

## Virtual Loading Bays in London

Loading and unloading in Virtual Loading Bays (VLB) is part of a more general kerbside management strategy in London. Virtual Loading Bays are also included in the London Mayor's Air Quality Strategy (2019) and are being adopted by boroughs across London. Virtual Loading Bays were first trialled in south-west London in 2017.

### Objectives

Guaranteed time-spliced kerb slots for delivery vehicles are meant to create certainty of parking location, preventing circling and therefore reducing congestion and emissions. Vehicles can park and directly load outside the door rather than from a 'legal' loading bay situated further away (which may be occupied).

A Virtual Loading Bay can reduce costs associated with administering and receiving penalty charge notices for both councils and operators, as well as reduce fuel through more optimised deliveries and better multi-drop planning capability. Other benefits include bookable rapid chargers in reserved bays and access to previously difficult-to-reach locations.

### Description

A Virtual Loading Bay allows drivers to park closely to their delivery point without causing congestion or running the risk of receiving a penalty charge notice. Local authorities will decide the fee and which locations are to be used. These can be vehicle and time specific to help nudge behaviour into off-peak periods and to prioritise low-emission vehicles. This can help manage poor air quality hotspots, incentivise the use of cleaner delivery vehicles, and improve traffic flow across the borough.

### Impact & outcomes

The integration of a digital parking and reservation layer with the existing freight and traffic management processes is a potential asset for fulfilling a safe and low emission freight delivery system. By tackling these challenges, freight and servicing can support the transition towards electric vehicles and beyond, unlocking additional revenue as fleets look to optimise their operations.

The pilots of this innovative measure have demonstrated the administrative, environmental and commercial benefits of moving to a digitally managed and compliant kerbside. In their further developments, using technologies and Apps like the AppyWay and the kerbside management platform Mapper as the interface, the public sector partner is potentially be able to pilot:

- Dynamic Traffic Management Orders (TMOs) to meet the demands of an ever-changing network. Under-utilised space can be freed up for freight to mitigate congestion.
- Real-time availability for freight. By integrating a suite of technologies to monitor the live and historical usage of parking assets
- Connect logistics API. Supporting freight by sharing real-time kerbside and highways restrictions, reducing network disruption, and avoiding conflicts with vulnerable road users

And for the freight partners:

- Route planning based on active TMOs. Providing open TMO data to fleets to enable them to plan their routes based on existing restrictions.
- Real-time delivery locations. Support freight movements by sharing the real-time availability of loading areas, waiting areas and free parking bays through the AppyWay Kerbside API.
- Asset reporting. Real-time feedback of network disruption, blocked assets and issue management driving faster resolution and reducing network disruption.

The Regent Street project highlighted that reductions in vehicle movements of 85 per cent (with commensurate emissions reductions) are possible.

## **Barriers / constraints and how they have been overcome**

Difficulty in getting businesses to engage. Furthermore, parking technology is key to improving and streamlining parking provision nationally, but take-up has been slow. The need for upfront capital investment, ongoing relationships with current providers and hesitation to commit to an uncertain future have all held up progress. While most London boroughs have moved away from cash payments in favour of payment by phone, the take-up of parking apps and automated payments is still low, though more prevalent among younger people. Steps towards standardisation are already underway – with a Department for Transport-funded initiative to develop new national and global parking data standards that support data sharing. All that should facilitate the development of apps to make parking easier.

## **Time for planning and implementation**

The City of London recognises freight as a problem, and it has committed to delivering another kerbside review by 2022 in its draft Transport Strategy. This will include identifying locations to prioritise commercial vehicles access to the kerbside, flexible kerbside use and reviewing opportunities to integrate technology for real-time kerbside management.

## **Rough costs and resources**

The Kerb Virtual Parking System (VPS) was done as part of Innovate UK's £19m investment fund (2019).

# Good Practice

Further information available at / from

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultation-document-3-draft-revised-air-quality-action-matrix.pdf>

