

## The bicycle in times of Coronavirus

21st of April 2020

### CONTEXT

The sanitary crisis, provoked by Coronavirus, has caused **drastic changes in urban and metropolitan mobility**. There has been a reduction in the number of trips taken, totalling over 90%, and **new social distancing criteria** has been implemented in order to safeguard users' health. This implies a new paradigm when considering the management of mobility over the course of the next few months and years.

In this situation, it is important to begin working, from this moment, on **guaranteeing residents' mobility in a safe way, not just on public transport, but also individual transport means, promoting above all safe and active mobility** in order to transform the sedentarism caused by confinement and engendering new, healthier, habits.

The recuperation post the sanitary crisis will be accompanied for many years by an important economic and social crisis. Therefore, public transport and, specifically, active mobility, will have an evermore important role as these **modes of transport are more economical and accessible** for all.

Nowadays, we do not know how long the pandemic will last and, until a vaccine is readily available, it is probable that we will have to maintain a certain degree of physical distancing. In this scenario, **favouring individual mobility means, such as bicycles**, will permit a return to activity in a more ordered and isolated form.

We must not forget that the **COVID-19** pandemic specifically affects the respiratory system, which **has a graver impact in territories where the air is more contaminated**, a fact that has been supported by various scientific studies and universities around the world. It is therefore important to avoid, at all cost, the increased incidence rate of private motorised vehicle use, which has been prevalent in all of our cities.

We, cities and territories, have been actively working, over the course of the last weeks, on guaranteeing the **sanitary, social and basic supply needs** of our residents. Now that certain sectors are reactivating, it is important **to facilitate the mobility** of residents and, at the same time, **do this in the safest way possible**.

On the basis of the last Bicycle Barometer in 2019, **72% of homes** in Spain **have at least one bicycle** and **51% of the Spanish population, between 12 and 79 years old, use bicycles** with certain frequency. Therefore the bicycle is a good starting point.

The confinement period and the decrease in traffic has facilitated a **significant improvement in cities' environments** (breathing fresh air, listening to bird songs or listening to the sound of the wind are examples of this), unseen since before the proliferation of cars in the 60s.

Using this as a basis, and following the **recommendations of the sanitary authorities**, on behalf of the Cities for Bicycles Network, we are promoting the facilitation of the use of bicycles in cities and territories via different actions.



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## SHOCK PLAN TO IMPULSE THE USE OF BICYCLE

The Cities for Bicycles Network has been following, with great interest, the initiatives developed by different cities and territories around the world over the last few weeks.

In regards to the experiences analysed and the particular situation at hand, measures to facilitate the use of bicycles are detailed below:

1. Urgently impulse the **tactical expansion**, in a manner that implies little financial resources, in the **cyclist networks** in urban areas and connection points between neighbouring municipalities. This will be done with the aim of creating safe circulation spaces and facilitating physical distancing, without affecting pedestrian space, with **specific aid being offered by the supramunicipal administrations**.
2. **Reopen public bicycle services**, adjusting the offer to previsible demand, strengthening hygiene measures, disinfection of bicycles and installations and promoting the obligatory use of gloves and adequate hand hygiene between users.
3. Establish measures focused on **traffic light coordination** in order to avoid the accumulation of bicycles and pedestrians waiting at crossings.
4. **Achieve cities 30 and reduce speed limits** in the interurban network circulation in order to avoid reckless behaviour committed by motorised traffic and, therefore, favouring active mobility.
5. **Facilitate safe parking spaces** for bicycles in stores, municipalities and other spaces that require easy access (municipal parkings, equipment centres), in such a way to generate bicycle parking with structures that are easy to install in sanitary centres, train stations and other spaces which see high concentration of mobility, without affecting pedestrian space.
6. Impulse **cyclelogistics services** for deliveries, nearby shoppings and municipal services.
7. We ask the **state government and autonomous communities** to put in place an **urgent plan in order to aid the purchase of electric bicycles** and mechanics (for example an aid package of 100 € in order to buy a mechanic bicycle, 250 € for an electric bicycle or electrification and 500 € for a cargo bicycle).
8. We urge the **General Traffic Direction** to agilise the **updating of norms** that refer to bicycles and that it adapts, in a rapid way, to new times and social changes that can be anticipated. This will help to **facilitate safe mobility whilst cycling** and will impulse the **prioritisation** of bicycles, in a way in which the government is proposing.
9. We ask that **projects**, which will be focused upon over the next few months and **seek to impulse the economy**, will specifically contemplate the projects which favour the **industry, the commercialisation and the use** of the bicycle.
10. We ask that **autonomous communities and other supramunicipal entities** elaborate plans in an urgent manner in order to impulse the use of the bicycle and contemplate specific measures in regards to promotion and financing.
11. **Bearing in mind that a greater use of bicycles is predicted in the immediate future, we urge autonomous governments and establishments to impulse road training and education programs related to bicycles** in schools, institutes and for the general population.
12. In order to accomplish these actions we ask the state government to **name a figure responsible for coordinating**, on an inter administrative level, **all policies** which must be implemented in an active manner, **and in a variety of bodies**, over the next few months.

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## WHY IMPULSE THE USE OF THE BICYCLE DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC?

During the Coronavirus crisis many territories have been impulsing the use of bicycles due to a variety of factors:

- It is an **individual transport** mode which facilitates **physical distancing**,
  - It is a transport mode which **does not contaminate**. Therefore **it does not contribute nor aggravate the condition of people who are unwell with coronavirus**,
  - It is a **soundless mode**, therefore helping to facilitate the appreciation for the improvement in acoustic contamination noted in the days of confinement due to lack of traffic. This helps promote a better **emotional state**,
  - It is a mode which **does not generate greenhouse gases**, therefore not contributing and aggravating the climate emergency situation,
  - It is a mode which **does not provoke serious** traffic incidents, therefore avoiding the use of health services during these days,
  - It is a **flexible mode which does not occupy space** and can circulate around the majority of streets and pedestrian areas in cities,
  - It is an active mobility mode which **promotes a user's physical and emotional health**, which is very important in these times of confinement and sedentarism,
  - It is a more **rapid** transport mode for **distances up to 8 km**, distances most habitually covered in metropolitan environments,
  - It is a **very economical** transport mode on behalf of both the **user** and **public administration**,
  - If those who can use their bicycle do so, **this implies lower occupation levels on public transport**,
  - For the transport of merchandise and ecommerce, **cyclelogistics** is demonstrating itself to be more **efficient** these days, especially for stores in the nearby proximity.

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