

CASE STUDY

Car-Free Days Can Give Big Cities Room to Breathe



Ciclovía, Bogotá's car-free days, has inspired more than 100 cities to make space for walking and cycling to improve public health and the environment.

Overview

Bogotá introduced the Ciclovía car-free days in 1974, inspiring similar programs in more than 100 cities around the world. On Sundays and holidays, the city closes 121 kilometers (km) of roads to motor vehicles, reserving these for cyclists, skaters, and pedestrians. The Ciclovía routes connect all parts of the city, creating a space where all residents—rich and poor, old and young alike—can exercise, play, and interact.

Like other rapidly urbanizing cities, Colombia's capital has had to deal with overcrowding in public transport, traffic congestion, and pollution. Though it was started as a recreational program, Ciclovía has helped to promote cycling as a low-cost, zero-emission alternative to cars and buses.

Project snapshot

Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1974: Start of program - the first Ciclovía took place from 9 a.m. to 12 nn on two streets near the city center. • 1976: Fully operational - more than 40 km of streets were reserved for the program. • 1995: Establishment of the Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte (IDRD) • 2006: Relaunched
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$17,676 annually (as of 2012): Operational cost to the city, per kilometer • \$7.2 million annually (as of 2012): Total program cost
Institutions and Stakeholders	<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte or IDRD: Institute of Sports and Recreation <p>Executing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretaría de Tránsito y Transporte: Department of Traffic and Transportation • Instituto de Cultura y Turismo: Institute of Culture and Tourism • Mayor's Office <p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal government and private sponsors

Context

Along with football, cycling is a national passion in Colombia. Many households own a bicycle, but this was more for recreational use than as a means of transportation. The motor vehicle was still the commuter's first choice.

In 1974, cycling activists in Colombia's capital, Bogotá, convinced the city government to close two streets to motor vehicles on a Sunday. This was the first Ciclovía, which means "bicycle path" in Spanish.

More than 5,000 Bogotanos joined the event to protest against the growing number of motor vehicles on the streets, air pollution, and the lack of public space for recreational activities.

A second Ciclovía was held in 1976. It was not until 1982 however that it became a weekly activity.



Challenge

Roads dominated by motorists

Like other American cities, Bogotá has had to struggle with problems arising from its car culture. The growing number of motor vehicles clogged the city's streets and left little or no public space for bicycles and pedestrians. These vehicles also contributed to air pollution.

Subject to the whims of the political leadership

Depending on the priorities of the city government, the Ciclovía routes were either expanded or reduced. There was also no permanent agency to manage the program.

Solutions

Restrict car use and make space for other road users

Starting in 1995, for an average of 72 days a year (Sundays and holidays), Bogotá closes a network of streets to motorized traffic from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. to give way to pedestrians, cyclists, and recreational activities. The area covered by Ciclovía includes the main commercial center and major roads, which are clogged with motor vehicles on normal days.

Create a permanent group to manage the program

The Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte (District Institute of Sports and Recreation) or IDRDR was created in 1995 and took over the management of the Ciclovía. It works in coordination with other government agencies, including the traffic and transport department, community volunteers, and private sponsors.

IDRD more than doubled the Ciclovía route to 121 km by 2006 and linked the bicycle circuit to parks, sporting venues, and tourism sites. It also launched a Recreovía program that offers free activities to the public, including yoga, aerobics, and bike riding and repair classes.



MAPA CICLOVÍA



Ruta CICLOVÍA

Tramo CICLORUTA

Tramo SUSPENDIDO por obras



Eventos Ciclovía IDRD
Prensa IDRD

@IDRD

www.idrd.gov.co

CULTURA, RECREACIÓN Y DEPORTE - Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte

Source: IDRD

Numbers and facts

121 km road closed for Ciclovía

2,000 volunteers and 600 employees use for operation

Results

VIDEO: Interview with organizers and/or participants

Key statistics

600,000 to 1.4 million users each time

46% of users bike, 48% walk, and 8% skate users of other nonmotorized transit

\$3.23 to \$4.26 Ciclovía saves individuals in medical costs for every dollar spent on the program, as a result of increased physical activity

2,000 directly generated jobs over each Sunday, through staff managing the program and vendors selling food, bike-related services, and other goods

Lessons

Car-free days promote sustainable transport and health consciousness

Ciclovía is helping change public opinion and shape policy toward reducing the use of cars and supporting more efficient and less polluting or nonpolluting modes of transport. It has strengthened the bicycle culture in Bogotá and underlined the need for dedicated bicycle lanes, which were later constructed throughout the city.

Engage the community to ensure the program's success

One of the key success factors behind the program is the active participation of the different sectors of the community. The Ciclovía idea came from a group of cyclists and the program has since gained popular support from Bogotá's residents, who have helped keep it going even when government priorities change. The weekly event is now made possible by the collaboration of different government agencies and the private sector.

Resources

- A.D. Torres. 2012. The Bogota Ciclovía-Recreativa and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity, and Social Capital in the City of Bogota. Thesis submitted to Georgia State University.
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- C.F. Pardo. 2012. Chapter 4: Sustainable Urban Transport. In M. Peck, ed. Shanghai Manual: A Guide for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- D. Hidalgo. 2014. How Ciclovías Contribute to Mobility and Quality of Life in Latin America and in Cities Worldwide. The City Fix. 22 October.
- Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. 2013. ADB-CAF South-South Cooperation Virtual Study Tour Final Report. Unpublished.
- Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte. La Ciclovía Bogotana y Su Historia.
- M. Power. 2010. Bogotá's Ciclovía Could Teach Boris Johnson How to Run a Car-Free Capital. The Guardian. 16 June.

Related links

Case Study: Bogotá's TransMilenio Strategy: Putting People First

Case Study: CicloRutas Transform Bogotá into a Bicycle-Friendly City



Institute for Transportation and Development Policy

This case study is from a series of virtual study tours created by The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) as part of a South-South Cooperation Project that facilitates the sharing of best practices in sustainable transport.

Last updated: May 2016