





16:45 - 18:15

📍 Wednesday, 26 November 2025  
⌚ 16:45 - 18:15

### SESSION 3F

Green Freight, Bright Future

### SPEAKER

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**POLIS25**  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
26-27 November 2025  
Royal Jaarbeurs | Utrecht, Netherlands

# Green Freight, Bright Future for Boston (?)

Can we brighten Boston when it's so bleak to begin with??

- Minimal cycling-for-delivery culture
- Most delivery accomplished by car or truck



*Source: Toby McGuire*

# Changing landscape

**On-demand + e-commerce explosion**

**“I want it that way”**

Between January 2019 to July 2020, increase of packages by 65% to avg. of 5.3 packages per household/week (US)

**More people, more stuff**

**A numbers game:**

Boston growing by projected 20% by 2030 (to 724k)

# Changing landscape

## A Variety of Commercial Demand

**One size does not fit all:**

Parcel delivery, on-demand, app-based gig workers, food and bev. resupply, large commercial...

## The (post) COVID Life

**60% say behavior has changed forever:**

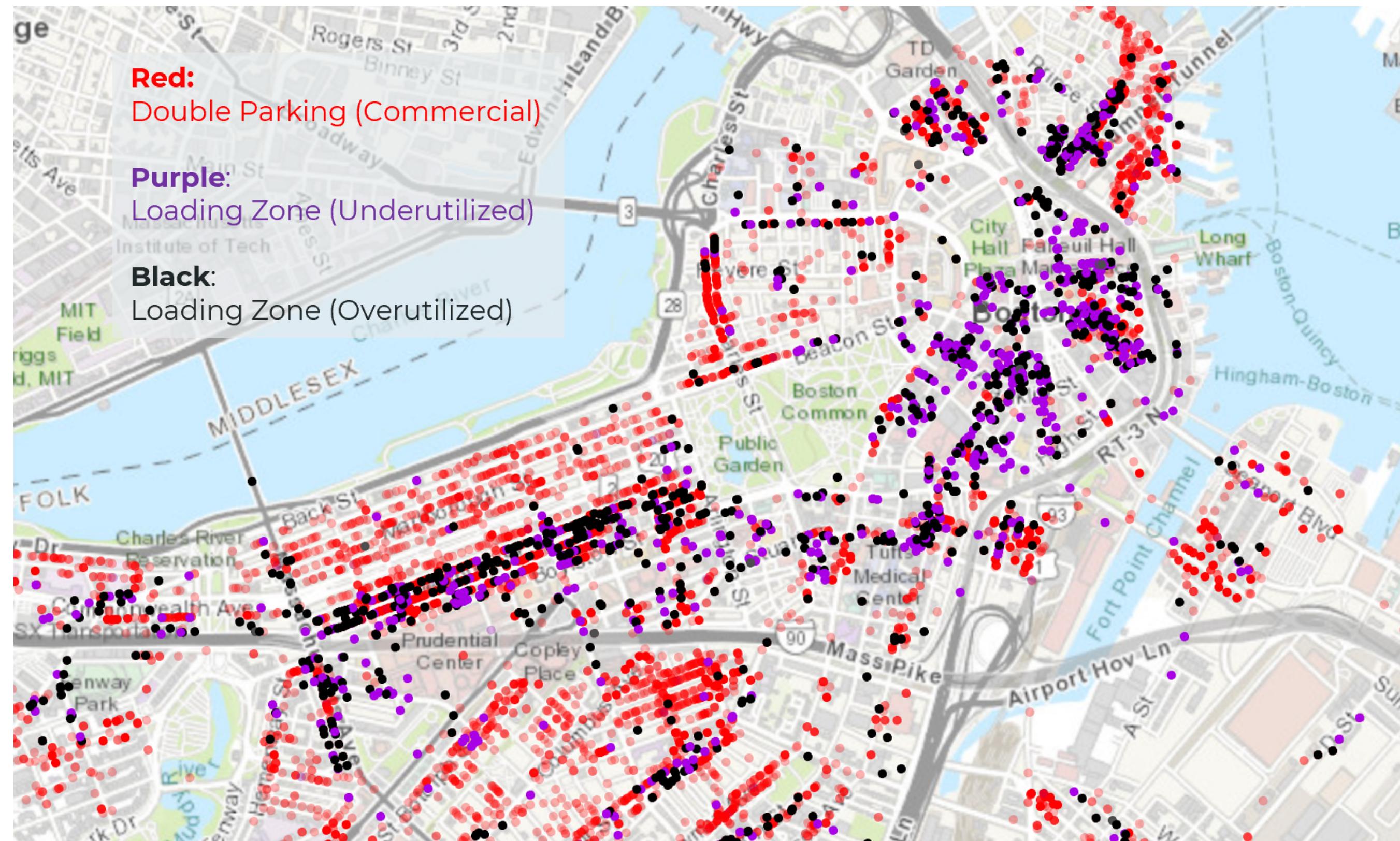
More...takeout, “click and collect” pickup, on-demand deliveries, grocery delivery...

# Curb appeal

Without policy intervention,

# of delivery vehicles  
projected to increase +36%  
from 2019 to 2030

...and +32% CO2e...



# The e-cargo bike has entered the intercontinental chat



[Source: Le Parisien](#)



[Source: Curbed NYC](#)

# Boston Delivers pilot program

*“Promote an e-cargo bike delivery service for businesses in Boston”*

## Goals for the pilot:



Reduce Urban Congestion



Reduce Carbon Emissions



Improve Safety



Support Local Businesses



Source: City of Boston

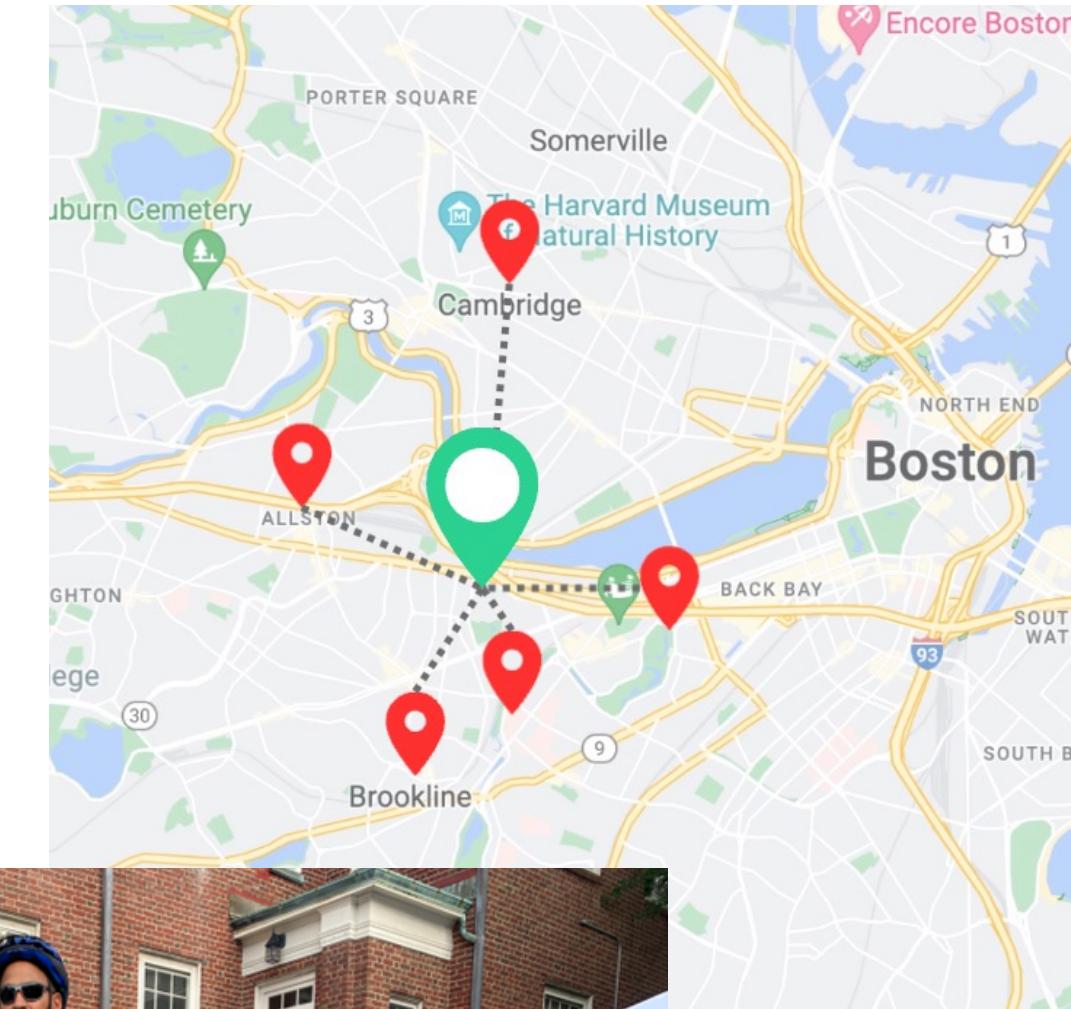
# Neighborhood + vendor choices

Neighborhood: focus on equitable benefits

Subsidies to small and minority-owned businesses in Allston and Brighton neighborhoods, but low-density + car/truck oriented

Vendor: turnkey operator but new to market

Net Zero Logistics (NZL) provided electric cargo bikes, made the deliveries, and coordinated logistics



Source: Net Zero Logistics

# Funding approach

**Only through a City-sponsored program and subsidy could Boston test the market for e-cargo bike delivery**

- \$500,000 usd budgeted for pilot
- Rent and space build out more costly than expected
- Heavy subsidy to draw NZL to participate
- 18,000+ deliveries (\$6 subsidy per delivery)

<b>SUMMARY OF ACTUAL GRANT EXPENDITURES</b>	
<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Grant Expenditure</b>
Build out/improvements	\$31,000
Rent	\$110,000
Equipment	\$28,000
Delivery subsidies	\$110,500
Outreach/marketing	\$57,000
Additional staff time	\$28,500
<b>TOTAL Subcontractor</b>	<b>\$365,000</b>
Pilot evaluation	\$125,000
<b>Overall Grant Total</b>	<b>\$490,000</b>

*Source: City of Boston*

# Types of tours

- Focus on catering + meal delivery for low-income households
- Only found one participating local restaurant (OliToki)

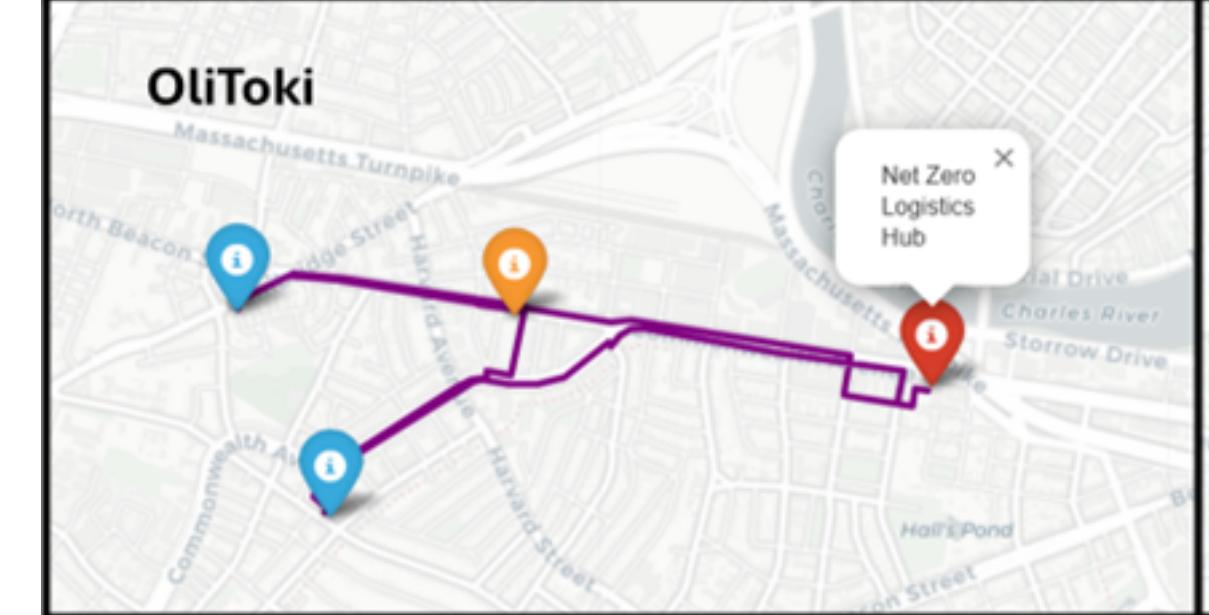
Catered meals:  
*pretty good use case*

Direct one-to-one deliveries:  
***bad use case***

*One-to-many (tour)*



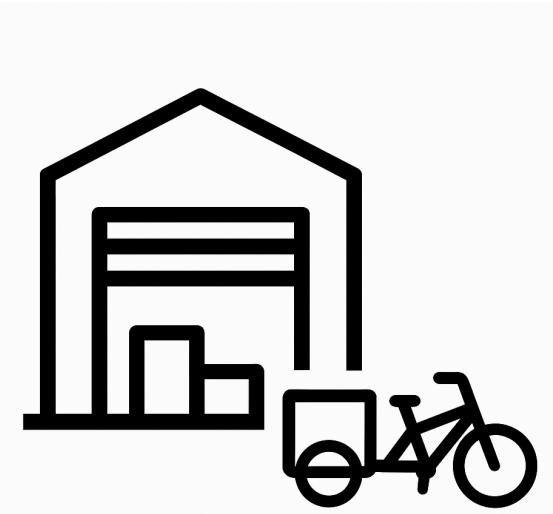
**OliToki**



Source: City of Boston

*One-to-one deliveries*

# Hard infrastructure needs



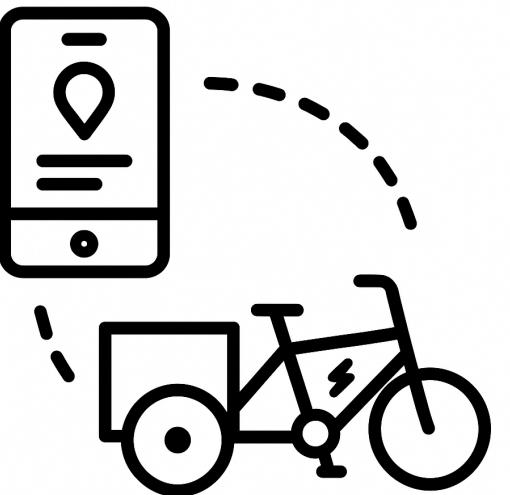
## Physical investment was mostly obvious

- Indoor hub location
- “Small Vehicle Delivery Zone” curbside designation
- Battery storage requirements not well defined by City code



*Indoor hub, before launch of pilot.  
Source: Net Zero Logistics*

# “Soft” infrastructure needs



Technological investment was a major gap

- Food delivery apps not integrated with 3rd party logistics operator
- Restaurants had to set up new ordering systems



# How did it go?

## The stats:

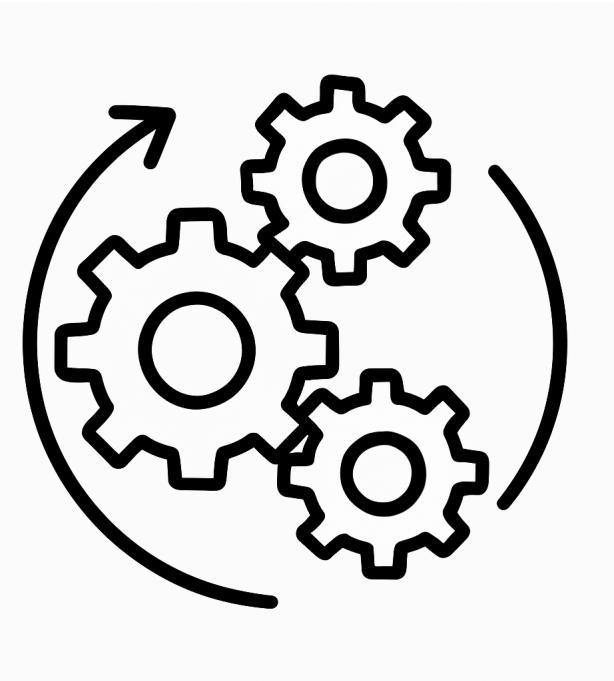
- 18-month pilot from Sept. 2023 to Feb. 2025
- 18,375 deliveries made
  - Most to underserved, food-insecure populations

## An uphill climb:

- Secured 4 clients **despite significant outreach**
- Estimate of almost 10,000 cargo bike km's for 3,000 kg CO2e avoided
  - Still, **only ~0.005% of Boston's annual emissions**



# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 1 of 6



## Pilots Require Maximum Flexibility

**Pilots are experiments: cities should be creative and flexible to improve the odds of success**

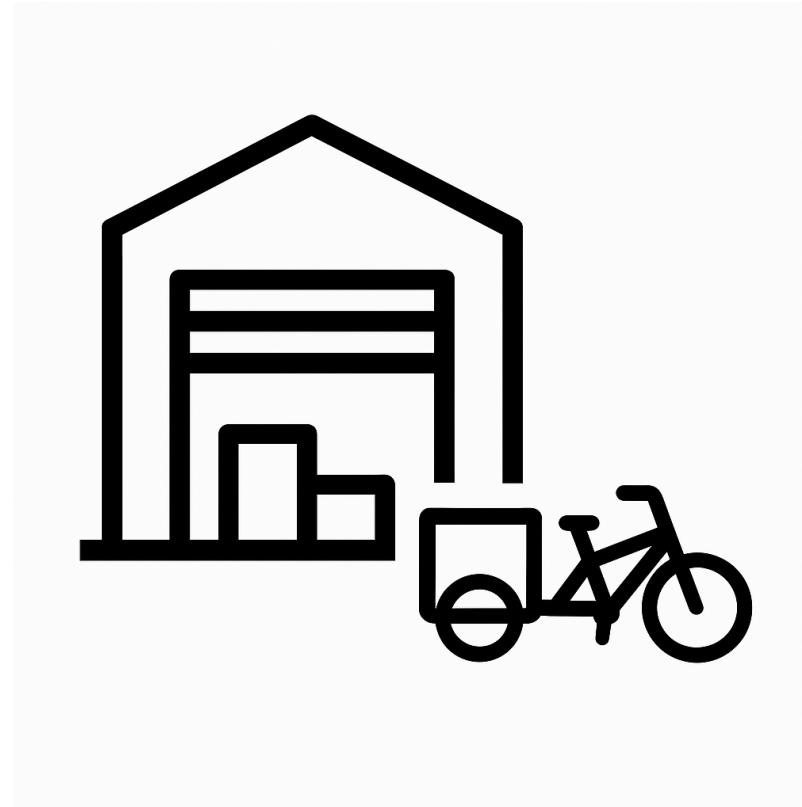
# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 2 of 6



## Get Ahead on Stakeholder Outreach

**It is never too early to understand the market and your stakeholders**

# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 3 of 6



Consider your Staging Plan

**Cargo bikes need the right location and facilities to perform.**

# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 4 of 6



## Define the Use Case

**Cities and partners must find the “sweet spot” for what can and should be delivered by e-cargo bike**

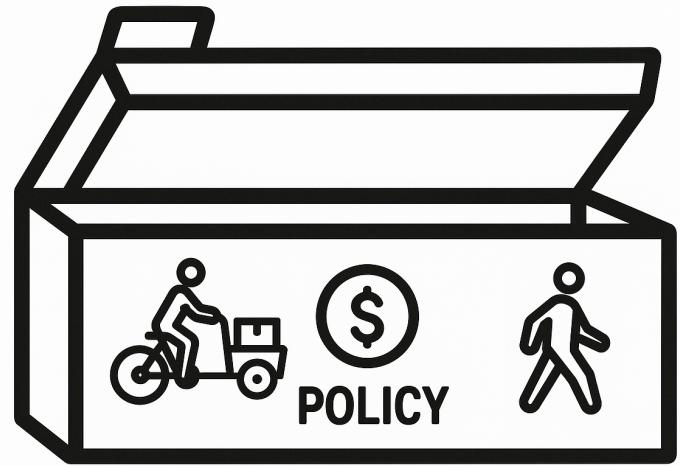
# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 5 of 6



## Anticipate and Budget the Costs

**Cities and partners need to overcome high start-up costs and thin margins that can be barriers to success in sustainable delivery pilots**

# Cargo Bike Pilot Recommendations: 6 of 6

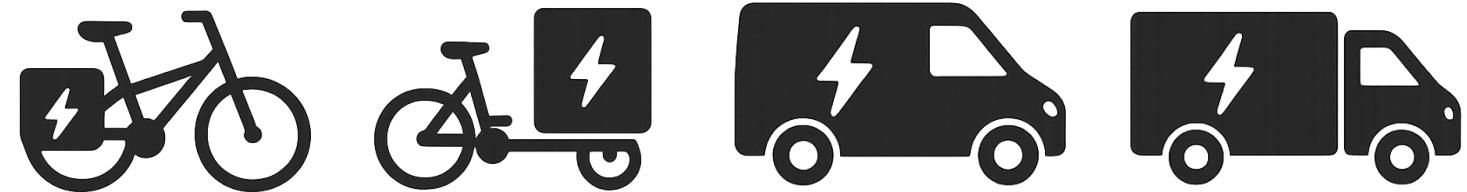


## Find the Policy Angle

Cities should see e-cargo bikes as one tool in a toolbox to advance policies for equity, safety, and sustainability

# Beyond the pilot

- Boston SULP will operationalize several of these 6 recommendations
- City can simplify the regulatory environment and provide clear pathways to grow clean, green freight solutions



## CITY of BOSTON **SUSTAINABLE URBAN LOGISTICS PLAN**

*The City of Boston, acting by the Transportation Department, 1 City Hall Square, Room 721, Boston, MA 02201, hereinafter referred to as the Awarding Authority, hereby invites written sealed proposals for the project listed above.*

Source: City of Boston

# Green Freight, Bright Future

The pilot was certainly **green freight!**

**For a bright future, we must acknowledge the realities and be intentional in our solutions to achieve green freight at scale.**

*The lesson is true for any city, from Boston to Bologna...*





**Thank you for  
your attention!**

**For more information:**

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*Boston Delivers:  
Cargo Bike Pilot Evaluation*

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CITIES AND REGIONS FOR TRANSPORT INNOVATION



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