

Projects

Urban Freight Scoping Study

Developing an evidence base to support better planning for urban freight in Australia and New Zealand.



LOCATION

NSW

CLIENT

Austrroads

Policy & Strategy Development

Background

The Urban Freight Scoping Study was commissioned by Austrroads to address a growing challenge facing cities across Australia and New Zealand: the rapid expansion and increasing complexity for urban freight. Population growth, eCommerce, and higher density living have driven a shift towards more frequent, smaller deliveries, placing pressure on already constrained urban environments.

Despite the critical role urban freight plays in supporting economic activity and daily life, planning and policy responses have been inconsistent across jurisdictions. Freight movements within cities, particularly last mile deliveries, are often not well understood, poorly measured, and insufficiently integrated into planning frameworks.

Austrroads engaged NineSquared with Lachlan Benson from Blue Arcadia to provide a clear and evidence-based understanding of the urban freight task, identify key challenges, and explore opportunities for better policy and planning outcomes.

Our role

NineSquared supported the delivery of a comprehensive scoping study that brought together research, stakeholder insights to inform decision-making. The engagement involved:

- **Literature Review:** Assessing existing research and best practice approaches to urban freight in Australia, New Zealand and internationally.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Consulting with 56 stakeholders across 30 organisations, including government agencies, industry representatives and planners, to capture real-world insights and challenges.
- **Problem definition and analysis:** Identifying issues such as congestion, limited loading infrastructure, inconsistent planning, labour constraints and fragmented data availability.

- **Development of an Urban Freight Evaluation Framework:** Creating a practical tool for policy makers to assess urban freight across five critical dimensions including demand, productivity, network performance, land use capacity and externalities.

The study established a shared evidence base for urban freight, highlighting the increasing scale and complexity of the task, while identifying clear gaps in data, policy and planning capability. It also outlined actionable opportunities for government to better support freight outcomes, including improving awareness among policymakers, trialling targeted interventions (such as off-peak deliveries and micro-freight solutions), and enabling data sharing between industry and government.

Importantly, the project delivered a structured and practical framework that can be applied by transport agencies and planners to inform future investment, policy development and operational decisions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The full report can be downloaded from the Austroads website [here](#).

To learn more about how NineSquared supports transport agencies to plan for complex, evolving systems view our transport and infrastructure advisory services on the NineSquared website.