ATTRACTIVE, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACES AT MAJOR ATTRACTION POINTS

LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA

Better Accessibility

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IN BRIEF

Mass tourism is impacting European destinations and challenging local representatives. Despite that increasing tourism brings with it prosperity and development to cities, residents' best interests should not be overlooked in the pursuit of economic growth. To do so mobility planning can play a key role in putting together the needs and requirements of both citizens and tourists.
The following article describes a set of effective measures to contribute to achieving a more sustainable mobility of tourists in European cities. The reader will learn how to properly develop a Mobility Plan for centre new touristic hotspot in order to manage the new mobility and encourage a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport.

For whom is this article intended?

On the one hand, this article can be used as a practical tool for local representatives (transport planners and other civil servants). On the other hand, this article could also be appropriate for people working on the travel and touristic industry.

The article starts with a short overview of the main challenge: how to reduce the impact of a new touristic attraction into an already congested area of a city. Then there is an explanation of the common vision that was agreed with the key local stakeholders and the concrete objectives to reach it. Taking all this into account, the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria selected a Mobility Plan as the best solution to face this problem and achieve these goals. Finally, we summarize the Action Plan which contains an effective package of measures to meet the defined objectives.

Overview: Mobility management at a major touristic attraction

Drafting a Mobility Plan for new touristic hotspots is an opportunity to take into account the mobility needs of both citizens and tourists in that area. The SUMP methodology (or approach) has proved to be also useful to address tourists' mobility challenges in cities.

Opportunities	Challenges
• To make sustainable mobility appealing for tourists. • To increase the city's attractiveness. • To promote sustainable mobility. • To foster a better cooperation between private and public stakeholders.	• To get data to identify mobility patterns and behaviour of tourists. • To define an effective package of measures for peak and off-peak touristic season. • To identify common needs and requirements of both target groups (citizens and tourists). • To engage the key local stakeholders (especially those linked with tourism).

ATTRACTIVE, SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACE AT A MAJOR ATTRACTION

Introduction

The Aquarium *Poema del Mar* is the new major attraction of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and its opening was in December 2017. The aquarium is located in the *Puerto Ciudad* area where plenty of other touristic and leisure attractions are already placed (*Mercado del Puerto*, *Castillo de la Luz*, *Parque de Santa Catalina*, etc.). Besides that, the new aquarium lies alongside the Cruise Terminal and just 200 metres away from *Las Canteras* beach. This area of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is the most congested area of the city due to its particular urban structure: a narrow strip of land joining the Port of Las Palmas and the *Isleta* neighbourhood with the southern area of the city. That isthmus is the gateway to the Port of Las Palmas and the most important industrial park of the city (*El Sebadal*). The main highway of the island (GC-1) passes through the isthmus and shapes the urban space in this area.

The methodology used to overcome the urban mobility challenges of this new touristic attraction can inspire other cities with similar problems: how can a city integrate tourists' mobility management into its existing planning tools and meet the needs and requirements of both citizens and tourists?

The first step is to identify all **target groups** in order to recognise their specific needs and goals regarding the accessibility to the area. In the case of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria these target groups were the following:

- **Users of the public transport network**
- **Common citizens** of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- **Tourists** (especially cruise passengers and Aquarium visitors)
- **Bike users**
- **Workers** at the *El Sebadal* Industrial Park and the Port of Las Palmas

Then it is necessary to build up different user profiles by using a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. On the one hand, the qualitative data came from one-to-one meetings with some key stakeholders and target group representatives. On the other hand, a data gathering campaign was organized in order to get information about mobility and travel patterns in the study area (traffic counts using Scout cameras, a mobility survey to locals, etc.).

Once the specific needs and goals of each target group had been analyzed, all stakeholders involved in the project identified the need of drafting a Mobility Plan for this new major attraction. This kind of planning tool enables the impact assessment of the new hotspot in the current mobility system and its main goal is to foster a balanced development of all relevant transport modes. In particular, in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria the specific objectives of the plan were the following:

1. **To reduce car use**
2. **To encourage a shift towards more sustainable modes**
3. **To tackle traffic congestion**

Moreover, it is also necessary to define a stakeholder engagement strategy to foster a close cooperation with all of them:

- **Public Administrations**: Regional Government, Port of Las Palmas Authority, Regional Transport Authority, Gran Canaria Tourism Board.
- **Private Companies**: Interurban transport operator, cruise companies, tour operators, private bus companies.
- **Tourist attractions**: Aquarium *Poema del Mar*, Elder Museum of Science and Technology.

- **Local and regional Associations**: Business Federation of Hotels and Tourism of Las Palmas, Business Transport Federation, Logistic & Transportation Association of the Canary Islands.

Action Plan

The main output of the Mobility Plan was an Action Plan that put forward an integrated set of technical, infrastructure, policy-based, and soft measures to improve performance and cost-effectiveness with regard to the declared goal and specific objectives. Most of them can be applied in other cities also.

Goal 1: To reduce car use

- **Park & Ride facilities** at the main entrances of the city**:**
  - competitive fares (especially compared to the parking fares in the city downtown);
  - high frequency public transport services, demand management (balance between residents and commuters);
  - and competitive travel time compared to car travel time.
- **Traffic calming actions:** Implementation of traffic calming actions such as zone 30, liveable streets and pedestrian streets.
- Improvement of the **parking management scheme** and the **parking facilities:** This measure is focused on improving the residents' parking scheme by creating priority and exclusive areas for residents. However, it should also include actions for improving the parking facilities for tourists.

Goal 2: To encourage a shift towards more sustainable modes

- Improvement of **walking accessibility**: Sidewalks, crosswalks in all street crossings, curb ramps for pedestrian in all crosswalks, etc.
- Creation of a **walking paths network.**
- **Bicycle Master Plan**: This plan states the following priorities: to develop and maintain a safe, connected, and attractive network of bike lanes, to improve cyclists' safety, and to secure parking racks for bicycles.
- Improvement of the **bike sharing system in the study area.**
- Improvement of the **public transport in some transit corridors.**
- **Transit signal priority for public transport.**

Goal 3: To tackle traffic congestion

- **Road network management**: The main action within this measure is a variable traffic signs system in the main highway (GC-1).
- To take care of the **accidents black spots.**
- **Transport planning solutions for the new touristic attraction:** In the case of the Aquarium of Las Palmas, this action is focused on to setting up a Laboratory area reshaping the public space and fostering universal accessibility solutions. The Mobility Plan also proposes a set of transport solutions for the two main target groups:

  For tourists:

  - Development of a **signs system for pedestrians.**
  - A new **parking area for coaches.**

For residents: On the one hand, the plan foresees an improvement of the walking, cycling and public transport facilities (i.e. new **bus stops, walking** and **cycling paths).**

On the other hand, the plan also includes an **improvement of the traffic routes**: The objective is to avoid crossing trajectories amongst all traffic flows in the area (visitors of the new aquarium, shopping mall clients, taxis riding cruise passengers, etc.).

Implementation activities

Some of the measures included in this Mobility Plan have already been implemented:

- Sagulpa (public parking company and promoter of electric charging points for e-cars) has installed a charging station for electric vehicles in the "Muelle Sanapú" parking facility.
- Despite the Bicycle Master Plan not been fully deployed yet, some of the actions related to the Laboratory Area have already been implemented, such as parking racks. The Municipality and Sagulpa agreed to improve the transport planning for the new Aquarium by installing two stations in the new development's surroundings.
- An exclusive parking are for tourist coaches was opened in January 2018. This is the main action for improving the parking facilities for tourists visiting the northern part of the city (especially the new Aquarium).

Risks and success factors

Some of the potential risks that have been identified in this project could also be found when replicating it in another city.

- It might be necessary to involve some Public Administrations in all the decision making process.
- A part of the study area may have special urban regulations. In this case, an important part of the *Puerto Ciudad* area is located within the Las Palmas de Gran Canaria harbour, which depends directly from the National Government and has special urban regulations.

However, the most relevant success factor of the implementation of this project in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria was that the key political stakeholders agreed on the need of improving this area of the city.

Baseline situation. Source: Cinesi SLU

Traffic modelling (delay time). Source: Cinesi SLU

Aquarium Poema del Mar. Source: Poema del Mar.

Learn more on this topic…

- Aquarium official website: https://www.poema-del-mar.com/index.php/en/
- Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Tourism Site: http://lpavisit.com/en/noticias/ciudad/149-lpa-capital-city/1139-presentacion-acuario-lpgc

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