

# **Towards a More Socially and Environmentally Sustainable City**

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## **Background**

1. Bogota is an old city with a population of about 7 million and an area of 492 square kms. At that time, Bogota was a city hated by its inhabitants, who felt powerless and that things would only get worse in the future.
2. In 1998, Mayor Enrique Peñalosa promoted that "We had to build a city not for businesses or automobiles, but for children and for the people. Instead of building highways, we restricted car use."
3. In three years, starting in 1998, Mayor Enrique Peñalosa created from scratch a BRT system called TransMilenio that transformed the quality of life in the city of Bogota and renewed the civic spirit. Mayor Peñalosa decided in 1998 to reject a Transportation Master Plan that proposed to solve Bogotá's traffic jams with a metro system and elevated highways because it was unaffordable and unworkable, promising mobility for the few, but not for all.
4. With the money that Bogotá would have paid interest in one year for a loan to build the metro, Mr. Peñalosa built 155 miles of bicycle paths that now move 5% of the population, up 10 times from bike rider ship in 1998. A key to the success of Bogotá's BRT is the attention paid to improving public spaces, bikeways, and sidewalks which made the system safe and accessible to all.

In 2000, after about three years, the first TransMilenio system was operational. After five months of operation, TransMilenio reported a 93 percent reduction in traffic fatalities; a 40 percent drop in some air pollutants; a 32 percent decline in travel time; and a passenger acceptance level of 88 percent.

5. Now, the TransMilenio with its feed system, bikeways, sidewalks, parks, and improved public spaces have been continuously expanded. The improved city infrastructure has attracted all citizens at all income levels. More than 20% of bus costumers own private cars.

## **Synthesis of Presentation by Enrique Penalosa**

1. Quality City and Transport
  - A quality city provides satisfaction to people as it provides high quality of life.
  - It also provides social equity which means in post-communism public good prevailing over private interest.
  - Transport system should therefore be designed according to the kind of city we want to live in, which should be designed according to how we want to live.
2. Defining a Good City

- All our everyday efforts have one objective: Happiness.
  - It is a city for the most vulnerable citizens of the society: the children, the handicapped, the elderly, and the very poor.
  - It is where people want to be out in the streets, parks, etc.
  - It is a city that is built around the needs of the people, and not cars.
  - It is a city that is safe and friendly to pedestrians and bicycles. It is not one with great highways but rather one where a child in a bicycle could go safely everywhere.
  - Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cities were for the pedestrians only (slides 22-27)
3. Quality of urban life may be the most important instrument for economic competitiveness.
- So far competitiveness in developing countries was derived mainly from its lower labor costs.
  - Soon it will have to be based on highly qualified and highly paid professionals.
  - A good city that will attract children will also attract highly creative and qualified professional staff.
4. Transport Challenges
- Transportation gets worse as society gets richer.
  - Transportation cannot be solved with money alone, it requires change in attitude.
  - Good transport policy is about providing mobility for all and minimizing motor vehicle usage.
  - If use of car is to be restricted, there must be a good transport system in place.
  - Density is the most important element of good public transport system (slide 173-182).
5. Distributing a Road Space in a Democratic Society
- Road space should be divided into: (a) exclusive space for public transport such as a bus system, (b) large sidewalks, (c) protected bicycles lanes, and (4) cars get whatever remaining space there is.
  - Where there are cars, parallel road network should be built: one for cars and the other exclusively for public transport, bikeways, and pedestrians (slides 32-37)
  - For cities yet to be built, they should be structured around a street network of pedestrian and bicycle (slides 39-46).
  - Quality sidewalks and protected bicycle paths are not appealing architectural features: they are a right.
  - Pedestrian-bicycles highways are not just for the poor, but for upper income of advanced cities as well (slides 53-55). A formidable pedestrian-bicycle highway would make our cities better. It would encourage a different, happier and more sustainable way of life. It would be attractive to highly creative and qualified people.
6. Designing a Transport System
- Sidewalks.
    - The lack of it or the use of it for park cars means the lack of respect for human dignity (slides 59, 61-64, 66-71)
    - Pedestrians are important. Equality can be measured by the width and quality of sidewalks.
    - They are therefore an important element of democratic infrastructure (slides 72-80).
  - Bicycle lanes
    - They protect people and raise social status of users (slides 184, 186-194, 197).
    - It is a symbol of democracy. It shows that a citizen on a \$40 bicycle is equally important as one on a \$40,000 car.

- In Bogota, not one meter of bicycle lane existed before. Now, 35,000 go to work on bikes. (199-204).
- In developing countries, the use of bicycle save 10-30% of minimum wage earner's income.
- Public Transport
  - In advanced cities, majority of the population use public transport for their daily mobility. They use it because it is a necessity. This is possible because of (a) a good transport system, and (b) existing restrictions in car use e.g., high gasoline taxes, car days-off (slide 230), car free day (Slides 231-233), social integration, parking restrictions, congestion charges.
  - A good transport system offers quality service at low price. This maybe possible through transport subsidies. A poor, living far, pay more as they go farther. Using the same logic, car users should be charged more for using more gas. A democratic city should charge the uniform fare for long or short distances.
  - Railway system cannot transport more than 15% of the entire population within a city. To go beyond would be expensive, both in building and maintaining the system.
  - To choose rail system over bus system is like taking away resources away for other needs of the poor, schools, libraries, parks, etc. Rail system expenses cover cost of operating urban racism. The upper income people are pushing for it not for them but for the poor, so they can have the road space to use for their private cars.
  - Bus system would be better than rail system in terms of capacity and speed to transport people.
- Parks
  - In public space we all meet as equals. In a place where 99% are private properties, it is the only space where we all have access.
  - Access to greens is what will give happiness to people. You can build, say, sewerage system later on, but not parks. Governments have to buy lands for parks now.
  - Central parks were created at the time when income per capita of New Yorkers was much lower than Asia (slides 93, 95-96). Asia can create better and bigger parks.
- Waterfronts
  - They should not be made private.
  - There should be pedestrian lane alongside, but not motor-vehicles (slide 112)
  - In Paris, they closed roads adjacent to the Seine so that people may enjoy the river ... (slides 112-113)
  - In Korea, they spent billions of dollars to breakdown a highway to give way to a man-made waterfront (slides 114-115)
  - In Bogota, they created pedestrian lanes adjacent to drainage canal to enjoy the water (slide 121)
- Highways
  - Bigger roads/road expansion will only stimulate use of cars, and will not solve traffic congestion (slide 133, 142); neither elevated highways (128, 134, 138-140) nor underpass (143) will solve traffic jams. If there were less space for cars, there would be less cars.
  - Highways destroy quality of life. In most advanced cities, they do not solve traffic jams by building more highways. There are no elevated highways in most desirable cities.

- Instead of investing billions of dollars on highways, it can be used to restrict car use, create quality public transport, and create quality city, i.e., improving the lives of the poor (Slides 149-166)
7. The Transmilenio – Bogota’s BRT (slides 244, 246, 248-250, 256-274)
- Owners of traditional buses became shareholders of new BRT
  - Bus Rapid Transit systems is a symbol that show that public good prevails over private interest because road space is allocated first to public transport.
  - Buses were perceived as transport for the poor. We needed people to refer to them as TransMilenio and not simply as “bus”
  - Nearly 20% of TransMilenio riders are car owners
  - TransMilenio is moving more passenger per hour / kilometer than 90% of rail systems; at 5% the cost; similar speeds; and a US \$0.75 (profitable) price per ticket.
  - Half the proceeds of a gasoline surcharge tax of 25% goes to financing the local part of TransMilenio investment costs. It is important to analyze alternatives before going for investments.
  - Institutional arrangements are important. There must be an institution that is empowered to make decisions.