



TUMI INITIATIVE'S TRANSFORMATIVE STORIES

BUCARAMANGA, COLOMBIA: BOOSTING CYCLING FOR A HEALTHIER CITY

Until recently, Bucaramanga and its metropolitan area did not have any bicycle infrastructure. By supporting the creation of a cycling culture and implementing 20 kilometers of bicycle paths by 2019, Bucaramanga seeks to boost cycling and promote it as a healthier and more accessible mode of transport.

ABOUT BUCARAMANGA

Bucaramanga is the capital of the Department of Santander in northeastern Colombia. Located in the Cordillera Oriental in the Colombian Andes, it plays a leading role in the implementation of urban development strategies, influencing other cities in the region. Along with its neighboring municipalities Floridablanca, Girón, and Piedecuesta, it forms the Bucaramanga Metropolitan Area, Colombia's fifth most populated urban area with a population of approximately 1,141,671 inhabitants (DANE, 2016). Bucaramanga is also known as "La Ciudad de los Parques" ("The City of Parks"), thanks to its more than 200 parks and plazas spread across its 17 districts. Nonetheless, according to its metropolitan observatory, the index of green public spaces in the metropolitan area was just 2.82 m² /inhabitant in 2018.



Population: 521,857 inhabitants (DANE, 2017)

Land area: 165 km²

MODAL SPLIT

(Estimates and elaboration based on "Bucaramanga como vamos")

- 36% Public transportation
- 22% Motorcycles
- 16% Cars
- 10% Informal transportation (cars and motorcycles)
- 8% Taxi
- 7% Walking
- 1% Cycling



TARGETS by 2020: 20 km of bicycle lanes, 2% of trips made by bicycle

TARGETS by 2030: 5% of trips made by bicycle

MOBILITY IN BUCARAMANGA

Transport is the first cause of air pollution in Bucaramanga (AMB, 2019). Similarly to other Colombian cities, Bucaramanga is motorizing rapidly: between 2012 and 2017, the city registered a 47% increase in the number of motorized vehicles in the Bucaramanga Metropolitan Area, reaching 676,511 units, most of which are motorcycles (Metropolitan Observatory, 2017). Metrolínea has been the Integrated Mass Transit System (SITM) of Bucaramanga since its inauguration in 2010 when the system was introduced to improve mobility in the city and reduce air pollution. Jointly funded by all levels of governments, Metrolínea is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system operating with 237 buses, and it is complemented by 951 registered public transport vans called “colectivos” (Metropolitan Observatory, 2018).

In Bucaramanga, a significant amount of time is spent by commuters in traffic. Residents spent on average 57 minutes commuting by public transport every day, and fifty-eight percent of them travel for more than two hours daily. On average, the distance covered in a single trip is 5.6 kilometers, while 37 percent of travelers cover a distance of more than 12 kilometers in a single direction (Moovit, 2017).

THE LOCAL PLAN FOR ROAD SAFETY AND NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT

Bucaramanga’s 2017-2020 Local Plan for Road Safety (PLSV) prioritizes non-motorized transport, especially walking and cycling, along with public transport. The plan outlines key strategies to improve road safety, lower accident rates, and address informality issues through road control, improved signalization, and educational campaign.

Survey data has provided evidence on the positive impacts of such strategies. For instance, Bucaramanga registered a decrease of 33 percent in fatality rate in 2017, with 50 deaths compared to 75 in 2016 (PLSV, 2017-2020). When supported by appropriate infrastructure, increasing cycling rates can help reduce road fatalities while also improving residents’ health and quality of life.

Over the last few years, the Municipality of Bucaramanga has put into place many initiatives to promote active transport on its territory. Major activities included the institutionalization of a Bicycle Office within the Bucaramanga Directorate for Transit (DTB), the adoption of a bicycle strategy, the design and roll out of primary and secondary bicycle infrastructure, the organization of public events, and the introduction of a bike-sharing system. Each of these initiatives will be discussed in the following sections.

THE INSTITUTION OF A BICYCLE OFFICE AND THE 2019-2030 BICYCLE STRATEGY

The City of Bucaramanga decided to implement a Bicycle Office to promote cycling as an accessible and safe transport mode. The Office was established in 2017 with the aims of implementing and coordinating (1) bicycle infrastructure, (2) communications and awareness campaigns, (3) educational and cultural activities, and (4) other specific bicycle-related projects.



The Bicycle Office was purposefully integrated within the Directorate for Transit of Bucaramanga to ensure that its activities be aligned and contribute towards an integrated and cohesive implementation of the Local Plan for Road Safety.

The 2019-2030 Bicycle Strategy draws a roadmap for the activities of the Bicycle Office. It was created following several public consultations organized by the Metropolitan Area of Bucaramanga in collaboration with UN-Habitat and the non-profit organization Despacio. The Strategy outlines short and mid-term goals, milestones, as well as indicators. The promotion of cycling as a safe and equitable means of transport is set as a clear priority for the years to come. In 2018, the implementation of the Strategy was declared “hecho metropolitano”, making it legally enforceable within the entire metropolitan area, independently of future city administrations.

IMPLEMENTING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SAFE AND CONVENIENT CYCLING

The Municipality of Bucaramanga has started implementing bicycle infrastructure in order to attract daily commuters and invite citizens to modify their transportation habits. The first dedicated bike lane installed in the city connected the main public library to the public university. The City aims to increase the bicycle infrastructure network from the current 2.6 kilometers to a total of 20 kilometers of bike paths by the end of 2019, connecting areas of educational, commercial, and cultural interest.

The city has also identified strategic locations for secondary bicycle infrastructure such as parking and repair facilities. A legal and technical framework, combined with an implementation plan in three phases, will ensure the project's steady advancement. The first phase of the project should see the installation of 125 bicycle parking spaces and three bicycle repair facilities in 30 high-traffic locations such as sports, commercial, education, and transportation hubs. Bucaramanga is also focusing on promoting multimodality by placing bicycle facilities near relevant public transport stations. According to the Local Plan for Road Safety, 50 bicycle parking spaces are expected to be installed at five stations in 2019, with the City aiming to have bicycle facilities at 50 percent of its stations by 2025 and 90 percent by 2030. The Municipality of Bucaramanga also plans to adopt by 2030 a clear regulation regarding the presence of bicycles in public transport vehicles, and it wants to forge private partnerships with the taxi companies to equip them with bike racks.

Bicycle ownership is still very limited, according to the Municipality of Bucaramanga. The introduction of a public bike-sharing system in 2019 will be instrumental in doubling bicycle ridership in the city by 2020 and facilitating multimodality as a way to encourage ridership and public acceptance. The Municipality has secured a collaboration with Metrolínea and the Directorate of Traffic to launch a public bike-sharing system pilot project in June 2019, which will last until December 2019. Technical support is provided by GIZ and the C40 Cities Finance Facility.

GENERATING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE THROUGH AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS, PROGRAMMING, AND EVENTS

While bicycle infrastructure can make cycling more convenient and safe, temporary events and installations in strategic locations can also foster cultural change in mobility. When residents have the opportunity to experience car-free streets, they rediscover and redefine their interactions with urban spaces. For the Municipality of Bucaramanga, these events provide a powerful way to introduce necessary measures, such as parking bans in some streets or the removal of cycling bans on others. They also allow residents to experience and envision the streets before such measures are made permanent. Since 2016, the Municipality of Bucaramanga has been collaborating with the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Santo Tomas (USTA), where students support the Municipality with such interventions throughout the city.

The Municipality created in 2017 the Bucaramanga Bicycle Week, a yearly event that celebrates the use of the bicycle in its various forms. The event also provides an opportunity for residents to reflect on the impacts their mobility habits have on the environment, public space, and health. Car-free days also allow the Municipality to monitor improvements in air quality and noise pollution, as well as assess how the city's public transport system (Metrolínea) copes in the event of an increased demand.

The Bicycle Office coordinates further cycling-related activities throughout the year as part of their awareness campaign to encourage residents to use bicycles in their daily life. Events are organized throughout the year for diverse occasions ranging from Halloween to Mother's Day or WWF's Earth Hour.

Moving forward, the Municipality of Bucaramanga is focusing on incentivizing cycling to work as an easy and more convenient transport option through a campaign and partnerships with the private sector. According to the Local Plan for Road Safety, 100 workplaces will take part in a pilot project to implement bicycle infrastructures such as dedicated parking areas and showers. The Municipality also plans to continue its educational program in schools, with the aim of implementing the program "Bike to School" in 20 percent of the city's institutions by 2025.





KEY CONTACTS

Municipality of Bucaramanga

Natalia Duran-Valbuena, Head of the International Affairs Office
<https://www.bucaramanga.gov.co/>

ICLEI World Secretariat

EcoMobility Team - ecomobility@iclei.org
www.iclei.org | @ICLEI @EcoMobility

TUMI Initiative

Daniel Moser daniel.moser@giz.de
transformative-mobility.org | @TUMInitiative

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Author: Tu My Tran

Contributors: Natalia Duran-Valbuena

Editor: Marie-Eve Assuncao-Denis

Layout: Matteo Franceschi

Photos: Isaim Lozano

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The [Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative \(TUMI\)](http://transformative-mobility.org) enables leaders in developing countries and emerging economies to create sustainable urban mobility. It offers technical and financial support for innovative ideas. In TUMI the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has brought together some of the world's leading institutions working on sustainable mobility with city networks and think tanks to implement projects on site where they are needed most. Partners include ADB, CAF, WRI, ITDP, UN-Habitat, SLoCaT, ITDP, ICLEI, GIZ, KfW and C40. transformative-mobility.org

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ADDITIONAL READINGS

Bucaramanga's Bike Week website:
<http://semanadelabicicleta.com>

Metropolitan Area of Bucaramanga, Municipality of Bucaramanga, & UN-Habitat (2018). The bicycle as a means of transport: Strategy 2019-2030.

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