

# Off-hour truck deliveries in Manhattan reduce traffic, empower business owners

September 17 2013

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A federal study led by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is helping make Manhattan streets cleaner, less congested, and more profitable for businesses by shifting daytime delivery truck traffic to after normal business hours. Credit: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

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businesses by shifting daytime delivery truck traffic to after normal business hours.

Rensselaer Professor Jose Holguín-Veras is leading this innovative program in conjunction with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). Since launching in 2011, the program—called NYC deliverEASE—has enlisted nearly 150 restaurants, grocery stores, retailers, and other businesses in Manhattan to accept their freight deliveries between the off-hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. instead of during normal business hours. The feedback from companies, which received a \$2,000 cash incentive to participate in the program, has been overwhelmingly positive.

Holguín-Veras said this new model of unassisted off-hour deliveries—truck drivers use keys to drop off goods at the store or restaurant and lock up afterward—benefits participating businesses, the delivery companies, and the overall [economic health](#) and vibrancy of Manhattan. Participating companies range from small restaurants and delis to larger companies. Organizations already participating in NYC deliverEASE include: Sysco, Whole Foods Markets, Wakefern, Gristedes Supermarkets, the Waldorf Astoria, Chefs Warehouse, The Beverage Works, CVS, New Deal Logistics, the Grand Central Partnership, the Downtown Alliance, and the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce.

"Restaurant and grocery store owners can easily run out of products, because they don't know if their food deliveries are going to arrive at 9 a.m. or 3 p.m. So, just in case, they often buy extra, which is inefficient and expensive," Holguín-Veras said. "With unassisted off-hour deliveries, they know their fresh products are going to be there waiting for them every morning. This consistent, reliable delivery pattern improves the ability of business owners to manage their supply chain, which in turn allows them to be more efficient and better serve

customers."

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) is funding this program. NYCDOT and Rutgers University are partnering with Rensselaer on this project.

Several leaders from participating business have commented on the program:

- "Whole Foods Market Union Square has enjoyed the ability to take deliveries in overnight, serve our customers better, and enhance our commitment to the environment through more efficient trucking operations." – Mary Snow Thurber, Director of Receiving, Whole Foods Market Northeast Region
- "The off-hours delivery program . . . [is] a win-win as business owners and citizens will both realize real immediate benefits." – Nick Kenner, Managing Partner, Just Salad LLC
- "Sysco has been involved in this program since its inception, because we want to support programs that improve quality of life for people in NYC by reducing traffic congestion." Bobby Heim, – Vice President of Operations, Sysco Metro New York

NYC deliverEASE Program also benefits the delivery companies, Holguín-Veras said. During business hours, delivery trucks spend an average of two hours at each stop. With unassisted off-hour deliveries, drivers were able to park directly in front or back of the business, and the average time spent at each stop was only 30 minutes. Additionally, average travel speeds at night are twice as fast as during the daytime.

If just 6 percent of New York deliveries shifted to the off hours, the difference to livability in the city would be substantial, with less congestion, visible display windows in retail establishments, and open street space during daytime hours, Holguín-Veras said. Such a 6 percent

shift to off-hour deliveries also could result in a reduction of carbon monoxide emissions of more than 100 tons each year. All of these benefits add up to less daytime truck traffic on Manhattan's busy streets, which makes it easier for tourists and local residents to visit and patronize downtown businesses.

Holguín-Veras is the William Howard Hart Professor at Rensselaer, and a member of the university's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. He is also director of the Center for Infrastructure, Transportation, and the Environment at Rensselaer.

Provided by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Citation: Off-hour truck deliveries in Manhattan reduce traffic, empower business owners (2013, September 17) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-off-hour-truck-deliveries-manhattan-traffic.html>

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