

Amazon.com — Built on the Logistics of Getting Goods to You: Cameron on Transportation ,,,”,,

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These days getting there doesn't just mean moving yourself from point A to B, but the logistics of moving stuff from dozens of locations to your doorstep. And nobody does that better than Amazon.

Want a new pair of jeans? Click once and they're delivered the next day. Need a new printer? Maybe a couple of days because they're still scarce, thanks to the home-office explosion. Your favorite ointment out of stock at CVS? Save yourself a trip, click here and apply twice daily.

In his 2013 book "The Everything Store" (yes, available on Amazon), business writer Brad Stone chronicle the early days of Jeff Bezos' dream. But in the intervening years the Amazon phenomenon has grown far beyond anything that even Stone could have envisioned. And now that Bezos has stepped down as CEO it's worth a moment to admire what his team has built.

At the heart of the operation is a logistics network that is a marvel of technology. So just how does a package go from your click to your doorstep? Keep in mind that half of all Amazon orders are for third-party sellers just racking their goods on Amazon's e-shelves.

Most Amazon orders are handled at one of the company's 110 U.S. "fulfillment centers," massive 800,000 to one million square foot warehouses filled with robotics. So far there are two such centers in Connecticut, Windsor and North Haven, with more in the works.

Merchandise arrives by the pallet and gets offloaded, scanned and stored by some of the 1500 full time employees at each site. Other, slightly smaller centers house the really big stuff... furniture, lawn mowers and such.

As sales soared during the pandemic, Amazon went on a hiring binge, bringing an additional quarter million staffers onboard, many of them enticed by \$1000 signing bonuses. Worldwide the company has 1.3 million employees.

Much has been reported on the working conditions in Amazon facilities — the long hours, intense pressure for performance, etc. While we should keep this in mind when we shop at Amazon, there seems no shortage of folks willing to take these jobs, averaging about \$40,000 a year in Connecticut, plus benefits.

These are the folks who, with the help of Kiva robotics, pick your order, pack it up and SLAM it — scan, label, apply and manifest. Then it rides miles of conveyor belts and is sorted by destination zip code.

It used to be that Amazon relied on FedEx, UPS and the postal service (for the last mile) to deliver your order, supplemented by freelancers earning \$20 an hour to make deliveries using their own cars and vans.

But lately Connecticut has seen Amazon roll out its own fleet of dark grey Prime vans to handle many deliveries, with plans to convert to an all-electric delivery fleet by 2040. The current vans are noticeable by their back-up warning sounding like a quacking duck rather than the usual beep-beep.

Supporting this U.S. network are 20,000 tractor trailer trucks and Amazon's own cargo airline, Prime Air. That plane fleet has doubled in size this year to 85 leased jets and Amazon even is building its own \$1.5 billion airport hub in Kentucky.

So next time you click to shop, think of the amazing logistics network that helps your package in getting there.

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.

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