

## BOGOTA DESIGNS TRANSPORTATION FOR PEOPLE

WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE - When Enrique Penalosa became mayor of Bogota, Colombia in 1998, he asked a question that is changing the way people all over the world think about cities: "In Bogota, where 85 percent of the people do not use cars for their daily transport, is it fair that cars occupy most of the space on the streets?"

The answers he came up with have reshaped Bogota, home to 7 million people, into a city so easy to negotiate by public transportation that people actually voted in favor of outlawing cars in the city during rush hour by 2015. In just a few short years, the city has become a success story that cities around the world - from Mexico City to Shanghai - are aiming to copy. . .

After taking office Penalosa implemented a number of simple measures designed to make living in the city easier. He built schools, paved roads, ran sewers to poor neighborhoods, repaired parks, and instituted policies to restrict automobiles. "At first, I was almost impeached for getting cars off sidewalks," he said. But Penalosa pressed ahead with his transportation reforms. And as the city became easier to navigate, support for his efforts grew. The city built 70 miles of bicycle routes and closed several streets to cars and converting them into pedestrian malls. More drastically, the city began to restrict car use during rush hour, banning each car in the city from the downtown area 2 days a week, based on the license plate number. The results were dramatic: the average commute time dropped by 21 minutes, and pollution was reduced significantly.

And then came the Transmilenio. The city had been debating a multi-billion dollar subway system for decades. But Penalosa decided to copy the significantly cheaper rapid transit bus system that had turned Curitiba, Brazil into a model city for effective public transportation. The initial \$350 million, 38 kilometer Transmilenio system was up and running in less than two years. The buses, running in separate lanes down the center of the city's main arteries, are able to carry 780,000 people a day at an average speed of 26 kilometers per hour ? considerably outpacing cars and private buses. Estimates have found that the system saves people an average of 300 hours of commuting time annually.

Unlike expensive subways or elevated trains, the Transmilenio actually runs at a profit. And the city plans to add a number of new lines to the system by 2015, so that 85 percent of residents will live within 500 meters of a bus station.

Not only is Bogota now easier to travel around, Penalosa's reforms have helped make the city considerably safer. Since 1998, crime rates have dropped dramatically. For instance, seven years ago there were 84 homicides per 1,000 people; today the rate has dropped to 30. In comparison, Washington, DC had 52 homicides per 1,000 people in 2002.