



# Tirana

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## Promoting sustainable alternative mobility in the city

### • DURATION

Ongoing since 2023

### • POPULATION 2024

528.000 (Growth rate 1,54%)

### • URA SCOPE

STRATEGY: SHARED VISION

### • TOPICS

SUSTAINABILITY, MOBILITY, CYCLING, INFRASTRUCTURE

### • MAIN ACTORS

Municipality of Tirana, Albania  
 Department of Public Works  
 Department of Transport and Mobility  
 Agency for Parks and Recreation

Imagine this: a sunny morning in Tirana, Albania's capital, where bustling streets are filled not with the roar of engines but with the cheerful hum of bicycle wheels. Families stroll down boulevards once choked with traffic, now brimming with life—music playing, children laughing, and farmers displaying their fresh produce. This vision is no longer just a dream but a growing reality in a city transforming itself through sustainable mobility.

Tirana, the heart of Albania's political, cultural, and economic life, has come a long way since the fall of communism in 1991. Back then, private cars were a rarity, and the city, designed for just 250,000 people, seemed spacious and calm. Fast forward to today, and Tirana is bursting with over 860,000 residents—35% of Albania's total population—and home to more than 300,000 vehicles. Add to this a staggering influx of 10 million annual tourists, and the pressure on the city's mobility infrastructure becomes clear.

Yet, under the leadership of Mayor Erion Veliaj, Tirana is reimagining its streets. The focus is shifting from car-dominated congestion to eco-friendly alternatives, particularly bicycles, as a low-cost and sustainable way to navigate the city. Here's how this ambitious transformation is unfolding:

**A Network of Bike Lanes:** The municipality is investing in a grid of bike lanes to accommodate both commuters and recreational cyclists, encouraging more people to choose biking over driving.

**Car-Free Days:** On select days, main streets are closed to cars, transforming them into vibrant spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, complete with festivals, artistic performances, and farmers' markets.

**A Global Partnership for Cycling:** Tirana is part of the Bloomberg Initiative for Cycling Infrastructure (BICI), aiming to create a safe and accessible cycling network for all ages.

**The Biking Academy:** Located in Artificial Lake Grand Park, the Biking Academy offers lessons to help individuals of all ages learn to ride and understand traffic rules, promoting biking as a skill and enjoyment.

Every initiative reflects Tirana's commitment to redefining urban living. The city's message is clear: by prioritizing bicycles, it's not just reducing traffic and pollution—it's creating a healthier, more connected community.

So, the next time you're navigating Tirana's bustling streets, remember, with a bike, you'd have already arrived.





## Impact

Tirana is decisively reshaping its mobility landscape by firmly embedding sustainability into everyday life.

With 58 kilometres of bike lanes already constructed for both routine commuting and recreational activities, cycling has dramatically increased from a mere 2-3% of trips in 2015 to a substantial 9-10% in 2023. The Municipality is committed to expanding this network to 95-100 kilometres by 2027, targeting an ambitious goal of having 30% of citizens actively participating in cycling—whether for daily transportation, occasional use, or leisure.

Data from bike user counters is being utilized to reinforce this vision. Events such as "Days Without Cars," held 6-8 times annually, clearly illustrate the city's bold shift towards shared, pedestrian-friendly spaces. These initiatives temporarily transform busy streets into lively centres for culture, recreation, and community engagement.

Moreover, plans are in motion to enhance safety at eight major intersections, ensuring seamless access and ease of movement for cyclists. Education is a vital element of this transformation. The Biking Academy located in Grand Park currently trains 3,000 children in biking skills and traffic rules each month—a figure set to soar to 10,000 participants when the academy reaches full capacity in 2024. By concentrating on youth, the city is investing in a generation passionate about championing environmental responsibility and sustainable mobility.

These interconnected projects address traffic congestion while challenging the city's deeply ingrained car-centric culture. By promoting eco-friendly mobility, they aim to cultivate an environmentally conscious urban mindset. Tirana's vision is clear: to establish a model for sustainable, people-focused urban mobility that leads to a greener, more liveable future.

Developed and coordinated by various municipal departments, these initiatives not only ease traffic but also inspire a cultural shift toward sustainability, setting a standard for future urban development.

## Challenge

Tirana faces a significant challenge in balancing its rapid growth with sustainable urban development. With a population exceeding 860,000, in its Metropolitan Area, —35% of Albania's total population—and over 300,000 registered vehicles, the city's mobility infrastructure is under immense strain. This pressure is further compounded by an annual influx of 10 million tourists, who contribute to the bustling urban environment and increased demand for efficient transportation systems.

Originally designed to accommodate just 250,000 residents during the communist era, when private vehicles were virtually non-existent, Tirana's streets now grapple with the consequences of exponential urbanization and motorization. The city's infrastructure, built for a bygone era, struggles to meet the demands of its growing population and visitor numbers, leading to congestion, pollution, and a reduced quality of life for residents.

To address this, the Municipality has undertaken ambitious projects to promote sustainable mobility, such as expanding bike lanes, redesigning major intersections for safety, and fostering a cultural shift toward alternative transport modes. However, overcoming the entrenched car-centric mentality remains a significant hurdle. By focusing on innovative solutions and engaging younger generations, Tirana aims to transform these challenges into opportunities, setting a new standard for environmentally conscious and people-centred urban mobility.

## Solution Proposed

The Municipality of Tirana is implementing a comprehensive plan to promote sustainable mobility through a series of interconnected projects focused on cycling infrastructure and alternative transportation. Central to this initiative is the creation of a minimum grid of bike lanes, aiming to expand the network to 95-100 kilometres by 2027. This objective aligns with the Tirana Sustainable Development Strategy (2018-2022) and its upcoming successor (2023-2027, draft). The project benefits from collaboration with strategic partners such as the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, supporting the biking grid initiative, and the German International Development Agency (GIZ) through the Sustainable Urban Transport in Tirana (SUTI) project.

Complementary efforts include the periodic organization of "Days Without Cars," typically held during spring and autumn. These events transform streets into pedestrian-friendly spaces, encouraging alternative mobility and raising awareness about environmental sustainability.

Additionally, under the Bloomberg Initiative for Cycling Infrastructure (BICI), eight major intersections are being redesigned for cyclist safety, with completion expected by 2025. The operational Biking Academy in the Artificial Lake Grand Park and its central counterpart, opened in June 2024, further emphasize education and community engagement in sustainable practices.

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