

Curridabat & Montes de Oca, Costa Rica

Pilot Project

Completed

Basic information

Urban area → Curridabat 15.92 km²
Montes de Oca 15.16 km²

Population → Curridabat 79,577
Montes de Oca 62,533

Growth rate → Curridabat 0.78%
Montes de Oca 0.36%

Cantons of the Metropolitan Area
of San José

GDP per capita → USD 11,215

Modal share (Metropolitan San Jose Area, 2016)

Formal public transport: 26% → 26%

Informal public transport: 2% → 2%

Walking → 36%

Cycling → 1%

Private cars → 27%

Private motorbikes or 2-wheelers → 5%

Taxis → 2%

Train → 1%

National GHG emissions per capita → 3.2 tCO₂eq/year (2023)

Exposure to climate change → MEDIUM



Context

Montes de Oca and Curridabat are two of the 21 municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of San José, an urban agglomeration with more than 1.5 million inhabitants (one-fourth of the total national population). They are conurbations in the eastern zone of the metropolitan sprawl, both highly developed and service-based. Montes de Oca also hosts many of the country's well-known universities. At the same time, most residential and commercial activities in both municipalities are concentrated along their border with the canton of San José, Costa Rica's capital.

In 2016, over 2.6 million trips occurred daily within the metropolitan area of San José. Sustainable transport modes comprised the majority of the modal split, with 36% of trips made on foot and 26% by public transport. However, private vehicles, including cars and motorbikes, accounted for 32% of total trips and are increasing in prevalence, as the motorisation rate of 0.5 cars per household is projected to grow by 4% annually. Although cycling remains a minor mode of transport, it has historically played a more prominent role in Curridabat and Montes de Oca compared to neighbouring districts, largely due to the presence of students and working-class residents in medium- and low-income areas, predominantly men. Approximately half of all trips in Curridabat and Montes de Oca are internal or interactional, while the remainder are to San José. As in the rest of the metropolitan area, these municipalities lack a mass transit system. In 2017, the Integral Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (PIMUS, for its Spanish acronym) was developed for the metropolitan area of San José, to integrate all transport modes with urban planning and promote active transport and cycling infrastructure. This plan serves as the metropolitan-scale transport master plan.

Since 2002, Curridabat's administration has promoted a progressive and environmentally conscious vision of the city under the slogan "Ciudad Dulce" (Sweet City), undertaking interventions that favour biodiversity and the balance between constructed and natural environments, and committing to long-term active mobility. Decision-makers and city officials in both municipalities consider themselves active urban cyclists, and Montes de Oca implemented one of the first dedicated cycling lanes in the metropolitan area, improving connectivity to San José. The local counterparts do not have the mandate and responsibility to finance mass public transport infrastructure, as this falls under national jurisdiction. Responsibility for transport and cycling infrastructure is shared between national and local authorities, depending on the type of road on which the cycling lanes are located. Systems and procedures are partially in place to monitor, evaluate and report on urban mobility. The information provided does not specify whether local counterparts have the authority to borrow from international finance sources.

Significant efforts were necessary to consolidate existing cycling infrastructure and expand it beyond isolated projects, particularly in the absence of governance frameworks for its construction and maintenance, and with limited coordination between national ministries and local governments. The fragmented nature of cycling infrastructure, combined with unclear responsibilities among public authorities for active mobility planning, posed challenges to the long-term scalability of cycling initiatives. The pilot project aimed to enhance mobility and accessibility for urban cyclists in Curridabat and Montes de Oca by generating cycling demand data, developing a cycling infrastructure plan for both cantons, and designing a prioritised network of cycling lanes. Participatory and educational processes for data collection and systematisation were conducted with local cycling communities, although the COVID-19 pandemic restricted in-person activities.

Support from the Partnership

Technical Assistance: Pilot Project development

Funded by: European Union (EU) through EUROCLIMA+

Funding amount: EUR 400,000

Implemented by: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) through the EUROCLIMA+ Program

Local counterpart: Municipality of Montes de Oca, Municipality of Curridabat, Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Transport, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of the Environment (through the Dirección de Cambio Climático) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Supported activities:

- Information gathering: Collect information on cycling infrastructure needs in a participatory manner in the cantons of Montes de Oca and Curridabat.
- Diagnostic: Identify the infrastructure needs of people who use bicycles as a means of transport, prioritised based on data collected, technical criteria, and participation.
- Implementation: Design and build the infrastructure in the cantons of Montes de Oca and Curridabat while strengthening the urban cycling planning capacities.
- Evaluation: Systematise and disseminate experiences and lessons learned during the project implementation

Status of pilot project implementation

Project start: 2019 Q4

Project completion: 2022 Q1

Completed outputs:



Source: [Changing Transport](#)

- Participatory data collection: participatory workshops with medium- and low-income cyclists to collect information on urban cycling in the canton identified participants' infrastructure and capacity needs for urban cycling. During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, some workshops were held virtually, and information was gathered through interviews and secondary sources.
- Prioritised planned infrastructure: identified priority infrastructure for urban cycling based on collected data and technical and participatory criteria. This proposal included 54km of cycling lanes in Montes de Oca and 60km in Curridabat. 20 km were to be implemented with EUROCLIMA+ funds.
- Adequation of cycling lanes: permanent implementation of an initial 4 km cycling lane in Montes de Oca in March 2021, followed by another 16 km in a second phase, which was finished in late 2021.
- Scaling-up experience: experience and lessons learned documented and disseminated to promote the development of similar and complementary projects in other San Jose Metropolitan Area cantons.
- Strengthening capacities: The population of the cantons of Curridabat and Montes de Oca was sensitised about better urban cycling.

Insights from practice: key pilot project takeaways

Tactical cycling interventions favour the efficient use of resources

The adoption of tactical alternatives for bicycle lane implementation improved the efficient use of limited resources. Bike lanes were constructed using only the essential elements required for operation, while maintaining adequate road safety and adhering to national technical guidelines. The bicycle lanes established through this project became permanent, as the implementation process provided feedback that informed the national technical guidelines for cycling infrastructure. Additional measures to promote intermodality were also introduced, including cycle-friendly modifications at train stops to facilitate cyclist access to public transport.

Both political commitment and interinstitutional coordination enable project success

The success of the project was driven by strong political commitment to active mobility and effective coordination among technical officials and decision-makers. The project team demonstrated flexibility and responded promptly to emerging challenges, capitalising on opportunities presented by the pandemic. Efforts were made to foster collaboration among public and private stakeholders and civil society. A governance structure for active mobility, the Red Intercantonal de Movilidad Activa (RIMA), was established to consolidate cycling and walking networks across various levels of government.

The pilot project contributed to building capacities within the local authority for cycling

The most significant impact of the project is the enhancement of knowledge and institutional capacity, extending beyond the development of physical infrastructure. A key lesson is the need to empower both national and subnational entities to design projects that facilitate transformative change toward sustainable mobility. The pilot initiative yielded valuable insights into addressing technical and logistical challenges, including the use of digital tools for collecting cyclist demand data, adapting international cycling infrastructure guidelines to the Costa Rican context, and managing political and administrative transitions. The project also underscored the importance of

improved communication between local and national authorities, stronger regional coordination, and more effective governance structures involving municipalities and citizens. Future initiatives should focus on refining design and construction processes, improving documentation and knowledge sharing, and ensuring a gender-inclusive approach.

Results and perspectives for scaling

Replicability in the near future is ensured due to the assignment of both national and local resources to continue the cycling network expansion

Replicability in the future is expected to occur through a snowball effect; efforts to plan cycling infrastructure at the metropolitan level culminated in the Intermunicipal Territorial Plan for Active Mobility.

As municipalities acquire experience in implementing cycling infrastructure and improve coordination with the national government, further expansion of cycling lanes is anticipated. The municipality of Curridabat is already allocating funds to expand its cycling network, facilitating incremental improvements in the short and long term. The Council of Road Safety (COSEVI, for its name in Spanish) will also support the installation of bollards in areas where vehicles travel at high speeds.

Curridabat and Montes de Oca push cycling forward on the metropolitan policy agenda

With the launch of the RIMA, both Curridabat and Montes de Oca took the lead in continuing to implement the Intermunicipal Plan for Active Mobility, encouraging neighbouring municipalities to undertake actions to deploy walking and cycling infrastructure.

Stakeholders and project participants achieved coordination with the Costa Rican Railway Institute (INCOFER, for its acronym in Spanish) to allow cyclists access to the train infrastructure. The model is replicable.

The municipalities approved budgets to expand cycling infrastructure. The Pilot Project also leveraged additional financial resources from the EU-funded MUEVE project to build part of the priority cycling corridors.

The success of the project demonstrates that sustainable mobility initiatives can be effectively advanced through strategic public-private partnerships and active citizen engagement. The execution model, tailored to Costa Rica's administrative context, achieved efficiency, transparency, and agility, avoiding bureaucratic delays and ensuring high-quality implementation. This experience offers a replicable framework for other municipalities in the Greater Metropolitan Area that require similar interventions. The project also functions as a platform for regional knowledge exchange, particularly within the Euroclima Community of Practice, fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Although transforming Latin American cities demands time and significant investment, this initiative has established a precedent, serving as a catalyst for change and promoting more human-centred, sustainable, and equitable urban environments¹.

¹ To know more about the Project's results and outcomes, and about the Euroclima's Urban Mobility component at large, please visit <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/6qxczic62nujnb7i42kz/Movilidad-Urbana-Euroclima-Resultados-y-lecciones-2018-2024.pdf?rlkey=nhinfi1r4n0by256rf1rp6u0d&e=1&dl=0>

Highlights in the past year

Montes de Oca is implementing a comprehensive multimodal mobility strategy, which includes expanding the Ciclovía al Este network, investing in pedestrian infrastructure, and delivering EU-supported protected cycling facilities in 2025².

Ongoing expansion of the “Ciclovía al Este” cycling network

The Ciclovía al Este cycling infrastructure project is currently underway and is projected to extend approximately 20 km, featuring both segregated and shared bike lanes that will connect Montes de Oca and Curridabat. Construction began in September 2025 and is advancing along key corridors, including Betania, Vargas Araya, and El Higuerón, with traffic managed by the Municipal Transit Police during construction.

Recent local municipal initiatives

The Municipality of Montes de Oca continues to prioritise mobility infrastructure, focusing on accessible sidewalks and connectivity enhancements that facilitate multimodal transportation alongside the cycling network, such as sidewalk construction scheduled for early 2026.

mUEVE-supported infrastructure delivered earlier in 2025

In May 2025, a new protected cycle lane was inaugurated in Montes de Oca, connecting the areas surrounding Vargas Calvo and Calasanz schools. This project, part of the EU's mUEVE programme, enhances safety in a corridor with significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Last updated December 2025

² To know more: <https://delfino.cr/2025/05/montes-de-oca-inaugura-ciclovía-en-sector-que-conecta-los-colegios-vargas-calvo-y-calasanz>