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Off-Peak Delivery Program Could Reduce Chicago Traffic Congestion, Implementing It Requires Carefully Designed Incentives and Regulations – News Story

Recommendations Cited in New Research Report  
from Urban Transportation Center at UIC

CHICAGO (August 2016) – Reduced traffic congestion, better air quality, more efficient distribution of goods to businesses and stores, and an improved environment for pedestrians would be key benefits from implementing an off-peak delivery (OPD) program in congested parts of Chicago.

To make such a program happen, business and civic leaders will need to encourage it and the City would need to make it a priority. A formal pilot program could be a useful step to test the idea, measure the public and private benefits, and address possible concerns of supply chain carriers, businesses and residents.

Those were among conclusions reached in a recent report on policies and practices that can be used to shift deliveries of goods from congested peak traffic periods to less-congested off-peak times. Off-peak delivery programs have reduced costs and improved traffic flow in several domestic and international markets.

The report, “Exploring the Potential for Off Peak Delivery in Metropolitan Chicago: Research Findings and Conclusions,” was produced by the Urban Transportation Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The concept behind an OPD program is simple: Shift more deliveries of goods to times when there is less traffic. As noted in the report, the advantages may not be shared evenly by shippers, businesses and residents impacted by the off-hour receipt of goods: “Carriers

generally like the idea because it can save them time and money, but receiving businesses often resist it because it is inconvenient for them and can add costs. OPD offers broad public benefits from lessened congestion and improved air quality, but neighbors may have concerns about nighttime noise.”

Researchers found that some Chicago businesses have already adopted some OPD practices. Further study should be undertaken to better understand the scope and benefits realized, and the extent to which market forces alone might increase OPD.

Next steps proposed for an OPD program in Chicago include:

- Recognize businesses that currently accept deliveries during non-traditional hours and encourage others to take up the practice.
- Consider incentives for businesses that will accept deliveries during non-peak hours.
- Encourage shipping companies to offer reduced pricing to customers who agree to accept off-peak shipments.
- Explore transportation demand strategies, like variable pricing for loading zones, that could lead shippers and trucking companies to shift some deliveries to off-peak times.
- Carefully design and enact regulatory measures that would require certain types of businesses in congested locations to accept some deliveries during off-peak hours.

The report was prepared by UTC researchers James C. LaBelle and Sheena F. Frève, with support from graduate student researcher Ellen Gottschling. Funding was provided by the NURail Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the research team collaborated with the Supply Chain Innovation Network of Chicago (SINC).

Here’s how you can learn more about the study into launching an off-peak delivery program in Chicago: [Get access to the complete report and read an abstract.](#)

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