Surveys of Freight Movement in the Old Town, Tallinn, Estonia

Surveys of freight activity and businesses to understand the lack of conformance to regulations

Freight movements in Tallinn Old Town are a major issue, especially in the summer. In 2015 Tallinn City Government defined freight routes and identified loading zones for the area, available 06:00-10:00 am.

Recognising these regulations were not working as planned, the city surveyed local freight operators and businesses; worked with police to encourage regulation compliance of freight operators; and engaged local stakeholders to discuss possible solutions.
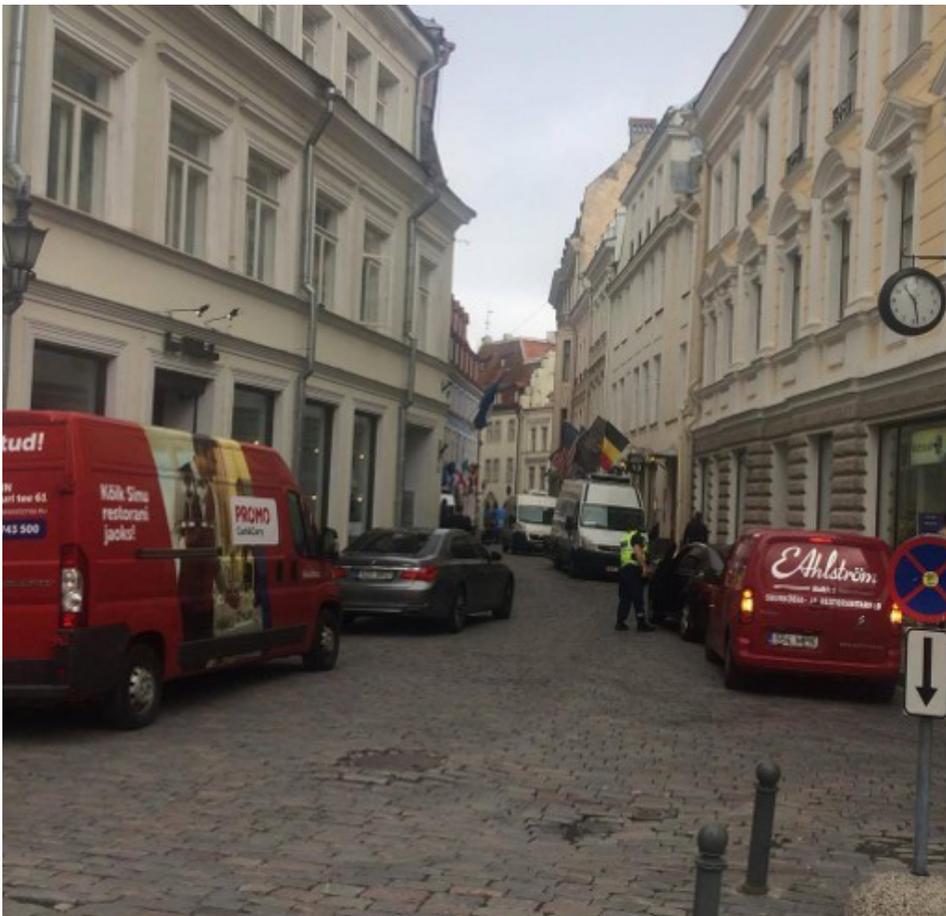
Survey of freight operators and businesses to ensure both sides were understood

Engagement with all stakeholders, including the local police, to find relevant solutions

Surveys proved regulations and business behaviour don't match, and that changing freight movement starts from changing the ways of thinking

Additional controls on freight movement are likely to be needed in the future

Scope of works

The Old Town, Tallinn has narrow streets, a wide range of businesses, and over 700,000 tourists annually. Resident and tourist safety is paramount, but every day dozens of freight movements in and out of the Old Town increases the risks to vulnerable road users. The Old Town has the highest density of businesses in Tallinn, with on average 4-5 cafes/restaurants/shops per 100 metres.

To understand where freight vehicles were moving, and to determine the effectiveness of the Old Town unloading and loading zones, the city has:

- Held workshops with freight companies to understand their views and get data on their movements
- Collected traffic camera data to see which vehicles were breaking the rules
- Conducted a face-to-face survey of businesses in the restricted area to understand their viewpoint and solutions
- Involved the state police, who conducted 6 enforcement operations in the Old Town, talked to operators and fined those breaking the rules.

Outcomes

59 businesses answered the survey questionnaire. The results showed that the behaviours of smaller businesses account for most of the issues with loading and unloading: larger business, appear to have better organised deliveries. In addition, many business owners were concerned that any future change to regulations could make their current activity more complicated.

The supporting police operations showed that up to 50 vehicles/hour broke the restricted access rules. On days after the police operations occurred, this dropped to about 30 vehicles/hour. This proved that the police actions have an impact (as operators realise that if they break the rules they may get fined) but shows that the underlying issue of non-compliance with regulations remains.

Lessons learnt

- no easy solution to the freight traffic problem
- all stakeholders must acknowledge the problem and work together to find solutions
- fines and police raids do not give the results the city needs.

Future of the project

With growing vehicle numbers, delivery systems must change to support better coordination using fewer vehicles. Enforcement of new laws is likely, but business owners and logistics companies also needs to change their ways of thinking.

Options under consideration:

- amending delivery time regulations
- installing automatic bollards
- providing freight loading areas on the Old Town edge.

In the meantime, police operations will continue to educate and enforce existing regulations.

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up to 50 vehicles/hour ignore the delivery time window 06:00 – 10:00 in the Old Town

Freight operators act as a result of businesses not wanting to change delivery times

Engagement with stakeholders created a climate of greater awareness and cooperation, but no easy answers

Future options include the use of automatic bollards to ensure rules are observed

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Freight TAILS Integrated Action Plan for Tallinn