

Smart Freight Week 2026

Smart Freight Week 2026 drew ~1,000 participants, delivering a surprisingly optimistic signal despite mounting pressure on sustainability agendas such as regulatory rollbacks (CSRD Omnibus), macroeconomic headwinds, and shrinking budgets. The green logistics ecosystem is maturing, becoming more commercial, and converging on clearer technology pathways.

Planned framework updates

- ✓ SBTi directional guidance in June 2026
- ✓ GHG Protocol update (AMI) in late 2028
- ✓ MBM revision in early 2027

1. Market-Based Measures (MBMs): Progress in Theory, Patience in Practice

MBMs moved from concept to pilot stage, testing how book-and-claim instruments can channel investment toward decarbonization. Yet uncertainty persists: biofuel prices remain coupled to fossil fuels, and investments are inherently transactional. No lasting infrastructure is built. Their primary value is signaling demand to scale SAF and alternative marine fuel production. European regulations (ETS, FuelEU Maritime, ReFuelEU Aviation) provide a regulatory floor; voluntary markets lag.

SBTi is expected to release directional MBM guidance in June/July 2026, though a codified standard won't arrive before late 2028, creating a strategic tension between the need for clarity now and governance that's two-plus years away. A key next step: Smart Freight Centre's revised MBM Framework (due early next year), harmonizing with ISO 22095 chain-of-custody norms.

2. Road Freight Electrification: A clear winner is emerging

BEVs were affirmed as the definitive pathway for road freight, with exceptions limited to specific geographies and extreme conditions. The energy cost crossover is already visible even without incentives.

Remaining barriers:

- Charging infrastructure rollout
- Upfront CapEx premiums
- Green electricity certification & data traceability

Full superiority is years away, not decades. Staying focused on BEVs, rather than chasing alternative propulsion narratives, was a clear conference consensus.

3. Data standardization: The overlooked bottleneck

- ▶ **Challenge:** GLEC and ISO 14083 set the accounting backbone yet divergent databases produce materially different results across emission factors, vehicle classes, and fuel types.
- ▶ **Solution:** Invest in consistent global master data: harmonized emission factors, standardized taxonomies, and location-based reference data.
- ▶ **The result:** This foundational data layer reduces variance between calculation models more effectively than any further methodological refinement.



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4. Green Procurement: From Pilot Projects to Scalable Markets

Green procurement remains pre-scale. ~80% of freight transactions are cost-driven and transactional; pilots prove concepts but rarely exceed single-digit market share.

The path to scale is economic, not idealistic. Green options must compete on cost. The energy cost crossover is the real unlock. Microsoft's SAF deal (~100,000 tCO₂e abated) signals ambition, but remains an exception.

The critical enabler: buyer-supplier alignment

- Procurement sends consistent demand signals
- Logistics providers respond with validated, commercially attractive solutions

Until this handshake happens at scale, green freight remains a niche.

Strategic Outlook - 5 Key Takeaways

The Smart Freight Week 2026 revealed an industry that is simultaneously more mature and more patient than headlines might suggest. The shift from concept to commercialization is real and healthy. Five priorities emerge for sustainability leaders:



Monitor SBTi / GHG Protocol timeline closely...

... but do not wait for it to act. The summer 2026 directional statement will shape strategy; final standards arrive in late 2028.



Double down on road freight electrification...

... the technology path is settled. Focus on securing green energy supply, charging infrastructure partnerships, and optimizing CapEx.



Send demand signals into the market...

...for SAF, renewable marine fuels, and green electricity to accelerate the supply-side build-out that enables scalable decarbonization.



Invest in data foundations over methodological refinement...

... harmonized master data (emission factors, vehicle taxonomies, location data) will reduce variance and build trust faster than additional guidance layers.



Align procurement organizations and collaborative processes...

... the energy cost crossover is approaching. Prepare transactional procurement models that integrate sustainability KPIs for the moment green options reach cost parity.

Getting started: Quick Wins

Begin with available data while building comprehensive systems. Focus on the largest emission sources. Ensure key personnel understand the importance of managed data collection systems and leveraging technology to automate and validate data quality.



How can shipzero support?

Our team brings together experts in product & data management, logistics, and sustainability. Our methodology is fully aligned with the international GLEC Framework and the ISO 14083 standard and is certified by the Smart Freight Centre as well as validated by independent auditors.

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