

## international

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Interview with Laurence Bannerman on the DISCO project

## “When a vehicle stops the parking industry has to be there”

On May 16, 2023, a new project called DISCO was launched in Brussels. Among other things, it combines parking with urban logistics. We asked former EPA President Laurence Bannerman, who is closely involved for EPA in this Europe-wide real laboratory project, what exactly it is about.

### *What is the DISCO project about?*

It is an overall concept for the development, implementation, testing and demonstration of logistical solutions for city management. Logistic operations of course include parking. During the pandemic, the use of urban space has exploded due to deliveries in cities – accentuated as a post-pandemic phenomenon, it is increasing in the whole of Europe. Therefore, intelligent planning and management solutions are needed to enable smart integrated decisions. The aim is to set up integrated data-driven projects under real-life

conditions and to develop smart tools to enable planners, logistics operators and infrastructure managers to have a set of tested criteria. On the one hand, the EPA members participate with their knowledge and experience in parking management. On the other hand, new business opportunities arise for operators that incorporate last-mile logistics.

Perhaps briefly by way of background: in our statement at the EPA Congress in Malaga in 2019, we noted that digital vehicle parking can include anything with a number plate. In other words: When a vehicle stops for services

the parking industry has to be there. We also recognise the complexity of technology and data in the connected world. That is why we have launched APDS, the Alliance for Parking Data Standards, to provide a framework for real-time, purpose-driven data exchange and synchronisation. I believe the DISCO project will make parking even more dynamic.

### *For how long will the project run?*

Kick-off was on 16 May 2023 in Brussels. It is to run for 42 months with a budget of 8 million euros.





Urban logistics often has to deal with parked vehicles.

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and doing research activities. The STC can be described as the think tank of the EPA starting back in 2010. Results are regularly presented at the EPA congresses. In Malaga 2019, Massimo Marciani, President of the Freight Leaders Council, gave an important presentation confirming possible synergies between our respective sectors. This has brought our sectors together in the public perception and confirmed their interest in parking. In June 2021 a large-scale survey at European level on curbside management focused on urban logistics was carried out by Erasmus University on behalf of the organisations of ALICE, POLIS and EPA. It received strong attention from the professional community. At the EPA Congress in Brussels 2022, there was a dedicated session on urban logistics coordinated by Paola Cossu, who also participated in EPA's Scientific Committee, which also attracted a lot of interest from EU and USA representatives. As part of these activities, EPA was invited to participate in urban logistics projects such as DISCO.



Laurence Bannerman

APDS-EPA standards, 5th raising awareness of new business activities for EPA members, and 6th contributing with EPA expertise on processes that enable doable solutions.

#### *Is this accompanied by a change in perception of the parking industry?*

Yes. Ten years ago, EPA released their survey "Scope of parking in Europe", in which we established that our parking sectors representatives are managing about over 40 million parking spaces, or a queue of 200,000 kilometres of parked vehicles. This indication has opened doors for our industry and changed awareness of us as an economic player. It became clear that we manage an important part of the urban space, not simply the cars. This variation in parking management has become apparent. Now we are interacting with others and with the DISCO project we are encountering and developing new activities.

The interview was conducted by Marko Ruh, Editor-in-Chief of Parking trend.

#### *What are some of the envisaged results and deliverables?*

As far as the EPA is concerned, four relevant work packages are being tested to ensure that things work. Package one has to do with planning to harmonise technology and tools. Package two deals with measurable interoperability for multimodal transport routes in all areas of mobility. Package three defines the urban freight data space and outlines the principles for data sharing when it comes to multiple use of space. EPA members contribute with knowledge of their parking spaces. Package four explores the market and takes a look at business models, players, relevant organisations and the value chain. Then, following up there will be an intense disseminating and promotions phase to contribute in inspiring dynamic urban planning.

#### *How did EPA get involved in it and what is its role?*

EPA has been working with the freight sector for many years, in particular through the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), collaborating in scientific events and events

#### *Who are other major partners in the consortium?*

The entire ecosystem includes the European technology platform ALICE – Alliance for Logistics Innovation through Collaboration in Europe, of which EPA is also a member. A total of 47 partners are connected in the DISCO project, coordinated by two consulting agencies from Rome and Cologne. Organisations and experts come from 12 countries and as many Living Lab cities (demonstration and follower sites) participate in the project. So, it's real and Europe-wide and a pretty big deal. DISCO aims to contribute in making Europe the most data-rich continent in the world.

#### *How does this project, and the EU funding linked to it, fit within the 'EPA 2.0' action plan?*

In six points: 1st integration of resources, 2nd implementation of parking knowledge in a network with different mobility stakeholders, 3rd interacting with the European Commission – DISCO is the second project after the successful "Push & Pull", 4th introduction of mobility actors both from the logistics sector and from the Living Labs on

### DISCO ...

... stands for "Digital data Integration for multi actor, synchro modal, collaborative, and optimal urban freight system for smart urban planning".