

Solar power to the hopper

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Cargohopper keeps us busy. Only last April was the premiere of the electric urban cargo distribution system, now it has already evolved.

[F057 Image 2](#)

The miniature, thirteen-metre long electric train distributing cargo in Utrecht city centre was already an environmentally friendly alternative to the flock of polluting small trucks and minivans swarming the centre every day to drop off their loads. As of 18 August the Cargohopper is more sustainable still: it drives on solar energy.

Show their worth

Dutch trailer builders Bolle and propulsion and steering specialists Harthold equipped three of the train's compartments with two solar panels each. With help of a measuring and regulating device, under normal weather conditions the six panels should be able to supply sufficient energy for the Cargohopper to make its daily round, according to Henk Harthold.

[F057 Image 1](#)

"The interesting challenge of this pilot will come this winter," said Harthold. "Then the panels must show what they're worth. We'll probably place another panel on the pull cart itself by then. We lacked the time to do so now."

Call for regulations

Jacques van der Linden is transport manager with city distributor Hoek, the exploiter of the system. He is very pleased with the result.

"We want to show that entrepreneurs too are willing to take on responsibility," said Van der Linden.

He also suggested that especially local authorities could do more. "I understand that the many regulations and plans don't make it easy to form a coherent policy. But local governments can, with municipal regulations, rather easily compel more than is currently the case. Where the direction is clear, businesses will follow, I'm convinced of that."

More regulations? Coerce businesses into a certain direction? That doesn't sound very entrepreneurial.

We asked local Alderman for Public Space, Mobility and Accessibility Ms Ingrid de Bondt to comment on Van der Linden's suggestion. Her spokesperson explained that: "Rather than adding to superfluous regulations, the alderman is more interested in taking away restrictions in order to facilitate entrepreneurs."

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