proposed solutions are culled from successful pilots in other cities such as London, Paris, Oslo, Buenos Aires, and D.C. This legislative package attempts to address the compounding issues facing cities, delivery operators, residents, and curb management practices across the boroughs. At a more granular level, first and last mile delivery frictions have been exacerbated by the pandemic, New York City's population density, parking spaces, and increasingly outmoded public and private infrastructure.

Nearly 100 years ago, Robert Moses was drafting bills for Governor Al Smith in Albany which would lead to the first parkways, and later highways and interstates throughout New York State, connecting the city to the region. This same system of interconnected roadways became the bedrock of goods distribution throughout the Northeast. Commercial freight trucks, containerized shipping, and the rise of the internet and e-commerce began sending manufactured goods around the world to their last mile destinations on the doorsteps of New York City.

New York is not alone. Urban regions across the US are in search of smarter, safer, and more sustainable delivery options to change outdated use patterns while making leaps toward newer modes of urban mobility. These updated patterns are increasingly changing the landscape of the 21st century city.



Compounding freight and mobility issues

Last mile delivery in New York City has hit a fevered pitch between operators attempting to perform their services in a timely fashion and residential demand for goods in increasingly smaller timeframes. Goods sales and home delivery with tracking has increased while the daily operation taking place on curbs, sidewalks, and residential streets has not changed quickly enough to meet the demand. The use of trucks to bring goods in and out of the urban center has not changed drastically throughout the last century with the exception of an increase in volume. Illegally parked or idling trucks in the street, packages sorted at the curb, cluttered sidewalks, and excessive vehicle miles travelled add to the congestion in our public spaces. It is an issue that exists for myriad reasons and is not just about freight and e-commerce.

The reality of these issues is that they are not standalone problems. We believe these issues are a piece of the larger urban mobility ecosystem. Just as technology now changes from year to year as opposed to decade to decade, so does mobility—especially in our congested urban areas. This paper (and those that will follow) outlines our thoughts that while these bills are grounded in proper planning, they need to be viewed differently. Urban mobility is much larger than simply point to point movement within a developed area; it is the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services which will bring useful gains to the economic vitality of our city.

“ We need to transition into more sustainable modes of deliveries and transportation. ”

[Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez](#)

“ I consistently hear from constituents regarding the onslaught of deliveries and package sorting on our streets and sidewalks. ”

[Council Member Keith Powers](#)



People

Goods

Services

Urban Mobility

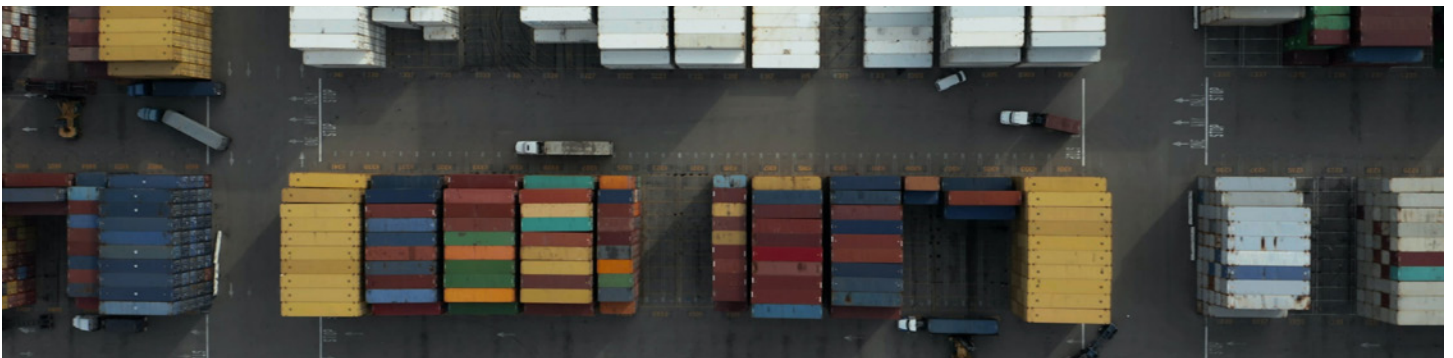
The safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services crucial to the economic vitality of a city.

Cities throughout the world are working to mitigate neighborhood frictions and support economic vitality through test pilots and programs focused on adapting the built environment and our infrastructure. NYCDOT's Office of Freight Mobility has promoted off-hour deliveries, piloted neighborhood delivery zones as well as e-cargo bike delivery and consulted with freight operators such as UPS, Fed-Ex, DHL, Amazon, and industry associations such as the Trucking Association of New York (TANY). During the public introduction of these bills at the City Council Transportation Committee meeting this spring, NYCDOT Commissioner Hank Gutman aligned with the overall direction of the package.

From our perspective, the approaches to date are appropriate but there is a small additional step that can have extensive benefit to the problem at hand. Each mobility contributor, whether it be freight, transit, micromobility, pedestrians, or countless other elements that encompass the definition, are interrelated. Approaching these issues as a whole and acknowledging they are each a piece to the question of overall mobility will improve their impact and address the greater needs of the City. We advocate that an overarching definition of *mobility* be applied to bills such as those in this series. As more are introduced they will be looked at as part of the greater picture – interlocked with bills that have come before them and setting the stage for bills that come afterwards.

“The increase in online shopping and deliveries brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has only made it clearer that the way we handle freight and shipping in most American cities just isn't working for our 21st century economy.”

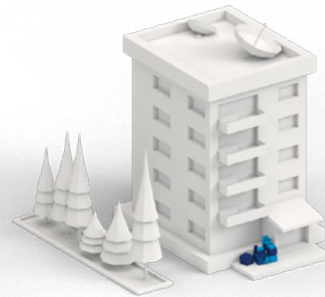
[Council Member Carlina Rivera](#)



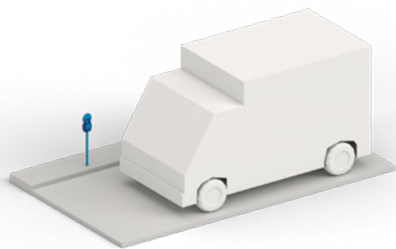
This specific package of bills has been labeled as the Council’s “Smart, Safe & Sustainable Deliveries” legislation. It is focused on exactly that and includes the following:



Bill 2253 – Creating a pilot program to establish micro-distribution centers for distributing goods via sustainable modes of transportation. (Corey Johnson)



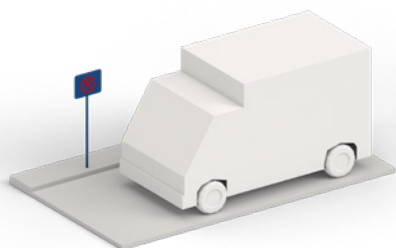
Bill 2280 – Requiring secure package storage in certain buildings. (Antonio Reynoso)



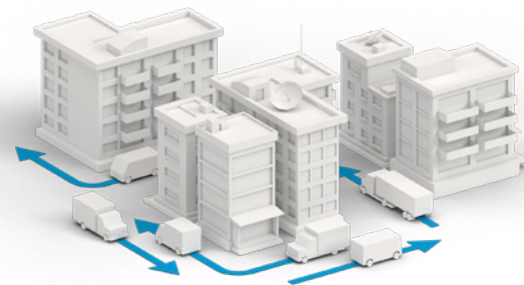
Bill 2277 – Requiring commercial loading zones to be controlled by a smart meter enforcing parking rates and extending their time limits from 3 to 8 hours. (Keith Powers)



Bill 2281 – Creating an office of sustainable delivery systems and requiring buildings that are large generators of truck traffic to produce and implement a delivery and servicing plan. (Carlina Rivera)



Bill 2279 – Requiring NYCDOT to expand commercial loading zones to at least 25% of curb space in select census tracts and zoning districts. (Antonio Reynoso)



Bill 2282 – Redesigning the truck route network to improve safety and reduce traffic congestion and emissions. (Ydanis Rodriguez)

This package of bills, and future bills, would be well served with the minor difference of “Mobility Package X: Smart, Safe & Sustainable Deliveries.” The X would be replaced by a numbering system to coordinate this and future bills that impact urban mobility. Providing this label to individual or packaged ones such as these, would refocus this and other legislation as critical to the future movement of people and goods within New York City.

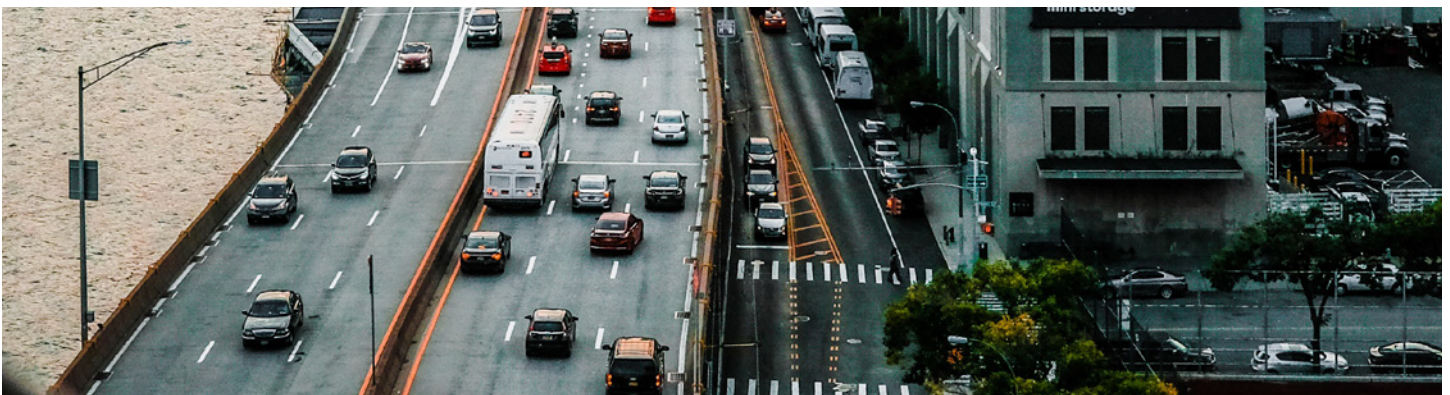
We continue to face ever changing mobility realities in New York City. Optimizing limited public rights of way and congested infrastructure through pricing and policy is a growing focus of civil servants, urban planners and engineers, along with citizen, advocacy, and interest groups. Each of these groups are invested in preparing for urban mobility solutions which encompass the entire ecosystem. Seamless mobility for people and goods throughout all of New York City can be obtained by the enhanced use of current infrastructural assets, making them easily accessed and better utilized by all New Yorkers.

According to the NYCDOT Smart Truck Management Plan, “1.5 million packages are delivered daily in New York City, with 45% of New Yorkers receiving a home delivery at least once a week.” Truck deliveries such as these to the doorsteps of buildings are one piece of the urban mobility ecosystem this package of bills focuses on. Knitting together plans for the future movement of goods and services decreases stresses to the mobility infrastructure currently in use.

Either as packages or standalone legislation, all mobility related initiatives should use this preface to more easily be identified as mobility based. The mobility prefix will connect these bills with future legislation and influence stakeholders to use this lens and interrelate them. The subsequent papers in this series will address how each bill can better be integrated into an overall mobility approach. As the City Council and City agencies continue to grapple with the issues, they cannot be done in silos that assume each part of the equation is separate and apart.

“ The quick and efficient movement of freight is critical to both the City’s economy and quality of life. ”

Council Member Antonio Reynoso



Conclusion

Freight delivery is but one segment of the larger mobility landscape. Resolutions to these issues impact other mobility activities and as such cannot be solved as separate, standalone problems. Pedestrians, bicycles, scooters, trucks, and automobiles are all part of the answer when it comes to the movement of goods and services on city streets. With the addition of the mobility definition to these and related bills (now and in the future), all interrelated affairs can be viewed as part of the same challenge with associated solutions.

Urban mobility is impacted by a multitude of factors necessitating a broader view of the considerations at hand. By placing all of these related topics under one defining umbrella, a more diverse set of options with a focused approach can unfold. This package of mobility related bills laid out by the City Council takes the first step in providing a framework for change to city operations. It is time to bring this conversation forward and position all of these points as urban mobility.

