4 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SEATTLE CURB OCCUPANCY STUDY

Cities that want to strategically manage their load/unload space network, which includes private loading bays and alleys, can use the toolkit to replicate the UFL curb occupancy study and generate much-needed data and findings to inform policy and practice.

The Seattle curb occupancy study produces several key findings that give policymakers and transportation officials new understanding of the Seattle Greater downtown area curb system and how the system can best be managed to avoid massive gridlock. Among those findings are that:

1. Commercial and passenger vehicle drivers use CVLZs and PLZs fluidly: commercial vehicles are parking in PLZs and passenger vehicles are parking in CVLZs.

2. Most commercial vehicle (CV) demand is for short-term curb parking: 15 or 30 minutes.

3. Service CVs made up more than one-third of the total CVs parked at the curb; urban parking schemes must factor in current service CV parking behavior and their future parking demand.

4. Forty-one percent of CVs parked in unauthorized curb locations. But a much higher share parked in unauthorized areas near the two retail centers as compared to the predominately office and residential areas. Curb parking behavior is associated with granular, building-level urban land use, even as other factors such as the total number, length and ratio of CVLZs versus PLZs varied widely across the five study areas.

In many cities, curb space is allocated by vehicle type: to transit, passenger, or freight vehicles. Yet the curb occupancy study shows drivers often do not follow those designations in their parking choices. And it shows that many commercial vehicles park for short periods of time. Cities seeking to mitigate gridlock can manage curb space more flexibly, allowing different vehicle types to park in the same spaces based on the amount of time and space (due to vehicle size) they need. Curb space could be more effectively managed using emerging technologies that offer integrated data systems and real-time data to improve the productivity of finite load/unload spaces and reduce drivers circling the block in search of parking. Curb space should be managed in concert with the other elements of the load/unload network, not in isolation.