

Freight Transportation Emissions: Hiding in Plain Sight

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ABSTRACT

Freight transportation emissions reduction is on the environmental sustainability agenda for the logistics and transportation function in many organizations. Transportation is the fastest growing form of emissions in developing countries and is second only to electricity emissions generation globally. However, freight transportation is not a priority on the overall organizational sustainability agenda for many companies. This research uses in-depth interviews with twelve organizations to build mid-range theory with its foundation in legitimacy theory. The purpose is to explore what motivates organizations to engage in reducing outsourced freight transportation emissions. The context of this research takes the perspective of shippers that have joined SmartWay, a public-private partnership focused on the reduction of freight emissions, fuel consumption, and the associated costs. Transportation cost reduction was found to be the pragmatic priority for most shippers, and emissions reduction might be considered a significant priority. Furthermore, in most organizations the issue is managed within the Transportation function and there is a lack of organizational focus on outsourced freight transportation emissions reduction. Given the increasing saliency of emissions reductions in many organizations, this presents a gap that needs to be addressed. The research suggests methods for creating more concern and visibility of freight transportation emissions.