



SUPPLY CHAIN INSIGHTS

SUSTAINABLE LOGISTICS TRANSPORT: AS MUCH ABOUT PEOPLE POWER AS TECHNOLOGY

Technology and data will be game changers in reducing road transportation emissions – but ultimately it's about the people who are helping to unlock their potential says Stephan Schablinski, VP Global GoGreen at DHL.

DHL Supply Chain – Excellence. Simply delivered.

Buy anything online, and it's almost certain that road transportation will play some part in delivering it to you.

Similarly, wherever you are in the world, drive along any major road and note the volume of logistics lorries and vans you'll pass.

Put the two things together and it's not hard to see why supply chain transportation has a big role to play in efforts to cut carbon emissions.

In fact, the logistics industry is second only to the energy sector in the power it has to curb the advances of climate change – a tricky challenge given the often vast distances that separate goods from where they are made to where they are delivered, and consumers' increasing reliance on e-commerce.

With electric vehicles (EVs) becoming more commonplace on the world's roads, electrification and other alternative drive trains and fuels will play a big role in creating more sustainable transportation, but it's just one part of a sustainability approach that needs to be holistic.

Decarbonization investment

Tackling a huge challenge such as decarbonization requires huge investment. At DHL, we are investing a total of 7 billion euros over the next ten years in measures to reduce CO₂e emissions. This includes

the expansion of our zero-emission e-vehicle fleet to 60% for the last mile as well as increasing the use of sustainable fuels in line-haul operations to cover more than a third by 2030.

Working towards our target of zero emissions by 2050, DHL has also committed to new, ambitious interim targets – for example, as part of the acclaimed Science Based Target initiative (SBTi) the Group has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in line with the Paris Climate Agreement.

Part of the answer to reducing emissions certainly lies in the use of fewer, cleaner, quieter vehicles. In the UK our first purpose-built, fully electric 16-tonne vehicle is now on the road. The Volvo FL Electric 4x2 rigid is part of DHL Supply Chain's fleet in London, making last mile deliveries into the West End shopping district.

In terms of larger, heavy goods vehicles, it is estimated that it will be around five years before we can expect to see electric or hydrogen vehicles on the roads. While we are actively involved in road testing battery electric and hydrogen heavy goods vehicles in real world operations, until vehicles can span larger ranges and the charging infrastructure is more widely available, there can be no large reduction in our carbon footprint.

However, this is where renewable natural gas comes into the picture as a powerful bridging technology. In the Czech Republic we are already using liquefied natural gas to power some of our trucks, reducing CO₂e emissions.

Holistic approach

But while alternative drive trains and fuels are a large step forwards towards decarbonization, there are many other measures that are being taken, and initiatives that are underway.

Even the most CO₂e-friendly truck is creating too much CO₂e if its load capacity is not well utilized, with no load planned for the return trip, or if it is not being driven in a fuel efficient way.

A combination of data-driven, optimized use of the truck's capacity, the reduction of empty trips, and well-trained drivers can make a huge difference.

Design also plays a part. Standard vehicle specifications now include innovations such as solar panels and aerodynamic, more efficient designs. The use of 'tear drop', long and double decker trailers improve carbon efficiency, without the need to compromise on load capacity.

Small interventions, significant rewards

While electrification, technology and data grab the headlines, perhaps the least heralded element of sustainable road transportation is the role that people play, thanks to the DHL Certified GoGreen Specialist program.

This trains and unites everyone connected to driving, transport planning and solution design, educating them on ways to reduce fuel consumption by making greener choices.

Factors such as fuel-efficient driving, intelligent planning of trucks to reduce mileage, using the right number of trucks to do a job and avoiding empty backhauls all make a difference. The idea is that, at scale, small interventions in vehicle use, systems and planning will produce significant rewards.

Since 2007, DHL has reduced its CO₂e output in transport by more than 38% and work continues to improve this further. Drivers themselves have the power to cut CO₂e emissions, through small but consistent interventions such as reducing speed to an optimum 55mph, avoiding idling, and braking and accelerating more smoothly.

Everyone can be a sustainability advocate

Making real progress in the journey towards decarbonization is therefore as much about the small but significant changes every person can make at DHL as it is down to cutting edge technologies.

I firmly believe that making transport more sustainable isn't about a few people within a business making decisions – it's about turning everyone involved into a sustainability advocate.

