Bogotá and Cali: Building a new roadmap for public infrastructure transparency in Colombia

CoST's Colombian members Bogotá and Santiago de Cali both received Honourable Mentions under the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Open Gov Challenge 2025 for their commitment to deliver ambitious reforms that will strengthen transparency, participation, and accountability in public infrastructure investment.

CoST – the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative – is a leading global non-profit that works with governments, civil society, and the private sector to help ensure that when governments spend money on infrastructure the process is transparent, money is used efficiently, and the infrastructure built meets community needs.

This recognition did not reward a single platform or pilot. Instead, it acknowledged deeper institutional shifts underway in both cities: opening up how public infrastructure investments are planned, delivered, and monitored – and doing so in a way which helps rebuild over a decade of trust lost by their citizens.

In Bogotá, the CoST approach has enabled infrastructure transparency at scale across a complex institutional environment. In Cali, CoST membership has supported the evolution of existing public debt and investment monitoring reforms into the infrastructure sector; providing legitimacy, structure, and innovation as those reforms scale to deliver better infrastructure and services to citizens.

Lessons learned:

1. The CoST approach leverages legitimacy and global networks strategically
The network of international good practice and recognition from the CoST approach can provide political buy-in and momentum for reforms; sending a strong signal to citizens that there is evidence-based action behind the ambitions. In Cali, CoST helped legitimise the expansion of existing openness reforms in infrastructure, while in Bogotá membership reinforced commitments during political transition.

2. Anchor transparency in issues citizens care about
Reforms gain traction when linked to everyday infrastructure challenges. In Bogotá, publication and participation anchored on major mobility projects such as Metro Line 1, has ensured public interest. While in Cali, linking open governance to the road network, which citizens identified as being a major priority area, has improved engagement.

3. Standardise data and governance to enable scale

Applying CoST-aligned data standards and embedding multi-stakeholder oversight makes transparency reforms scalable and resilient. Bogotá's adoption of CoST data standards created a common framework for publishing infrastructure data across entities and at speed, while both cities are working towards formalised multi-stakeholder governance to support oversight and data quality.

4. Design citizen-facing tools that enable participation

Transparency through publishing data is a key part of the puzzle, but data must be accessible and usable to drive accountability. Cali's platform enables citizens to submit geolocated images to the maintenance team and follow real-time updates via their 'maintenance map' on infrastructure projects. Whilst in Bogotá, prioritising efforts to meet and engage with a wide range of stakeholders is working in building support for both procuring entities and contractors to increasingly publish and use infrastructure data.

Nurturing a city-wide system for open infrastructure data in Bogotá

With 62 public entities authorised to commission infrastructure, Colombia's capital city Bogotá, faces a coordination challenge comparable to that of a national government.

> **"** This new data platform will "guarantee free and comprehensible access to information about infrastructure projects, empowering citizen participation and fermenting civil society control".
>
> *Carolina Gaez, Office of the Mayor of Bogotá and CoST Manager Bogotá, 2025*

Prior to joining CoST, information on public infrastructure was fragmented and difficult for citizens, as well as government entities, to use. "In 2024 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recognised the District Administration's efforts to consolidate Bogotá's strategic city projects into a single platform for public consultation. This integrated approach had not previously been implemented in the city and was achieved with technical support from CoST," says Carolina Gaez, a specialist consultant in the Mayor's Office and manager for CoST Bogotá. This platform later evolved with the technical support from CoST into the updated GobiernoAbiertoBogotá platform launched in May 2025.

Within the first seven months of establishing the updated platform[1], data from 135 infrastructure projects had been published, which is a total value of around 803 million USD. "Most of these projects focus on citizen mobility, that is Bogotá's greatest infrastructure challenge," Carolina also says.

Building appetite for transparency

Bogotá recognised that delivering transparency would require more than technical change but would also require cultural change to support the publication and use of the data published.

Infrastructure construction in Bogota

[1] Between May and end of December 2025.

An important step taken to do this was bringing together multiple stakeholders across public, private and civil society to raise awareness of data publication. The Bogotá's Mayor's Office held workshops to bring together senior representatives from government, transport procuring agencies such as

Construction of Metro line in Bogota

RENOBO (Bogotá's Urban Renewal and Development Company), major delivery contractors such as Metro IDU, as well as civil society and international partners. As Manuel Gonzalez Caballero, CoST Senior Regional Manager explains "To align all procurement entities in the city took a lot of awareness raising."

Caroline told us "Transparency can cause anxiety for some new entities, but the new platform will help those entities themselves identify and solve bottlenecks in advance too". Advocacy meetings with the private sector have enabled local companies to understand that there is more to gain than to lose in publishing the right data in the right format.

Despite the promising start, only around 20% of infrastructure procurement entities in Bogotá have published data on the new platform, with a particular future area of focus increasing publication on non-centralised contracts. The Bogotá's Mayor's Office believe the key to enticing more local administrations to publish data is to highlight the benefits. "This process will be supported through capacity-building activities, targeted training, and the use of technology solutions to automate data collection and publication, reducing administrative burden on local teams" after.

In addition, the new current government has demonstrated its commitment to transparency in public infrastructure by committing, through its 2025-2027 OGP Action Plan to deliver open data and citizen monitoring using the CoST approach.

Optimising control and oversight

'Veedurias ciudadanas', district oversight offices such as the Veeduria Distrital in Bogotá, are semi-governmental groups formed of citizen experts who provide feedback, monitoring and evaluation on government spending and projects. There are 25 alone looking at public infrastructure in Bogotá, with Metro Line 1 having its own group.

"The Veeduria Distrital use the new transparent infrastructure dashboard [GobiernoAbiertoBogotá] to monitor the budgetary and execution progress of Bogotá's infrastructure projects in order to subsequently initiate or continue monitoring and preventive control actions on these projects," says Liliana García Lizarado, District Inspector, Veeduria Distrital. The dashboard optimizes how "control and oversight" are implemented, says Lizarado. Lizarado welcomes the platform and encourages the municipality to continue to update the data.

Building trust in public infrastructure in Cali

Luz Adriana Vásquez Trujillo, Cali's Secretary for Infrastructure

Cali joined CoST in May 2025, after taking its first step to infrastructure transparency through the Secretariat of Infrastructure implementing its open government strategy in 2024. Membership of CoST helped give legitimacy to taking this reform to the next level.

The size of the trust and infrastructure investment challenge in Cali is considerable. According to the Cali Cómo Vamos citizen perception survey 2024, 41% of Cali residents surveyed expressed dissatisfaction in "how public resources are invested by the Mayor's Office." 71% stated that there should be greater transparency in contracting processes and 34% demanded that access to public information should be improved.

This naturally led to look at the CoST approach - where transparency through data publication is one of the three key pillars - as part of the solution.

The government of Cali faced a challenge to improve public sentiment and trust whilst delivering the substantial investment of public infrastructure required. They were determined to properly manage the largest public loan in Cali's 500-year history to finance 35 regeneration projects across the city between 2025 and 2027.

"Of 3,000 kilometres of thoroughfares in Cali, 1,700 are in a bad condition [....] there had been no maintenance for 30 years," says Luz Adriana Vásquez Trujillo, Cali's Secretary for Infrastructure

The Mayor's Office's first step to infrastructure transparency, and addressing these concerns, was launching its InfraestructuraParaTodos ("Infrastructure for everyone") portal in 2024 to improve access to information about public infrastructure contracts, as well as public participation in the real-time monitoring of public infrastructure works.

Using CoST to innovate

Building upon this, the Mayor's Office recognised that the CoST approach would be fundamental to providing legitimacy, continuous improvement, methodological support, and access to international good practice to help expand and structure further infrastructure transparency reforms.

"" The platform pushed us towards CoST to develop the tools to expand it"

Luz Adriana Vásquez Trujillo, Cali's Secretary for Infrastructure.

The published data showed that the majority of their public infrastructure contracts were given to a few suppliers, signalling a need to create a better business environment to increase competition levels. Through taking action to attract a greater pool of bidders through holding workshops to raise interest before publishing tenders, and the

general steps to increasing transparency and market confidence, they saw a 300% increase[2] in the average number of bidders per tender.

"The good results of these open government, open data, and transparency practices under the new adminstration's open government strategy were what motivated us to expand and professionalize the work, including becoming part of the CoST initiative," says Sanchez.

The Mayor's Office has co-developed with civil society, businesses and the media new ways for the published data to be used. A feedback system was created, which encourages citizens to send photos of areas where infrastructure is not fit for purpose, through an easy to use form, as well as a maintenance map on infrastructure projects around the city – where for the first time citizens can know in real time where infrastructure crews are around the city and what they are doing.

CoST as a legitimiser of transparency

"The impact CoST membership brings to the Department of Infrastructure's work is vital," says Sanchez. "Our work is disruptive and transforming. There have been local detractors and opposition, from technical working groups to political actors. CoST helps to lend legitimacy to our transparency reforms."

This legitimacy has helped the Department of Infrastructure embed transparency reforms more securely, enabling continued political backing, greater engagement from suppliers, and stronger collaboration with other public entities working on infrastructure.

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Sanchez explains that being able to point to similar reforms undertaken by cities across Latin America and globally through the CoST network has helped demonstrate the value of the work locally, lifting it out of isolation and making it more attractive to infrastructure procurement entities and businesses.

Luz Adriana Vásquez Trujillo, Cali's Secretary for Infrastructure, supervising the improvement works of a road in Cali

[2] From 20 companies participating to now more than 80, based on figures by the Mayor's Office, Cali.

They have held "sensitisation meetings" with key stakeholders which have been central to building momentum and expanding adoption, says Sanchez. Further engagement is planned and also they are keen to utilise the strong network across other Latin America CoST members to share experience and good practice.

"This alliance [with CoST] marks the starting point for continued innovation in open infrastructure, where the power of monitoring and control is within reach of every citizen. It also presents an opportunity to replicate best practices in the city, the region, and the country," states the City of Cali's website.

Next steps

Looking forwards, both members are focused on continuing to increase data publication and cementing a Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG) to increase momentum and stability of infrastructure data publication during a change of government.

❝❝ *I see huge potential in the CoST approach. I'm a public servant and I think it's a great opportunity."*

Carolina Gaez, Office of the Mayor of Bogotá and CoST Manager Bogotá, 2025

Bogotá's new current government has demonstrated its commitment to transparency in public infrastructure by committing, through its 2025-2027 OGP Action Plan to deliver open data and citizen monitoring using the CoST approach.

Bogotá is keen to explore the use of AI to not only address challenges in limited staff resources. This includes exploring AI-led solutions to upload information more frequently than their current monthly timescale. Also they are looking to engage a wider range of the public including young people in utilising the data to hold decision makers to account, such as through chatbots on the data platform and implementing CoST's environmental data standards.

Cali is also focused on increasing citizen participation and awareness across a range of stakeholders on how to use the published data. They are aspiring to learn from CoST members internationally to utilise the CoST methodology to integrate functionality into their platform to monitor the full life cycle of infrastructure projects, from planning and tendering to delivery and auditing.

"CoST opens up a range of opportunities for us, but the greatest is undoubtedly to continue innovating. The experience of the last two years shows us that transformation is possible when we collaborate with

❝❝ *In CoST, we found an ally."*

Luz Adriana Vázquez Trujillo, Secretary of Infrastructure, City of Cali.

other stakeholders," Luz Adriana Vázquez Trujillo, Secretary of Infrastructure, City of Cali and the chief strategist behind the Department of Infrastructure's transparency reforms.

To find out more about Bogotá's infrastructure transparency work, take a look at Bogota's website

For more on Cali's transparency initiatives, take a look at the Cali website

or

For more details or any enquiries about CoST's programmes, please email: cost@infrastructuretransparency.org

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