

Havana Sustainable Mobility Stage 4, 2017-18

Improving mobility and accessibility for disadvantaged communities in Havana

Project rationale. The City of Havana is at a critical juncture, with economic changes bringing growing motorized traffic and widening income disparities. For disadvantaged communities, these conditions create threats of reduced mobility, deterioration of urban infrastructure, and increasing pollution, congestion and danger. To avoid these outcomes, a clear vision for appropriate urban development and mobility policies is needed. Groundwork for the development of such a vision exists – in the form of a network of officials, concerned professionals and citizens, and a community in Central Havana where support is available from local government, transport authorities and university researchers – though progress is hampered by lack of financial, physical and research resources.

Aim. The project's aim is to support local initiatives for equitable mobility and accessibility by contributing financial, physical and research resources, to create a participatory planning and governance structure, built around a community-based 'Hub' for research activities and other social urbanism initiatives in a disadvantaged area of Havana.

Project participants: The core team is a partnership of academics (specialists in Architecture, Engineering, Urban Planning and Economics) from CUJAE, Havana's technological university, and University College London. Participant organizations include Havana transport and planning authorities (Dirección General de Transporte, DGT, and Dirección Provincial de Planificación Física, DPPF); Municipal government (Asamblea Municipal Poder Popular, Centro Habana); and neighborhood groups.

Activities. The project, involving participatory research, planning and design, will take place within the disadvantaged 'Los Sitios' neighborhood of Central Havana. The core project team of researchers will act mentors and facilitators for local participants, to enable a dynamic and continuous dialogue between residents and the city's planning authorities, with complementary input from other international researchers. The Hub will harness the community's vision and aspirations for quality of life, environment and mobility to generate, develop and test innovative interventions that inform policy. **Activity I** will bring together the project team and local community, government, planning and transport authorities to initiate case studies, establish consultation and communications processes, and identify premises for the Hub. **Activity II** will establish the first case studies, develop multiagency dialogue (through a series of participatory activities informed by international research) and create conceptual designs for pilot interventions. **Activity III** will involve evaluation of pilot schemes and presentation of results, to inform the design of subsequent pilot schemes. The Hub will host a launch public event and exhibition. **Activity IV** will disseminate result to relevant authorities, representatives from other communities, and a wider audience, and establish an institutional structure and plan of activities for sustaining the work of the Hub.

Impacts. (i) the creation of a participatory *process* for the planning of local urban mobility, with a physical space for its activities; (ii) the development of a multi-perspective *vision* on mobility through the case studies, capacity building events and public workshops; and (iii) introduction of innovative and appropriate local urban mobility policy *interventions* (including facilitation of non-motorized mobility and access).

Results. By generating a replicable framework for development of participatory community-led design and planning to improve urban mobility interventions, the expected result will be a shift in urban mobility policy in Havana towards a more equitable and sustainable model.

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Update

Reconfiguration of public spaces in Los Sitios neighborhood. The Cuban project team has held discussions with the municipal government, community and transport authority to develop proposals for the reconfiguration of public spaces in Los Sitios to enhance mobility and accessibility and provide a better environment for the community. To support this engagement, a 2.5-minute video has been produced, including short interviews with key actors (of CUJAE, transport authority, community council) against the backdrop of a June 2017 'Festival' that was the culmination of our previous work in the Los Sitios neighbourhood of Havana, <http://cuba-research-network.net/havana-sustainable-mobility/mi-plaza-a-video-overview-of-the-event/>. Filming was by celebrated Cuban cameraman Roberto Chile, and the video was produced by a young Cuban film maker Sarima Proveyer. After some delays due to the postponement of elections (due to hurricane Irma in early September 2017), the revised proposals have now been submitted to the transport authority (Dirección General de Transporte, DGT), whose Director of Development, Guadalupe Rodríguez, has indicated that a budget will be approved to implement them in 2019.

Developing a strategic policy vision. In an unanticipated development that has deepened our engagement with the DGT, Ms Rodríguez has requested the project team's support in drafting a bid for Global Environment Fund (GEF) support to develop Havana's carbon-reducing transport strategy. This is a highly positive development for the project, confirming our expectation that Cuba will be able to obtain access to climate funds in the near future, and underlining the imperative for policy-makers to design a strategy to use those funds for ensure equitable and sustainable mobility.

Dissemination. A project **web page** on the Cuba Research Network site <http://cuba-research-network.net/havana-sustainable-mobility/> is now available for posting updates. Emily Morris and James Warren presented a **conference paper** on 'Transport and public health in Havana: Indicators of Concern?' at University Transport Studies Group (UTSG) annual conference, University College London, January 5th 2018. Jorge Peña Diaz gave a **guest lecture** on 'Havana: Exceptions and Epitomes', at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL, February 21st 2018.

Upcoming activities. In April 2018, Dr Jenny Mindell, of UCL's Transport Institute and Editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Transport and Health*, will present **lectures** on the links between transport, public health and equity with relevant researchers and officials in Havana. An **article** based on the USTG paper is being prepared for submission to peer reviewed academic journal, and for presentation to relevant authorities and academics in Havana. In May, our Cuban project partners Jorge Peña and Joiselen Cazanave will discuss 'urban challenges' as panellists at a **meeting** at Canning House, then at a **seminar** at UCL's Institute of the Americas in London. From there they will travel to Barcelona to present their **paper** on 'Urban Mobility in Havana: Challenges of Creating a more Inclusive City' at the 2018 LASA Congress. Preparations are under way for our next **pilot workshops** in July. Arrangements for leasing premises for our '**Hub**' remain subject to official approval, which remains pending.