Uruguay

National Urban Mobility Policies and Investment Programme | Completed

Basic information

Population	→	3,499,451 (2023)
Growth rate	→	0,35%
Percentage of urban population	→	96.1%
GDP per capita (2023)	→	USD 17,277
Percentage of the population living below the national poverty line	→	8.1%
Annual average infrastructure expenditures as a percet 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	→	MEDIUM

Context

Uruguay has a high urbanisation rate, with 95% of its population living in cities and a continued migration trend from rural areas to urban centres. Urban expansion occurs at low densities, with half of the population concentrated in Montevideo's metropolitan area. Other cities are significantly smaller, with few exceeding 100,000 inhabitants.

While Uruguay has high access rates to public services such as water and electricity, urban growth has often been unplanned, leading to settlements with inadequate public transport infrastructure. As a result, transport systems are inefficient, costly, and of low quality. Many residents, including those from low-income sectors, have shifted to motorcycles or private vehicles. Economic growth has further fueled a rise in private vehicle ownership, reducing public transport demand and worsening congestion, air pollution, and noise in cities like Montevideo.

Due to the small size of most Uruguayan cities, public transport is often unviable at scale and, in some cases, nonexistent. This increases reliance on private vehicles, creating mobility barriers for those who cannot afford a motorcycle or 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 (MTOP), 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).

Private and social groups engaged in urban mobility include business sectors and civil society, such as bicycle user groups. Public transport companies and taxi drivers collaborate with departmental governments and urban mobility ministries. In recent years, business groups have been key in advancing electric mobility in Uruguay. Various stakeholders have contributed to promoting instruments, training, regulatory awareness, and discussions on the benefits and challenges of implementing electric mobility.

Transport accounts for nearly half of Uruguay's energy-related GHG emissions. Urban electric mobility can maximise the benefits of the country's low-carbon electricity matrix. Transforming the transport sector can reduce carbon footprint while providing co-benefits such as lower air and noise pollution. Given that GGDD is the leading authority for urban transport and operates with autonomy at the national level, policy processes involve strong participation through vertical and horizontal governance structures.

Aligned with MobiliseYourCity's framework for National Urban Mobility Policies (NUMP), this technical assistance takes a holistic approach to NUMP formulation. The NUMP in Uruguay aims to enhance access to urban centres through sustainable transport alternatives. Following a "ready-to-implement" approach, the technical assistance has supported policy design, implementation instruments (guides), financing mechanisms for specific measures, and a capacity-building roadmap. It has also facilitated strategic planning, concept design exchanges, workshops, and meetings while providing detailed insights into transport-oriented city planning, e-mobility solutions, and financing mechanisms.

Support from the Partnership

Technical Assistance: National Urban Mobility Policy or Programme (NUMP)
Type of NUMP: Policy NUMP
Funded by: European Commission
Funding amount: EUR 1,000,000
Implemented by: Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) through the Euroclima+ Programme
Local counterpart: Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM); National Energy Directorate; Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment
Final NUMP report: Guía para la planificación de la Movilidad Urbana Sostenible en Uruguay | MobiliseYourCity

The main purpose of the NUMP:

> **Objectives:** The project aims to strengthen capacities for planning sustainable urban mobility and to lay the foundations for a national program to promote electric urban mobility, including 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 date: 2018 Q2
NUMP adoption date: Not defined

Completed outputs:

- National Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning Guide
- National e-mobility guide[1]
- 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 programme on designing 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).
- National Policy document

Next expected outputs:

- E-mobility solutions guide
- Cost estimation of the policy implementation. The cost will be estimated after pilot implementation in six cities during the design phase, with support from EUROCLIMA's country dialogue in the new phase.

[1] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/euroclima_en

NUMP key measures and cost estimates

The following table highlights the most significant measures identified in the NUMP.

Measure	Implementation schedule	Cost estimate
Walking		
Walking network and walkability	Over 5 years	N/A
Shared streets	2-5 years	N/A
Sidewalks requalification	Under 2 years	N/A
Safe crossings	2-5 years	N/A
Signing	Under 2 years	N/A
Roads to schools	Under 2 years	N/A
Cycling		
Cycling network	Under 2 years	N/A
Bike parking	2-5 years	N/A
Incentive policies to bike to major activity centres	2-5 years	N/A
Shared bikes system	2-5 years	N/A
Public transport		
Creation of a mass public transport service	Over 5 years	N/A
Public Transport Service Quality Management	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Use of data for public transport management	2-5 years	N/A
Improve public transport infrastructure.	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Prioritisation of public transport	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Reorganisation of the public transport network	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
School transport services	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Road management and disincentives to private transport use		
Definition and revision of the road hierarchy	Under 2 years	N/A
Parking management	2-5 years	N/A
Measures to restrict private vehicle circulation	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Speed management	Under 2 years	N/A
Safe road design and traffic-calming	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Management, monitoring and evaluation of safe systems	Over 5 years	N/A
Urban logistics		
Access of freight vehicles and loading/ unloading operations in urban areas	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Distribution networks and last-mile logistics	2-5 years / Over 5 years	N/A
Urban development, land-use and public spaces		
Promote accessibility-oriented development	Over 5 years	N/A
Linear promenades and green infrastructure	Over 5 years	N/A
Expansion and upgrading of public space	Under 2 years / 2-5 years	N/A
Tactical urbanism interventions	Under 2 years	N/A

Finance leverage

Leveraged financing (resulting from or enabled by the NUMP preparation process)

Description	Source of financing	Type	Status	Amount (EUR)
Montevideo Metropolitan Transport Transformation (Electric BRT + corridor works)	IDB	Loan	Secured	420,650,000[2]
Montevideo's metropolitan transport system: design and implement an integrated high-capacity public transport system and set up a metropolitan transport agency	CAF	Loan	Secured	252,420,000[3]

Associated financing (independently secured financing for measures related to the NUMP)

Description	Source of financing	Type	Status	Amount (EUR)
"Subite Pasajeros" electrification support: continuation of a national programme providing USD 5,000 per vehicle for eligible operators switching from fossil to EVs	Government of Uruguay	Public grant/ subsidy	Secured / Active	420,700[4]

[2] BID | BID apoya la transformación del sistema de transporte metropolitano de Montevideo
[3] CAF aprueba USD 980 millones para Uruguay
[4] https://www.gub.uy/presidencia/comunicacion/noticias/ejecutivo-continua-apoyando-5000-dolares-compra-vehiculos-electricos

Projected impacts

Currently, the NUMP Chile includes a catalogue of measures but no action plan or NUMP scenario with quantified impact.

Indicator	Baseline - 2020
Total annual transport-related GHG emissions (Mt CO2eq)	4,09 Mt CO2eq[5]
Annual transport-related GHG emissions per capita (kg CO2eq)	1,170 kg CO2eq / capita
Acces to public transport in urban areas The proportion of the population living 500 meters or less from a public transport stop	55,7%[6] (2022)
Air pollution Mean urban air pollution of particulate matter (in µg PM2.5) at road-based monitoring stations (Montevideo)	10 µg/m³ of PM2.5[7]
Road safety Annual traffic fatalities in the urban area per 100,000 inhabitants	12,06 fatalities[8]/ 100,000 hab
Affordability of public transport Percentage of disposable household income spent on public transport for the second quintile household income group	NC

Perspectives for implementation

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

The GTP has the technical responsibility for developing the NUMP for adoption 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.

[5] https://catalogodatos.gub.uy/dataset/miem-emisiones-de-co2-por-sector
[6] https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/share-with-convenient-access-to-public-transport
[7] https://montevideo.gub.uy/sites/default/files/biblioteca/informeanual2023.pdf
[8] https://www.gub.uy/unidad-nacional-seguridad-vial/comunicacion/noticias/informe-datos-siniestralidad-vial-del-ano-2023

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 the policy development process, including diverse vantage points improved the setting of objectives and the allocation of responsibilities.

In this context, communication is critical. We advise implementing a dialogue process that engages stakeholders. Stakeholder input should be integrated into an iterative process. We harness stakeholder cooperation committed to the policy's implementation, which is one of the most valuable outcomes of the policy process.

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

Vertical coordination is crucial for engaging stakeholders and ensuring the policy's viability and implementation. It is essential to carry out this process in several steps to recognise challenges and identify solutions. For example, municipal representatives must tailor their ambitions accordingly if the national government promotes sustainable mobility without providing resources to meet stated goals.

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, its Spanish acronym), the Sustainable Mobility Planning Guide[9], the E-mobility Guide[10], a Financing Mechanism, and other actions. A national law will frame Uruguay's NUMP, and the CIMS will lead its enactment. 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.

Sustainable urban mobility planning tools must be adapted to the local context.

Introducing the "ready-to-implement" policy aspect 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 kept a holistic perspective, which is crucial to refining the covered aspects. Early engagement with cities was essential to understanding their challenges and needs for implementation. This process strengthened momentum and commitment from the stakeholders' ecosystem. The methodology provided flexibility to cover sustainable urban mobility planning at the national level while allowing for specific country needs and identity.

[9] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/euroclima_en
[10] https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-industria-energia-mineria/sites/ministerio-industria-energia-mineria/files/documentos/noticias/Gu%C3%ADa%20de%20Movilidad%20El%C3%A9ctrica%20Urbana%20UY_.pdf
[11] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/euroclima_en
[12] https://changing-transport.org/guide-to-electric-urban-mobility-in-uruguay/

2022 was a year for the 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 are now available to accompany the National Urban Mobility Policy. Specifically, the mobility planning guide[11] supports city-level strategy development and includes measures and recommendations for planning a sustainable multimodal mobility system. Cities also received an e-mobility guide[12] that offers solutions and highlights considerations for building an e-mobility system at the city level.

There is a lack of commitment and coordination among the ministries involved in policy approval.

The approval and publication of the policy require an interministerial resolution. This must be an agreement between the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM), the Ministry of Transport and Public Construction (MTOP), the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), and the Ministry of Housing and Territorial Planning (MVOT). Not all ministries are interested and willing to participate in this agreement. A needed strategy to coordinate and bring together the interests of these ministries to reach an agreement is currently being developed.

Highlights in the past year

Montevideo accelerates electric mobility with new e-buses, battery swapping, and major transport financing.

In 2025, the urban bus company CUTCSA in Montevideo introduced 50 new electric buses under the programme of the Joint SDG Fund's joint programme "Renewable Energy Innovation Fund (REIF)", marking a significant step in Uruguay's public transport electrification. This investment catalysed USD 13 million in financing through a blend of concessional support and commercial loans, making electric public transport more financially viable. The new e-buses are expected to avoid approximately 42,500 tons of CO_2 emissions annually, contributing to cleaner air, lower noise, and more sustainable urban mobility.

REIF, in partnership with Banco Santander Uruguay, also launched Uruguay's first large-scale battery-swap system for electric motorcycles, "Swapy," targeted at last-mile delivery and urban logistics in 2025. The pilot includes 60 electric motorbikes, 200 swappable batteries and six swapping stations strategically placed across Montevideo, offering drivers a quick-swap alternative to long recharging times. By replacing fossil-fuel scooters, Swapy aims to reduce emissions, cut operating costs, and improve the sustainability of the delivery sector, with an estimated 1,380 tonnes of CO_2 avoided over eight years.

In November 2025, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) approved a USD 500 million conditional credit line (CCLIP) to support the transformation of Montevideo's metropolitan transport system. The financing is earmarked for establishing an electric, high-capacity BRT system along two major corridors (Avenida 8 de Octubre and Avenida Italia), with dedicated lanes, segregated infrastructure, improved stations, and an interchange terminal at "Tres Cruces". An initial tranche of USD 10 million will finance early project preparation (planning, institutional capacity, procurement design).

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