

Mode of Delivery

Background

In 2023, the Postal Service added 1.7 million delivery points to our network and now delivers daily to more than 165 million households, businesses, and Post Office boxes. Though our delivery network—and its expense—is growing, the amount of mail crossing that network is declining. In 2007, we delivered an average of 5.5 pieces of mail per day per delivery point; by 2023, that average had fallen to 2.6 pieces, a decline of 53 percent. Year in and year out, we deliver less mail to more addresses, and because our only source of funding is the sale of our products and services, we must support an ever-growing delivery network with declining mail revenue. To meet this challenge, we must be more efficient, and carefully manage how we provide mail delivery.

Modes of Delivery

Historically there have been a variety of methods for the delivery of mail. Up until the Civil War, customers received their mail by coming to a Post Office. Beginning in the 1860s, free city delivery saw mail carriers delivering mail to homes and businesses where it could be done efficiently. Beginning in the 1890s, the Post Office urged the use of mail slots or mailboxes, and it was required by 1923. By the 1930s motor vehicles had been widely adopted and mail carriers were delivering to customers' curbside mailboxes. In some dense urban areas, delivery to mail rooms and grouped mailboxes began in the 1800s, and in 1967 this idea was extended to less dense neighborhoods with the introduction of the Cluster Box Unit (CBU), which provides delivery and collection services to multiple addresses at a centrally located receptacle.

Today, there are three primary modes of delivery to our more than **165 million delivery points**:

Door Delivery

- Door deliveries feature a door slot or porch mailbox and are served by a carrier on foot.
- The costliest and least efficient mode of delivery with an estimated yearly cost of \$224 per delivery point.

Curbside Delivery

- Curbside deliveries feature mailboxes along the curb typically served by a carrier from a vehicle.
- Moderate cost and efficiency gains for this mode of delivery with an estimated yearly cost of \$198 per delivery point.

Centralized Mail Delivery

- Centralized deliveries are mailboxes that a carrier can serve as a group. For example, a mail room in an apartment building or a CBU in a suburban neighborhood.
- The most efficient and cost friendly mode of delivery with an estimated yearly cost of \$141 per delivery point.

The Postal Service began restricting curbside delivery for new developments in 2012 and Centralized Mail Delivery has been the default mode of delivery since 2018. Our policies establish clear procedures within the Postal Service to determine the mode of delivery for new delivery points. Importantly, the requirement for Centralized Mail Delivery **does not** apply to businesses and residences that already have door or curbside delivery, or where it is impractical.

Our policy establishes procedures within the Postal Service to determine the mode of delivery for new delivery points. As described in [U.S. Postal Service National Delivery Planning Standards – A Guide for Builders and Developers](#) (also known as the Builders Guide), developers and builders should notify the Postal Service about their upcoming projects so that we can offer timely guidance on incorporating mail delivery into their plans. Consistent with Postal Service policy, developers and builders should plan for Centralized Mail Delivery at all new residential and commercial projects. It is important to note that the mode of delivery for individual delivery points is established when the address is first ready to begin receiving mail—when a community or home was platted, planned, permitted, or sold does not figure in the determination.



The Postal Service strongly discourages the regulation of the mode of delivery by either federal, state, local, or tribal governments. As a federal entity, the Postal Service is not bound by state, local, and tribal ordinances. In addition, Congress has directed the Postal Service to operate like a business, with the operational independence to make decisions free from interference by special interests.

Nonetheless, if passed, ordinances regulating the mode of delivery would have a detrimental impact on mail delivery, would negatively affect service for our customers, and create unnecessary confusion across the country. If a congressional office is contacted regarding Centralized Mail Delivery, please know that there are additional resources available to help developers, builders, and property owners better understand our current policy.

###

\$224 Estimated yearly cost per Door Delivery point
Compared to more efficient modes of delivery, like Curbside Delivery (\$198), or Centralized Mail Delivery (\$141).

1.7 Million new delivery points added in 2023
Demands on our network and declining mail volumes are a significant contributor to an unsustainable business model.