

Uruguay

Partner country

Status of the project: Ongoing National Urban Mobility Policy



Basic Information

Population: 3,387,605 | Growth rate: 0,35%

Percentage of urban population: 96.1%

GDP per capita: USD 17,277

Percentage of population living below the national poverty line: 8.1%

Annual average infrastructure expenditures as percentage of GDP: 5,9%

Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC): Unquantified transport-related NDC

National GHG emissions per capita: 1.90 (tCO₂eq)

Proportion of transport-related GHG emissions: 41%

Exposure to climate change: HIGH

Context

Uruguay has a very high urbanisation index, with 95% of its population living in cities and a sustained migration trend from the countryside to urban centres. Urban population growth occurs through the expansion of urban areas towards lower densities. About half of the population lives in the metropolitan area of Montevideo, Uruguay's capital. The rest of the cities are considerably smaller, with few counting more than 100,000 inhabitants.

Uruguay has achieved very high access rates to public services such as water and electricity. However, in many cases, urban growth did not occur in a planned manner. This situation has caused a surge of settlements with little transport infrastructure and collective transport. Hence, transport systems often present different degrees of inefficiency, provoking lower quality and higher costs. Many users have turned towards alternatives such as motorcycles or private vehicles, even in low-income social sectors. Hand in hand with the most prolonged period of economic growth in the country, which has now lasted for 15 years, a significant increase in the private vehicle fleet has taken place. Public transport demand has decreased, and congestion and air and noise pollution in many cities, especially in Montevideo's metropolitan area, have worsened.

On the other hand, as most Uruguayan cities are small, public transport is often not a viable economic option due to scale issues. In such cases, the population must resort to their vehicles to get around since public transport systems do not exist. This situation constitutes a barrier to the mobility of those who cannot afford a motorcycle or a car.

The public transport sector is highly regulated, with Departmental Governments (GGDD) responsible for granting public transport services and establishing the requirements for corridors and units, e.g. buses and taxis. Electric mobility has been promoted jointly through the Working Group on Energy Efficiency in Transport, led by the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM) with the participation of the Ministry of Transport and Public Construction (MTO), the

Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning (MVOT) and the Ministry of the Environment (MA), the national public electricity company (UTE), and the Departmental Government of Montevideo (IM).

There also exist private and social groups working on urban mobility, some from business spheres and others from civil society, such as groups of bicycle users. From the private sector, public passenger transport companies and taxi drivers actively dialogue with departmental governments and ministries in charge of urban mobility. In recent years, business groups have been a fundamental part of implementing the first actions to promote electric mobility in Uruguay. Several stakeholders have participated in the communication of promotion instruments, training, knowledge of new regulations and standards, and spaces for dialogue on advantages and possible barriers to electric mobility implementation.

Transport activities generate close to half of total energy-related GHG emissions in Uruguay. Urban electric mobility has the potential to maximise the benefits of the country's low-carbon electricity matrix. A structural transformation of the transport sector might reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to further co-benefits, such as reducing air and noise pollution. Considering that the GGDD are the leading authority for urban transport, enjoying full autonomy from the national level, policy processes have strong participation through the vertical and horizontal governance structure.

Following the structure proposed by MobiliseYourCity for National Urban Mobility Policies (NUMP), this technical assistance intends to build a holistic perspective of the overall NUMP formulation. The NUMP objective in Uruguay seeks to increase access to opportunities located at urban centres through sustainable transport alternatives. From the "ready to implement" approach, the technical assistance supported policy design, implementation instruments (guides), financing mechanisms for specific measures, and a capacity-building roadmap. It has also considered strategic planning, exchanging concept designs, and facilitating workshops and meetings. Detailed knowledge has been provided on Transport Oriented City-Planning, e-mobility solutions, and financing mechanism design.

Support from the Partnership

Technical assistance: National Urban Mobility Policy or Program (NUMP)

Type of NUMP: Policy NUMP

Funded by: European Commission

Funding amount: EUR 1,000,000

Implemented by: GIZ through the EUROCLIMA+ Program

Local counterpart: Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM); National Energy Directorate; Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment

Main purpose of the NUMP:

The project aims to strengthen capacities in planning sustainable urban mobility and to lay the foundations for a national program to promote electric urban mobility that includes the development of technical, regulatory, and financial mechanisms.

Supported activities:

- Incorporation of e-mobility into territorial planning instruments
- Development of standards and regulations for new technologies
- Development of financial tools to promote and accelerate public and private investment for vehicle fleet electrification
- Capacity building and institutional strengthening for public and private actors to facilitate vehicle electrification

Status of implementation

Project start: 2018 Q2

Expected project completion: Not defined

Completed outputs:

- [National sustainable urban mobility planning guide](#)
- [National e-mobility guide](#)
- Draft of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy
- A participatory process with national and subnational stakeholders
- 5 Cities have been supported to move towards sustainable mobility
- Capacity building diagnosis and recommendations for a cross-cutting educational system. A capacity development program on how to design Mobility Plans at the city level was agreed upon with the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), and, 12 practitioners from 6 cities. The program consists of an 8 week self-learning program to be monitored by the UBA online.
- Roadmap for the dissemination of policy and its implementation instruments. The GTP (Project Working Group, for its acronym in Spanish) decided to strengthen institutional capacity by creating a Multisectoral Sustainable Mobility Commission (CIMS). This commission will be piloted with support from Country-Dialogue (a new methodological cooperation format financed by the EUROCLIMA+ Programme).

Next expected outputs:

- National Policy document
- E-mobility solutions guide
- Cost estimation of the policy implementation. The cost will be estimated after the implementation of pilots in six cities with support from the Country-Dialogue of EUROCLIMA+s new phase

Perspectives for implementation

The GTP is responsible for advocating for successful NUMP implementation in Uruguay

The GTP has the technical responsibility to develop the NUMP so it can be adopted at the political level. Its way of working is a replica of the Working Group on Energy Efficiency in Transport, an essential promoter of electric mobility in Uruguay that the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM) chaired. The GTP has representatives from the environmental, transport, economy, territorial planning ministries, the national public company for electric mobility (UTE) and the Departmental Municipality of Montevideo (IM).

Inspired by these years of joint work building the NUMP, they proposed the creation of the Inter-institutional Commission for Sustainable Mobility (CIMS). This commission will lead the implementation of the NUMP and fill the gap between the national and city levels

Insights from practice: lessons learned from the NUMP process

Although costly and time-consuming, participation enhances NUMP development

While the need to consider the perspectives of each stakeholder group slowed down the policy development process, the inclusion of diverse vantage points improved the setting of objectives and allocating of responsibilities.

In this context, communication is critical. We would advise implementing a dialogue process that engages stakeholders to the greatest extent possible. The input provided by stakeholders should be integrated with an iterative process. In this way, one can harness the cooperation of stakeholders who are committed to the spirit of the policy – this, to be sure, is one of the most valuable outcomes of the policy process.

Vertical coordination is crucial to effectively meet local institutions' needs for sustainable urban mobility

Vertical coordination is crucial for involving stakeholders and ensuring the real-world viability and implementation of the policy. It is essential to carry out this process in several steps to recognise challenges and identify solutions. For example, if the national government promotes sustainable mobility but does not necessarily provide resources to meet stated goals, municipal representatives must tailor their ambitions accordingly.

NUMP implementation foresees additional support documents and an adequate governance framework

The institutional complexity of Uruguay has required an additional effort in coordination. The NUMP implementation transcends the policy document and entails the creation of a National Commission for Sustainable Mobility (CIMS as its acronym in Spanish), the [Sustainable Mobility Planning Guide](#), the [E-mobility Guide](#) and a Financing Mechanism, and other actions. A national law will frame Uruguay's NUMP, and the CIMS will lead the process of enacting the law. After its adoption, the CIMS is expected to lead and coordinate the process for cities to formulate their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans. Among other responsibilities, the CIMS will regulate access to funds and coordinate local capacity-building.

Available tools for sustainable urban mobility planning need to be adapted to the local context

Introducing the "ready-to-implement" aspect of the policy required work time alongside the counterpart to agree on a format tailored to the national regulatory framework. This "ready-to-implement" methodology came late, and its inclusion into the ongoing process created some friction. However, the counterpart keeping a holistic perspective was crucial to refining the aspects covered. The early engagement of cities was essential to know their specific challenges and needs for future implementation. This consultation process strengthened momentum and commitment from the whole ecosystem of stakeholders. The methodology used is vital for success, as it provides enough flexibility to cover all crucial aspects of sustainable urban mobility planning at the national level while giving room for specific country needs and identity.

2022 was a year for consolidation of a vivid and complex process to reach the NUMP adoption

The adopted strategy for promoting municipal engagement with the national vision was to provide cities with a solid knowledge base for change. Two guidebooks for municipal authorities now accompany the National Urban Mobility Policy. Specifically, the [mobility planning guide](#) supports strategy development at the city level and includes measures and recommendations to consider when planning a sustainable multimodal mobility system. Cities also received a [e-mobility guide](#) that offers solutions and highlights aspects to consider when building an e-mobility system at the city level.

There is a lack of commitment and coordination among the ministries involved to approve the policy

The approval and subsequent publication of the policy requires an interministerial resolution. This must be an agreement between ministries such as the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM), the Ministry of Transport and Public Construction (MTOP), the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning (MVOT), among others. Not all ministries have the interest and willingness to be part of this agreement. A needed strategy to coordinate and bring together the interests of all these ministries to reach an agreement is currently being developed.

This is the reason why the policy has not been approved yet, despite being drafted and revised since 2022. So far, there is no date set for its approval. It all depends on the authorities in charge at a certain point in time and their interest and willingness to advance sustainable urban mobility.