

# The last mile

La Petite Reine, the French nickname for a bicycle, is a company specializing in urban last-mile parcel deliveries. It hires people returning to the workforce to drive its electric tricycles. Veolia Environnement Foundation provides financial backing and technical support.

Twice a day in the heart of Paris, a parking garage just a stone's throw from the Louvre is the stage of an unusual ballet. Three-wheeled cycles, reminiscent of Southeast Asia's rickshaws, are fitted with a cargo carrier displaying prestigious brand names, such as Sanofi-Aventis pharmaceuticals. They merge quickly into the traffic of the Parisian streets. When they later return to the garage, each three-wheeler is marshaled to one of the twenty-one sorting zones. This is one of the logistics hubs of La Petite Reine. Founded in 2001, the company delivers parcels in urban areas, transporting them aboard these three-wheeled "vehicles." Ecological. "Eco-logical in two words," points out the company's founder and current CEO, Gilles Manuelle. Designed specifically for the needs of small retailers, the service is gaining popularity and the company is now hiring. Manuelle's early business experience led him to become interested in parcel logistics in urban environments, especially in the last mile before delivery. "80% of intra-city

transport services involve parcels that weigh under 30 kilograms. Today, you have vans of 1.5 metric tons making these deliveries, with payloads of only 100 kg! Because the traffic is so dense, it is materially impossible for drivers to cover any more ground." So Manuelle developed the tool of his trade: the Cargocycle®, a three-wheeled "bicycle" equipped with a cargo carrier designed to transport 180 kg of goods. The delivery drivers' task is made easier by electric power assistance.

#### Pedal power

In addition to the power boost, Gilles Manuelle lists the advantages of this delivery system. "We have an average speed of 12 to 13 kph, just like vans, but the three-wheelers are more regular. They are easy to park, leading to time savings that can be devoted to improving customer service and customer relations. For conventional parcel services, the delivery failure rate is 6%, versus close to zero for the bicycles." Our customers are parcel forwarders themselves. ♦♦♦



In the streets of Paris, a strange little vehicle makes its way: the Cargocycle®. This electrically assisted cycle, invented by La Petite Reine, can carry a payload of 180 kg. It makes environmentally friendly deliveries of around 700,000 parcels per year.

## Involvement

### 44 Aim: to create 200 back-to-work jobs

... who are convinced of the cycle's advantages for last-mile deliveries. Moreover, delivery companies operating in urban areas are increasingly focusing not only on speed and dependability, but also on the environmental impact of their services. Every year, each three-wheeler avoids three metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In 2009, La Petite Reine decided to look for a partner and became a fully integrated entity of the workforce development agency ARES (Association pour la Réinsertion Économique et Sociale). This social-welfare orientation is a logical step for Gilles Manuelle: even before teaming up with ARES, he gave priority to back-to-work candidates in his hiring. Today, "outreach" initiatives are more clearly structured within the company. In the basement of that Paris parking garage, one of the company's two offices is entirely dedicated to support and counseling.

#### Solidarity and environment

"In a 35-hour work week, 10 to 15% of the time is devoted to counseling aspects, such as helping people reschedule a debt, find housing or define career goals," Manuelle explains. The partnership with ARES has also opened up a more ambitious goal: the company aims to create 200 back-to-work jobs and avoid 1,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the next three years. Using as a foundation its current four locations in France and two others abroad (in London and Geneva), it intends to open six additional locations by 2011. The project was selected by the Veolia Environment Foundation, which is providing both financial backing and human support. "Our collaboration will involve three areas," says Manuelle. "For the back-to-work aspect, Veolia Environment can offer job opportunities to delivery staff (see opposite). La Petite Reine also needs reliable tools to measure the energy impact of its business. Finally, we have a common problem concerning small parcel deliveries in urban areas and managing several carriers at a single hub. We started to develop a computer application, but we lack sufficient resources, especially the technical skills, and Veolia Environment will help us with that." ■



La Petite Reine is a clean, quiet means of transportation that has little trouble getting around the city. Deliveries are easy even in the narrowest, most congested streets of Paris. This quality of service is far superior to that provided by other "last-mile" parcel services.

### "Mutual interest"

Philippe Payen, Vice President of Strategy for Veolia Transport and sponsor of La Petite Reine "We had at least two good reasons to back this project. One is the back-to-work dimension. Working for La Petite Reine demands an ability to work independently. Delivery drivers who prove to be self-starters will find real job opportunities later on. This resonates with the social stakes of our own company. Accordingly, we look for ways to help these workers pursue their return to the work world using the resources of Campus Veolia Environnement. The second area of mutual interest is the actual business of La Petite Reine. Urban logistics is one of our great future challenges. In the near future, we will have to analyze how personal mobility can be coordinated with goods logistics. Proxycway (Veolia Transport) is already operating and developing a compound mobility service for people and parcels, based on electric vehicles in La Rochelle, France. As surprising as it may seem, given the difference in scale between our two companies, La Petite Reine and Veolia Transport have a mutual interest in closely following what the other is doing.

### "Interesting profiles"

From delivery driver to bus driver Bertrand Barthélemy is the Training Manager for Veolia Transport, and he makes no secret of his interest in the activities of La Petite Reine, a company backed by the Veolia Environnement Foundation. Naturally, one of the project's stated objectives is to provide back-to-work jobs. "We observe delivery drivers to see if they have talents of interest to Veolia Environnement, such as an ability to work independently and good interpersonal/customer relations." These skills are necessary, for example, to work as a bus driver at Veolia Transport. Concretely, La Petite Reine identifies volunteers who will attend training at the Campus in the Paris region. "The training program lasts two years for people who have not earned a vocational training certificate, or one year for those who have," explains Manuèle Lemaire, Campus Director. "We also give them the same kind of support and counseling that they received at La Petite Reine." The two partners are not setting any quantitative targets. Barthélemy feels that "it is more important to train only a small number of people and see them all succeed."