

Where does the cargo bike stop?

Distribution to (inner)cities is a very complex matter: shops, enterprises, inhabitants, etc. want to receive their goods, but people are not keen on noisy, smelling, polluting trucks while they are shopping. The cargo bike is a rising star in these complex logistic surroundings.

Growing complexity

In the area of city distribution we see a lot of changes: to improve the quality of the air within cities, municipalities put a limit to the number of delivery hours, they pull up limits to the level of emissions vehicles delivering within the inner city may produce, or they try other measures to prevent lorries and vans to enter the city.

Nevertheless inhabitants, shops, enterprises, etc. still want to have their goods delivered at their addresses. And that is where the popularity of the cargo bike is growing to deliver within the inner city. In the meanwhile the old-fashioned cargo bike has been transformed into a fast and efficient means of transport.



Source: www.flickriver.com

Take a ride!

In many cities the (cargo)bike has been discovered as being a fast alternative to vans. That is because the cargo bike has some important advantages in comparison to vans. In the first place you need no driving licence and no minimum age is required. The costs of purchase of a cargo bike are comparable to that of a simple van, due to the limited number and specific demands. But costs of fuel are low (refilling the battery), you do not have to pay road taxes, and you need no registration of deliveries, like you do using a van. Furthermore a cargo bike can reach many places where a van is



not allowed to enter and you have hardly any problems in finding a parking place. And last, but not least: a cargo bike has no harmful emissions. In short: a cargo bike is cheaper and it can be used in specific situations. We see that a (cargo)bike is already often being employed. Velocity (a company for distribution by (cargo)bike in the Nijmegen region) says they ride about 500 kilometres daily; some 130,000 kilometres yearly!

Source: www.trapkracht.blogspot.com

Applications

The use of cargo bikes is at its best in urban areas, where a lot of orders have to be delivered within a small distance from one another. In several cities, especially those with a historical centre, with its characteristic narrow streets, the cargo bike seems to be an ideal means of transport. Next to this development the rise of the popularity of shopping on the internet is favourable to the use of cargo bikes: with an increasing number of small packages to be delivered within a restricted area the cargo bike is at its best. The larger couriers, such as DHL, TNT and UPS have rediscovered the use of cargo bikes in urban areas and nowadays a large number of different models are driving across the world.



Source: www.vogelvrijfietser.nl

Innovations

The technical domain of the cargo bike knows many innovations. At first it were mostly bike couriers with a specialised backpack or cycle-bags who found their way through the dense traffic. Due to an increasing demand for delivery of bigger parcels the common bike was accommodated with a larger loading space or a (small) trailer. The electric support for pedalling was an important innovation, because it increased the distance that could be covered as well as the weight of cargo that could be handled. This electric support needs a controlling device that

decides when support is needed. Next to the innovations around the electric support it is the loading area that invites to think of innovations: what is the best location, how can you make silent shutters that can be opened and locked easily, how can we find a flexible lay-out of the inside of the box, etc. Furthermore you can think of innovations in driving comfort, protection against bad weather, number of wheels, construction of the frame, aerodynamics, etc. etc.



Source: www.123fietsen.nl

And what can we innovate in the domain of suspension?

For everyone who wants to know about the actual developments in the world of the cargo bike it is recommended to visit the Cycle Logistics Conference on april 12th in Nijmegen (Netherlands); a conference combined with the Cargo Bike Festival.

Frontiers

The cargo bike and the van grow towards one another: on the one hand the cargo bike grows faster and larger (at this moment the limits for cargo are around 2 m³ and some 350 kilogram's); on the other hand the van gets cleaner with less harmful emissions. At what point do we speak of a cargo bike, and when does it become a van? Insurance companies do not know yet how to deal with this means of transport. Both vehicles have their own area in which they perform best. We wonder at what point we will stop to call a vehicle a cargo bike and where we the start talking about a van.

Bert Wolters, Elst, 2014-04-08