

Guatemala city energy transition

Between September 9 and 11, 2024, ECLAC officials participated in working groups with authorities and officials from Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines. The meetings addressed the main challenges in the mining sector and Guatemala's energy transition, defining the support mechanisms and tools with which ECLAC will contribute to strengthening the institutional capacities of the Ministry.

Minister Victor Hugo Ventura highlighted the importance of ECLAC's collaboration in achieving the strategic objectives of Guatemala's mining and energy policy. These include the environmental and social sustainability of mining and the energy transition, universal access to energy services, the need to expand rural electrification coverage, and reduce energy poverty, modernizing mining legislation and policy, and strengthening institutional capacities.

Among the topics prioritized by the Ministry of Energy and Mines in the energy sector for ECLAC's technical assistance were the updating of energy policy, future tenders for the expansion of electric transmission system infrastructure, and generally strengthening institutional capacities.

In addition, part of ECLAC's working agenda focused on preparing for the upcoming Regional Energy Transition Dialogues for Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in coordination with Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines from November 26 to 29, 2024, in Guatemala City. ECLAC will also support Guatemala in developing policies and plans to address its national energy challenges, while promoting dialogue and regional cooperation on this issue within the country.

Furthermore, the technical assistance sought to gather information from key actors to diagnose the current state of metallic mining in Guatemala and develop a proposal for modernizing the regulatory and policy framework, with special attention to governance, concessions and licenses, extraction and exploitation, production scales, and the tax and royalty system.

ECLAC committed to continuing its support for the government of Guatemala, in line with its ongoing technical assistance to countries in the region, with the aim of strengthening governance, policies, management, and the sustainable and inclusive use of natural resources.

Sometimes clean and efficient energy solutions do not require rocket science or fancy buzzwords, such as block chain or other digital jargon. When it comes to reforming public transportation in urban areas the City of Guatemala is now retrieving old train tracks - put in place in the late 1800s to aid the country's growing banana exports - to solve its mounting traffic nightmare. Rebecca Bertram reports

This has produced a heightened deterioration of the city's air quality: pollution levels here are 6,5 times higher than the World Health Organization recommends, and cars are responsible for 70 percent of it. As a result, air

contamination has become a serious public health problem with 30 percent of the population already suffering from severe respiratory problems.

The project's budget is said to amount to 772 million USD. If realized, it would not only benefit the Guatemalan commuter but also create 500 permanent jobs once the project is up and running. It should not only help fight high air contamination levels but also allow people to better manage their time and enjoy a higher quality of life.

Yet challenges remain. In order to make the new train service a success it is important that the system offers good connecting options with other transfer centers. A total of 1200 parking spaces are planned at six train stations on the new route, no doubt useful. But the priority task of urban planners should be to find ways to connect the city's Transmetro, the secure rapid public bus system, to Metro Riel in key transfer centers.

Another challenge of Metro Riel - as with any other infrastructure project - is to find a solution for the people living on or in very close proximity to the tracks. The city government has acknowledged the problem and begun public roundtable talks with affected groups.

There will be more bumps on the way ahead as commuter transit needs in the City have changed since the tracks were originally built over one hundred years ago. But if Metro Riel one day can transform city life in Guatemala City, this might serve as a model for other cities around the world that have old train tracks and aim to tackle traffic chaos and the resulting health concerns from the invasion of too many vehicles on their streets.

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