

La Paz, Bolivia

Partner city

Status of the project: Completed pilot project



Basic Information

Urban area: 3,152 km²

Population: 951,800 (2019) | Growth rate: 0.7%

Country capital city

GDP per capita: USD 3,143 (2020)

Modal Share:

Public transport (formal and informal): 79,18%

Walking: 11,92%

Cycling: 0,04%

Private vehicles (cars, motorbikes): 6,75%

Other (freight vehicles, taxis): 2,11%

National GHG emissions per capita: 1,77 (tCO₂eq) (2020)

Exposure to climate change: HIGH

Context

La Paz is the economic and administrative capital of Bolivia. With an elevation of roughly 3,650m, it is the highest capital city in the world. Its metropolitan area includes the even higher city of El Alto, with an average elevation of 4,000m. Both cities are connected via one of the biggest cable car networks in the world but are not integrated from an administrative standpoint. The metropolitan area of La Paz-El Alto has a population of about 2 million inhabitants, of which approximately 950,000 live in La Paz.

The Municipality of La Paz (the counterpart for this project) has the mandate and responsibility to finance mass public transport infrastructure. International finance sources can lend money to the counterpart by agreeing on a sovereign loan with the national government, which then retrocedes it to the municipal government. Systems and procedures are partially in place to monitor, evaluate and report on urban mobility.

In 2014, the city inaugurated the country's first formal public transport system: a structural network of buses named Puma Katari that travel along main urban transport arteries designated fixed stops. Compared to the pre-existing "micro" buses, this is a remarkable innovation, stopping on demand and operating at a low commercial speed. The cable car network, called Mi Teleférico, has also been functioning since 2014 and comprises 11 lines that transport about 250,000 to 300,000 passengers daily (2019). According to the network's expansion plan, four new lines will be operating by 2025.

Compared to other modes, cycling is nearly absent (0.04%) in the modal split, with less than a thousand trips made daily by bicycle. The city of La Paz is topographically challenging for cyclists, with steep slopes and an altitude variation of 600m from the lowest to the highest point of the city. The development strategy of the cycling infrastructure focuses on the implementation of micro-networks connected through the collective transport systems – Cable Car and Puma Katari. These micro-networks will be located in neighbourhoods whose slopes allow connections in order to cover trips for shopping, work or entertainment.

The objective of the pilot project is to design and construct a pilot micro-network in the Southern Macro District of the municipality of La Paz, proposing an intermodal connection and promoting the use of bicycles in urban mobility.

Support from the Partnership

Technical Assistance: Pilot Project development

Funded by: European Union through the EUROCLIMA+ programme

Funding amount: EUR 500,000

Implemented by: AFD through EUROCLIMA+

Local counterpart: Autonomous Government of the Municipality of La Paz (GAMLP)

Supported activities:

- Initiation: Report on the design and budget for the cycle path proposed by GAMLP.
- Preparation: Preparation of bid tender documents for the works and support in the design of the communication campaign for the launch of the bicycle infrastructure.
- Training: 20-hour course and study tour on cycling infrastructure for GAMLP staff.
- Diagnostic: Report on the site supervision strategy for cycling infrastructure projects and business model for a public bicycle system.
- Implementation: Construction of Phase I of the cycling path and technical support during its implementation.

Status of implementation

Project start: 2023 Q1

Project completion: 2024 Q4

Completed outputs:

- Training plan
- Territorial Management Plan
- Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Plan
- Project Communication Campaign
- Study tour agenda and methodology
- Technical design report
- Cost estimates, technical specifications and budget
- Bid tender documents for the technical assistance contract.
- Business model proposal for a bike share system
- Recommendations for the construction phase
- Communication strategy and project socialisation
- To school by bike programme proposal
- Designed 8.7 km cycling infrastructure: 5.2 km bike paths and 3.5 km shared lanes.
- 7,8 Km of bike paths implemented: 3 km of bike paths and 4,8 km of shared lanes.

Next expected outputs

- MRV plan implemented by local government

Insights from practice: key pilot project takeaways

The first cycling lanes in La Paz

With this pilot project, the city of La Paz has been able to create the first kilometres of high-quality bicycle lanes designed for the safety and comfort of cyclists, as well as for connecting them to the city's commercial and intermodal transport systems, such as the cable car. This new infrastructure will increase the potential for cycling, especially for short trips within the Calacoto area. However, in order to be most effective, the promotion of cycling will require a more significant commitment from the city's decision-makers.

Perspectives for scaling

Thanks to the high quality of the designs and the alternatives proposed, which adapt to different road profiles, the project designs have a high capacity for replication in other areas of the city and other cities in Bolivia and the region.

Capacity building and infrastructure implementation interact to encourage cycling.

This pilot project aims to test the development model of micro-networks of cycling infrastructure in specific neighbourhoods proposed by the Municipality. The pilot project trained technical teams, produced ground knowledge for future projects, and provided the necessary tools to complete the integrated cycling strategy in La Paz.

Highlights in the past year

The project designs were finalised in the first half of 2024 and the contracting process for the start of construction began around July 2024.

At the same time, the socialisation and communication campaign for the project was defined with the slogan 'High-level Mobility' (Mobilidad de altura in Spanish). The socialisation process began with key actors and neighbours in the area, especially cycling groups, businesses and schools.

The construction phase began and was completed in the second half of 2024, with the implementation of 7.8 km of cycling infrastructure (initially, only 5 km had been planned), combining segregated (3 km) and shared (4.8 km) infrastructure.

Updated in December 2024