

ECU parent forms investment partnership with logistics-focused VC firm

[Eric Johnson, Senior Technology Editor](#) | Jan 18, 2023



Allcargo Group, which owns global less-than-containerload (LCL) consolidator ECU Worldwide, co-invested with Northstar in logistics startup Stord in 2022.

The parent of the biggest global less-than-containerload (LCL) operator is partnering with a venture capital firm focused on logistics and supply chain to find opportunities to co-invest and help startups test their products.

Mumbai-based Allcargo Group, owner of co-loader ECU Worldwide, has tied up a strategic partnership with VC firm Northstar to jointly explore supply chain investments, the companies announced Tuesday. Allcargo and Northstar already [co-invested in the last funding round](#) for warehousing and transportation technology startup Stord and told the *Journal of Commerce* they are eyeing more joint investments in 2023.

Northstar co-founder and managing partner Amir Karimpour and Allcargo Chief Digital Officer Vaishnav Shetty were introduced prior to the Stord co-investment.

“We’ve worked together in an unstructured way as we got to know each other,” Karimpour said Tuesday. “We’ve had a number of [joint] meetings with founders in our portfolio, and now we have an investment pipeline and the goal is to do it in a structured way.”

For Allcargo, the partnership gives the company a chance to be a part of venture deals across North America, Europe, and Asia, while also introducing early-stage companies to an established logistics provider that is itself seeking to become more digitally oriented. Allcargo launched ECU360, ECU’s digital quoting and visibility platform for shippers and forwarders, in 2018 as it sought to diversify revenue away from being a purely LCL consolidator.

In India, Allcargo owns a diverse set of logistics assets, including a network of container freight stations.

“There’s a similarity in mindset in terms of not resting on our laurels,” Shetty said. “We need to be out there, understanding and learning. Amir and [co-founder Erol Suesler] are dynamic and energetic, and the companies they’ve invested in have been relevant to us.”

Outside of Stord, Northstar has also invested in project44, visibility hardware provider Trackonomy, and Beacon, a UK company that recently pivoted from digital forwarding to visibility.

Corporate interest in startups grows

The partnership is emblematic of a larger trend in logistics where name brand service providers are actively tapping into the plethora of early and growth stage technology vendors in the sector. [Container lines Maersk](#) and [CMA CGM](#) have launched corporate venture arms and accelerators, as have global third-party logistics providers like DB Schenker. Investment outfits like Plug and Play, where Karimpour started his career, partner with a range of corporates to give startups a leg up through pilot programs and proof of concept initiatives.

In North America, venture firm [8VC formed a strategic partnership with Lineage Logistics](#), the biggest US cold chain services provider, in 2021.

Similarly, Suesler said Northstar focuses on providing not just capital, but introductions to key corporate partners across regions, which gives companies in its portfolio a foothold in new geographies in which they previously had no access.

“A lot of times a startup doesn’t need a third check from Silicon Valley, but an intro to enterprise customers or a soft landing into Europe,” Suesler said. That global footprint also fit with Allcargo, for which ECU has an established footprint on all continents.

“Having someone like Allcargo on our side gives us a bigger window into India, and (we’re) excited to partner with them in Europe and the US,” Karimpour said.

[ECU parent forms investment partnership with logistics-focused VC firm \(joc.com\)](#)