

La Paz, Bolivia

Pilot Project

Completed

Basic information

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Urban area | → | 3,152 km ² |
| Population | → | 951,800 (2019) |
| Growth rate | → | 0.7% |
| Country capital city | | |
| GDP per capita | → | USD 3,143.0 (2020) |
| Modal share | | |
| Public transport (formal and informal) | → | 34.37% |
| 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 (tCO ₂ eq) (2020) |
| Exposure to climate change | → | HIGH |



Context

La Paz serves as the economic and administrative capital of Bolivia. Situated at an elevation of approximately 3,650 meters, it is recognised as the world's highest capital city. The metropolitan area encompasses the city of El Alto, which has an average elevation of 4,000 meters. Although both cities are linked by one of the world's largest cable car networks, they remain administratively separate. The La Paz-El Alto metropolitan area has a population of about 2 million, with roughly 950,000 residents in La Paz.

The Municipality of La Paz, which serves as the counterpart for this project, holds the mandate and responsibility for financing mass public transport infrastructure. International financial sources provide funding via sovereign loans arranged with the national government, which are subsequently lent to the municipal government. Systems and procedures for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on urban mobility are partially established.

In 2014, La Paz inaugurated the country's first formal public transport system: a structured network of buses known as Puma Katari, which operates along primary urban transport corridors with designated fixed stops. This system represents a significant advancement over the pre-existing "micro" buses, which operate on demand and at lower commercial speeds. The cable car network, Mi Teleférico, has also been operational since 2014 and currently consists of 11 lines, transporting approximately 250,000 to 300,000 passengers daily (2019). The network's expansion plan anticipates adding four new lines by 2025¹.

¹ <https://larazon.bo/economia-y-empresa/2025/03/06/arce-anuncia-la-construccion-del-teleferico-carmesi-que-unira-la-paz-y-el-alto/?utm>

Cycling accounts for a negligible share of the modal split in La Paz, representing only 0.04% and fewer than 1,000 bicycle trips daily. The city presents significant challenges for cyclists, including steep slopes and an altitude difference of 600 meters between its lowest and highest points. Consequently, the strategy for developing cycling infrastructure prioritises the implementation of micro-networks connected to collective transport systems, specifically the cable car and Puma Katari. These micro-networks are planned for neighbourhoods with manageable slopes, facilitating trips for shopping, work, or leisure.

The pilot project aimed to design and construct a micro-network in the Southern Macro District of La Paz, to establish intermodal connections and promote bicycle use within 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: Agence Française de Développement 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 the 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 the local government

Insights from practice: key pilot project takeaways

The first cycling lanes in La Paz

Through this pilot project, La Paz has established the first kilometres of high-quality bicycle lanes designed to enhance cyclist safety and comfort, while also connecting users to commercial areas and intermodal transport systems such as the cable car. This infrastructure is expected to increase cycling potential, particularly for short trips within the Calacoto area. However, effective cycling promotion will require stronger commitment from municipal decision-makers.

Perspectives for scaling

Due to the high quality of the designs and the adaptability of proposed alternatives to various road profiles, the project demonstrates strong potential for replication in other areas of La Paz, as well as in other cities within Bolivia and the broader region.

Capacity building and infrastructure implementation work in tandem to promote increased cycling.

This pilot project tests the development model for micro-networks of cycling infrastructure proposed by the Municipality in selected neighbourhoods. The initiative provided training for technical teams, developed foundational knowledge for future projects, and supplied the necessary tools to implement the integrated cycling strategy in La Paz.

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