

Introduction:

The city of La Plata is growing much faster than any of its neighbors could have imagined. The city is on its way to having 700,000 inhabitants, along with having all of the difficulties that come with being the capital of Argentina's most populous province. The unexpected population growth has occurred especially quickly in certain neighborhoods such as the eastern and western parts of the city.

There are zones with serious traffic problems, which suggests that thought should be given to innovations in transportation. It is clear that traffic is becoming more congested and that the situation demands a response now in order to avoid bigger problems in the future.

1.5 million cars pass through the intersection of Calle 12 and 54 each month. Each month, 1.5 million cars enter the city through one or more of the following ways: Avenidas 7 and 32, the Buenos Aires-La Plata Freeway, Camino Centenario, or Avenidas 44 and 31. Furthermore, the increased number of traffic accidents calls our attention to the need to solve La Plata's transportation problems. Almost 50 people died in traffic accidents during the first half of this year, according to the La Plata Transit Association.

The population increase coupled with the increase in both private and public parking causes new concerns for the transportation in La Plata. Our city depends on us to prepare for the future, keeping in mind that La Plata will continue to grow both economically and culturally.

Who is participating in this event?

You have been called to participate in an historical meeting. A group of citizens of La Plata, in a representative showing of the entire population, can discuss topics of great importance for the future of our community. With our review of the traffic conditions in La Plata, we will collaborate in the decision making done by the mayor and city council.

Every participant in this Deliberative Poll lives in La Plata and represents a section of our population. Only the participants who were chosen at random are able to participate, making this group a scientific representation of the population of La Plata.

Who organized this event?

La Plata's Deliberative Poll is sponsored by the municipal government following a technique tested in the United States, Europe, China, and Brazil by the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University (US).

It is important to emphasize that the people who worked to put this project together do not have an opinion about what should be done with the transportation and transit system in La Plata. Rather, they are trying to find out which strategies and policies the democratic society of La Plata would like to implement.

Strengthening democracy cannot be achieved simply by voting every so often for representatives. Tools like Participatory Budgeting and Deliberative Democracy (that include citizens directly in the decision-making process) lead us to grow as a society and produce better policy decisions, making La Plata a leading example of democratic participation in Latin America.

Proposals to address the transit and transportation problems in La Plata:

The following are proposals to reduce traffic and improve transportation in La Plata such as changing the traffic patterns, creating separate lanes for bicycles and buses, and creating more direct and convenient bus lines.

Some of these proposals would require larger changes than others. Each of these proposals has advantages and disadvantages for you to consider.

Proposal	Arguments for	Arguments against
Creating one-way streets in certain sectors of the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less time to enter/exit the city • Better synchronization of traffic signals to reduce travel time • Allows a larger number of lanes in accordance with the volume of traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverts traffic to other parts of the city that are less prepared to support a large number of vehicles • One-way streets could increase the distance of some commutes
Creating exclusive bus lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids congestion for passenger transport vehicles • Allows better control of the schedule for buses • Could increase the use of buses and decrease the use of cars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers of cars lose a lane to buses • Difficulties associated with ensuring that only buses use the bus lane • Increases the difficulty of merging into the right lane
Creating bike lanes on certain streets and on the main diagonals (73, 74, 79, and 77)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of bicycle accidents • Promote the use of bicycles • Reduce pollution • Promote physical activity and other health benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riding a bicycle is an individual activity; carpooling could be a more effective means of reducing traffic • Bicycles that do not travel in the bike lane could cause accidents
Create bike parking in the main city plazas (San Martin, Moreno, Italia and Rocha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a safe place for bicycles • Promotes parking bicycles in an orderly way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with enforcing proper use of bike parking • Disinterest in leaving bicycles far from the destination (fear of bike theft)
Create more bus lines, restoring old lines and/or creating more lines (based on the old lines 518, 506, 520, 561, and 508)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes direct travel to and from various parts of the city easier • Reduces the travel distance and need to take multiple buses to arrive at a destination • Reduces the cost of bus tickets if you do not have to take as many buses • Reduces congestion downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New lines could mean some of the existing lines could be altered or eliminated • The changes in the current lines could negatively affect the current schedules

	(currently, almost all lines that connect various neighborhoods pass through downtown)	
Using public funds to pay a private company to operate new bus lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves public transportation with more bus lines • Improves the frequency of bus routes and could provide service to a larger area of the city • Replace old buses with new, more environmentally friendly buses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These funds could be used for other more necessary projects • This proposal implies providing soft loans to private companies • Private companies would become lax on their obligation to maintain the public transportation system and they will wait until the government contracts them to do repairs
Use of reloadable bus passes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need to look for spare change to pay bus fare • Helps people save money • Reduces the time it takes to get on the bus and the waiting time between buses • Discourages robbery on buses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you lose the card, there is no way to know how much money there was on the card and that money is lost • If the card is linked to its owner specifically, its owner would have to report it as lost or stolen
Reduce bus fares during off-peak hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the use of public transportation outside of peak hours • Reduces the quantity of passengers on public transportation during peak hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people have rigid schedules and wouldn't be able to change the time they take the bus even if they were offered a lower fare during off-peak hours

In addition to the proposals listed above, the following two proposals would significantly modify the traffic and transportation currently existing in La Plata.

Proposal	Arguments For	Arguments Against
<p>Create new transfer stations at entry points to the city that would include:</p> <p>*Public parking *Free shuttles between the transfer stations and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the traffic in the main streets, diagonals, and areas in the city center • People would save money if they didn't have to pay for metered parking downtown • Promote the economic development where the transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The change would be inconvenient because people would need to wait longer for the bus • It would add time to people's commutes because they would have to find a parking spot and then wait for a

<p>the city center Possible location: Supermarket neighborhood, Tolosa station, Regional Market, Boulevard, 83, 82, and Avenue 72</p>	<p>stations would be located</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new jobs (at the transfer stations and new business that would spring up around them) • Reduction of pollution from leaving cars outside of city center 	<p>separate bus to take them to their destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people prefer more control over their schedules • People with a rigid schedule could not use these transfer stations
<p>Create a new bus terminal in the Regional Market, including public transportation between the terminal and downtown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the traffic of buses entering the city • It would restore the current terminal and repurpose it for cultural activities • It would reduce the damage to the streets created by bus traffic • Promotes the economic development (such as retail business) in the Regional Market district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would reduce the income of locals located in the area of the current terminal • Increase the travel time because people would have to switch buses and wait for another to take them to their destination

Other ways to improve the traffic and transportation in La Plata would be to expand and alter the current system of metered parking.

Metered parking is only found in the city center. When it began in February of 2009, there were many positive reactions (better rotation of parked cars, less congestion downtown, easy payment of meters with mobile devices, dividing the payment for parking time, etc.). Other cities in the world also use this system and many others are now starting to use it. However, the expansion of metered parking to other areas of the city could have disadvantages for La Plata.

Proposal	Arguments For	Arguments Against
<p>Extend metered parking to other areas of the city</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to park (no need to carry cash/change) • Decreases traffic in urban areas and promotes people using public transportation in those areas • Generates more revenue for the city which can be used to fund other services • Locals, who could not park their cars before because of over crowdedness, can park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locals would have to pay to park their cars every day • Drivers will park in other areas of the city (without metered parking) which could lead to increased congestion in those areas
<p>Increase special parking fees, for example: in peak hours, for extra-large vehicles or in especially</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes the use of public transportation or other forms of transport • Reduces congestion in crowded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will avoid zones with metered parking, relocating the traffic to other neighborhoods

crowded areas	<p>areas (especially in peak hours)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourages non-essential traffic in congested areas in peak hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transportation could not be equipped to handle the increased number of passengers • People would have to spend more on parking
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The following are proposals to penalize drivers and promote obedience to traffic laws and parking rules. Many of these methods are used in other parts of Argentina and around the world. Some of these methods are more controversial than others.

Proposal	Arguments For	Arguments Against
Use traffic cameras to catch cars that run red lights, park in no-parking zones, and exceed the speed limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tangible proof for violation of traffic laws • Reduce the number of police officers in the streets and optimize the use of the police force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could clog the courts with people being tried for traffic violations • It is costly to install these cameras • It could be seen as a way of simply making revenue for the government
Measures to reduce and prevent speeding, such as increasing the number of traffic lights, constructing speed bumps, and putting up signs warning of the dangers of speeding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the number of traffic accidents • It would generate more respect for other drivers and pedestrians • Makes streets safer for vehicles and pedestrians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complicates the flow of current traffic and reduces the efficiency of some routes • Drivers will try to avoid these measures and will create traffic in other parts of the city that are not ready to receive this volume of traffic