



— Yucatán's Urban Mobility Plan

- Building back greener -



Government: Yucatán

Population: 2,169,504

GDP: \$17 billion

Region: Latin America

Sectors: Transportation, energy

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700 indirect
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people

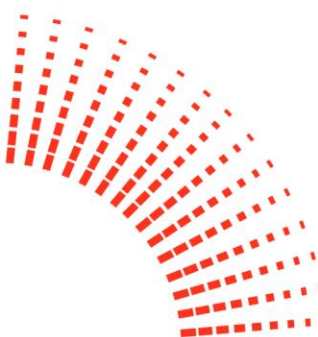
Summary

Global economic and health systems faced extreme pressures in 2020, with governments at all levels working to address the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the climate crisis has not gone away.

Regional governments such as Yucatán have decided to take action that not only helps to relieve the difficulties posed by COVID-19 but looks to the future as well. This means developing policies that help to build more sustainable societies, where the environment is seen as a key concern rather than a 'nice to have'.

Last year, Yucatán's **Plan for the Improvement of Urban Mobility in the Historic Center of Mérida** has reduced city center traffic, expanded and enhanced cycle lane provision, widened pavements and improved road crossings for pedestrians, and led to the planting of more than 2000 trees.

The plan has also generated 280 direct and 700 indirect jobs for local people, demonstrating the economic possibilities of more sustainable ways of living.



Urban Mobility Improvement Plan

One of the biggest challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic for governments around the world has been the need to reduce urban travel and congestion in order to maintain social distancing and protect public health.

The Government of Yucatán acted quickly by developing and implementing its **Plan for the Improvement of Urban Mobility in the Historic Center of Mérida**. This is a dynamic, flexible, and evolving project aligned with Sustainable Development Goals and the recommendations of international organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO).

The plan has two main goals: to make the city a safe space for residents and visitors in the first instance and then to create a more sustainable, resilient transport system that is fit for the future.

In its first phase, Yucatán planned to:

- Reduce the number of people at bus stops
- Restructure streets within the historic center to reduce traffic and create space
- Designate specific areas for loading and unloading vehicles
- Set out new crosswalks for pedestrians
- Activate new bus routes
- Focus on users of public transport

From September 2020, buses have not been able to enter the city center itself but have stopped in surrounding streets. This has enabled widening of pedestrian paths so that people can travel.

The actions were introduced together with a campaign of divulgation, awareness-raising and logistic support. In addition, mechanisms were implemented to monitor and evaluate the successes of each action and there was a strong focus on public transport users during the first three months of the implementation.

Ensuring sustainability

The second phase of the plan has looked more closely at sustainability, and actions that contribute directly to the national government's efforts to mitigate impacts of climate change.

Yucatán has taken actions to:

- Connect existing bicycle lanes to create an expanded network of more than 130 km within Mérida and the Metropolitan Area;
- Increase investment in overall cycling infrastructure. Although Yucatán is currently the 19th top investor in this area for Mexico, it has aspirations to do better;
- Promote physical activities that benefit the healthcare system by reducing rates of obesity. Yucatán is ranked among the top regions in terms of overweight and obesity and this has been identified as a risk factor for COVID-19 mortality.
- Protect the environment by promoting the use of more sustainable and energy efficient means of transportation, such as walking or cycling;
- Encourage walking and cycling for shorter journeys to reduce local congestion and air pollution.

In addition, Yucatán has been working to mitigate climate change, improve local air quality, and protect biodiversity by launching a “tree planting strategy” through which **more than 2,000 trees were planted** that are adapted to the region and will provide a series of environmental services such as the capture of CO₂. **This will ultimately lead to the removal of 20 tonnes of carbon every year, with added benefits.**

Working with all levels of government

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need to accelerate climate action and environmental protection which can contribute to a prosperous, sustainable economy and a more resilient and healthier future. To address this challenge, the Government of Yucatán is committed to local actions that have an impact on a global level.

Its plan required coordination with different levels of government and different governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Public Security (SSP), the Municipal Police of Mérida (PMM), the Institution of Road Infrastructure of Yucatán (INCAY), Mérida Municipal Planning Institute (IMPLAN), Yucatan Water and Sewerage Board (JAPAY) and the Mobility and Urban Territorial Development Institute (IMDUT). Close coordination between different stakeholders such as the board of trustees, and downtown store tenants was a key factor for the successful implementation of the plan. These groups will continue to work for three more months to evaluate the results and make any necessary adjustments.

Expected results

Yucatán's Plan brings significant benefits to the local population, including reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19, providing environmentally friendly transport alternatives, generating financial savings for residents, and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. At the same time it has the potential to reactivate the local economy by generating more employment and greater opportunities for self-employment.

It is not only an intervention that solves an immediate need, but will significantly transform the mobility of the capital, Mérida, which covers only 2% of the territory but is home to 42.5% of the population. It also responds to requests from residents for safer and more sustainable ways to get around the city. The new routes will allow Yucatecans to travel short distances in less time without polluting the environment.

This work will create 280 direct and 700 indirect new jobs for locals and provide saving opportunities for many families through a reduction in car use. Having fewer vehicles on the road will also reduce congestion - leading to lower emissions, cleaner air, less noise and a healthier overall environment.

More information

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