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COVID-19: Top 5 mobility and logistics solutions in Latin America

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Both the public and private sectors are implementing social distancing measures to halt the spread of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19 (<https://www.globalfleet.com/en/tags/covid-19>)) in Latin America and among the top solutions are teleworking, video conferencing, last-mile delivery, no-touch services, and the expansion of bike lanes.

Teleworking

First of all, federal, state and municipal governments across the region have been pushing for teleworking, a measure that impacts mobility and logistics across the board. While some mandates are obligatory, others are recommendations of which most companies and employees do seem to be following.

For instance, in the Brazilian state of São Paulo (Latin America's largest economic hub), governor João Doria ordered a two-week state-wide quarantine for its 44 million plus residents which tentatively ends on 7 April, something that is pushing the state into a digital transformation.

The transition, which includes teleworking for millions of workers, was implemented by many companies even before the mandate started. As such, working from home in the city of São Paulo as well as other megalopolises throughout Latin America is occurring on a massive scale. Among the larger countries which have called for national lockdowns are Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador.

Country	Date of First Social Distancing Measures	Current Type of Lockdown	Date of Total Lockdown	Date of First Confirmed Case of COVID-19
Argentina	14-Mar	Total	20-Mar	3-Mar
Bahamas, The	19-Mar	Total	24-Mar	16-Mar
Barbados	16-Mar	Partial		17-Mar
Belize	20-Mar	Partial		23-Mar
Bolivia	12-Mar	Total	22-Mar	11-Mar
Brazil	19-Mar	Partial		26-Feb
Chile	15-Mar	Partial		3-Mar
Colombia	12-Mar	Total	24-Mar	6-Mar
Costa Rica	12-Mar	Partial		6-Mar
Dominican Republic	16-Mar	Partial		1-Mar
Ecuador	11-Mar	Total	17-Mar	1-Mar
El Salvador	11-Mar	Total	21-Mar	19-Mar
Guatemala	16-Mar	Partial		14-Mar
Guyana	16-Mar	Partial		12-Mar
Haiti	19-Mar	Total	19-Mar	11-Mar
Honduras	12-Mar	Total	20-Mar	11-Mar
Jamaica	13-Mar	Partial		11-Mar
Mexico	20-Mar	Partial		28-Feb
Nicaragua		None		19-Mar
Panama	16-Mar	Total	25-Mar	10-Mar
Paraguay	9-Mar	Total	20-Mar	8-Mar
Peru	15-Mar	Total	15-Mar	6-Mar
Suriname	14-Mar	Partial		14-Mar
Trinidad and Tobago	13-Mar	Partial		12-Mar
Uruguay	13-Mar	Partial		14-Mar
Venezuela	12-Mar	Total	17-Mar	14-Mar

Lockdown scenario in Latin America and Caribbean as of 25 March, 2020. (source: IDB)

Video Conferencing

Teleworking, without a doubt, entails video conferencing. While services like Microsoft Teams, Webex and Zoom are making their licenses available throughout Latin America, other options such as Skype and even mobile phone-based messenger WhatsApp is being used to hold meetings

or run virtual offices.

Last-Mile Delivery

Although locations offering necessary services such as supermarkets, pharmacies and banks are open to the public, many cities are prohibiting the opening of restaurants and shopping malls with the exception of delivery services.

While cars are far from few and traffic is practically non-existent in cities under lockdown, motorcycles and bicycles remain on city streets operating under the names of mobile-app companies such as Rappi (Spain), iFood (Brazil) and Uber Eats (USA).

For Rappi, purchases in Latin America was up some 30% in mid-March, mainly for pharmacy, restaurants and supermarket orders.



Rappi delivery motorcycle in Lima, Peru (source: Shutterstock)

Besides food, the purchase of personal electronics such as laptops and telephony has been spurred by the growing number of employees needing to work from home. This same wave hit the United States in March, pushing Amazon to hire some 100,000 employees to deal with extra deliveries.

No-Touch Service

Another service on the rise amidst COVID-19 are the so-called No-Touch services. To prevent contagion and strengthen sales, companies such as iFood, Rappi and others are including a personalized service which involves delivering an order without actually coming in physical contact with the customer.

Pharmacies are also offering special delivery for seniors of which both employees and couriers follow the prevention standards recommended by health authorities such as using gloves, masks, and sanitizing gel.

Bike Lanes

As the pandemic hit Latin America about two weeks after the United States, seeing what is happening to the North is one way to get a preview of what should be done (or should not be done) in terms of deploying social distancing measures and re-organizing public spaces to tackle the pandemic.

While COVID-19 hotspots like New York and Seattle has shown boosts in bike path commuting, the same has recently started in Mexico City in an attempt to keep people off public transportation.

The idea was preceded down South in Bogota which, in mid-March, the city started to expand its 550km bike path network by nearly 100km by converting some of its car lanes into bike lanes.

This will help the city face its triple threat of poor air quality, seasonal respiratory illnesses and now the Coronavirus, says mayor Claudia López.

One thing that can be said is that this new Coronavirus is certainly making its way around the world and that Latin America has not been spared. The region, however, is made up of creative citizens that are both flexible and resilient owing to the economic and political challenges it has faced in recent years so expect a bounce back soon.

Top Photo: iFood bike delivery in São Paulo (source: Shutterstock)

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