

4. KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SEATTLE ALLEY INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY

Cities that want to strategically manage their load/unload space network can use the toolkit to replicate the pioneering UFL alley survey and generate much-needed data and findings to inform policy and practice.

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

- More than 90% of Center City area alleys are only one-lane wide. This creates an upper limit on alley parking capacity, as each alley can functionally hold only one or two vehicles at a time.
- When informed by the second key finding—68% of vehicles in the alley occupancy study parked there for 15 minutes or less—it becomes clear that moving vehicles through alleys in short time increments is the only reasonable path to increase productivity.

As one parked vehicle operationally blocks the entire alley, the Urban Freight Lab team concludes that the goal of new alley policies and strategies should be to reduce the amount of time alleys are blocked to additional users. Adding to street congestion and pollution by pushing commercial vehicles onto surface streets to circle until an alley is free is an undesirable outcome. Rapid changes in the city's built environment call for regularly updated alley surveys, such as every five years.