Recommendations to Minimize the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission in the Latin America and the Caribbean Tourism Sector

Recommendations to Minimize COVID-19 Transmission in Local Transport

With the participation of

OAS

With the support of

UNWTO

IDB
The recommendations in this document are intended to provide guidance on reducing the risk of SARS-CoV-2 virus transmission in tourist establishments and spaces. They should therefore be regarded as guidance only and not prescriptive.

The recommendations are based on the assumption that there is no zero-risk scenario and that it is therefore impossible to completely remove the risk of infection for the duration of the pandemic, although it is possible to reduce it.

The recommendations are provided without prejudice to the current legislation in each country, and this document does not replace existing government regulations or guidelines.

The content of the recommendations is based on publicly available scientific information at the time of publishing (August, 2021). New findings or future studies may require the document to be revised.
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This document includes, without prejudice to current legislation, the **recommended minimum specific preventive measures** to be implemented in local transport against COVID-19 infection risk nodes (RNs), in order to effectively protect customers and staff.

This document is applicable to operators of land transport passenger terminals and local public and private coach transport companies.

**Note:** Before reading this document R02.3, it is advisable to read document R01 (General Recommendations to Minimize the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission in Tourist Establishments and Spaces). Reading document R03 (Recommendations to Manage COVID-19 Prevention Protocols in Tourist Establishments and Spaces) is also recommended. The E02 documents will allow local transport companies to assess the level of transmission risk in their spaces and activities, and comply with the measures set out in this document R02.3 by using a Check Lists.

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1. A RN is a critical point in the process or space where there is a greater chance of infection, considering SARS-CoV-2 transmission pathways. More information can be found in document R01.
2.1 Risk map for local transport

These recommendations are based on a diagnosis previously carried out to identify the main COVID-19 infection risk nodes in the local transport subsector, as well as their level of coverage in the current protocols in different countries and regions around the world\(^2\). The diagnosis concluded that, overall, the level of RN coverage by local transport protocols was medium-low. Figure 1 shows this level of coverage.

![Risk nodes (RNs) in local transport](image)

**Figure 1.** Risk nodes (RNs) in local transport

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Therefore, considering the results of the diagnosis:

- **Document R01** sets out the general measures to minimize the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection in tourist establishments and spaces. These are cross-cutting factors that increase or reduce the risk of infection, such as ventilation, mask wearing, safety distance, exposure times, hand sanitizing and relative humidity (RH) control. The measures in this document apply to all tourism establishments and spaces.

- **This document R02** complements these cross-cutting measures with specific ones that target the RNs unique to local transport. Namely, it includes the most relevant measures and those considered to a lesser extent by the biosafety protocols assessed in the diagnosis.

- **Document R03** provides recommendations to ensure the adequate implementation, communication and control of the protective measures against infection in the RNs, regardless of the type of activity or space involved.

Operators and managers of local transport should take into account the RNs listed in this document to define their Prevention Plan. The measures of the Prevention Plan should follow the recommendations of both documents R01 and R02.3. Likewise, they should consider the recommendations for the proper management of these measures, which are found in document R03.

**Figure 2.** How to build the Prevention Plan
2.2 Terminal

Throughout this document, we understand terminal to mean the space where ticket sales, waiting areas, platforms and other complementary services (such as restaurants, stores, etc.) are located.

2.2.1 Risk node (RN): ventilation

Depending on the terminal and its passenger flow, this space could be large or small, covered, closed, partially covered or closed, or completely outdoor; the risk of infection will therefore vary, taking into account the available ventilation. While in closed-in terminals, the risk of infection through aerosol transmission will increase if ventilation is not adequate, in outdoor or covered terminals, it shall be reduced. Furthermore, in these spaces crowding occurs at peak times, so there is a risk of droplet transmission through direct contact. This is applicable in the different spaces and processes taking place in the terminal, including complementary services and work areas (for example, ticket office).

Recommendations

In the different spaces of the terminal, adequate ventilation is recommended to reduce risk of infection from aerosols, taking into account the RNs throughout the terminal, which are included in this document. Fresh air renewal should be increased throughout the terminal as much as possible, thereby reducing air recirculation. It may be useful to measure the amount of CO₂ to evaluate additional air filtration options or the need for greater air renewal capacity in the equipment. Reducing occupancy in the terminal is a measure that is hard to implement; however, the terminal management should consider organizational measures such as those specified in the following section.

Due to crowding that may occur in some parts of the terminal (and described in this document), with the subsequent risk of aerosol and droplet transmission, it is recommended that the terminal management consider a possible reorganization of spaces (e.g., platforms for vehicle departures and arrivals). It should also be assessed whether it is necessary or feasible to modify timetables and operational services. In this regard, it is important to establish adequate coordination between the transport companies and the
terminal management to establish the appropriate organizational measures.

To reduce the generation of aerosols in places with a high influx of people, such as a transport terminal, access to the terminal should be controlled, for example, allowing access only to passengers with upcoming departures. This may be complicated at times, as users may enter the terminal to make queries, purchase tickets or use ancillary services provided within, such as catering or shopping areas. Whenever possible, it is suggested that minimum recommendations be established regarding the time available for passengers to access the terminal before the departure of the service (a maximum of 30 minutes in advance is recommended). People accompanying passengers should not enter the terminal if they are not traveling (unless the passenger needs assistance, for example, because of some type of disability or to accompany children).

All members of staff working in the terminal should wear a face mask both indoors and outdoors. The recommendations included in document R01 regarding the use of face masks should be followed for both staff and passengers.

Depending on the ventilation conditions of the terminal, the entry and exit doors may be kept open. Ensuring the entry of fresh air can affect access control or the security conditions of the facility, so it is necessary to consider both variables. On the other hand, closing accesses may worsen the quality of indoor air. These issues should be analyzed in each specific situation.

2.2.2 Risk nodes (RNs): passenger service/information area, ticket sales area in the terminal

Inside the terminal, one of the most crowded areas (after vehicle boarding and disembarking) is the ticket sales area, and also, where applicable, the passenger service/information point. Crowding of this type increases the risk of droplet and aerosol transmission (in the latter case, in poorly ventilated places).

To a lesser extent, there is a risk of infection by contact with contaminated surfaces due to the handling by staff and passengers of travel documentation (where applicable), such as tickets. Also due to the high level of contact with some equipment (for example, counters passengers lean on).
Recommendations

To reduce the risk of infection, it is necessary to assess whether or not the space is adequately ventilated, considering the flow of travelers at peak hours. Air renewal should be increased as much as possible, while reducing recirculation and following the indications set out in document R01.

At ticket-sales and customer-service counters, it is not always possible to keep the safety distance between passengers and staff to prevent droplet transmission through direct contact. Therefore, given the influx of people in these spaces throughout the day, installing physical barriers, such as transparent partitions that are easy to clean and disinfect, is recommended. Also the installation of signage and floor markings to ensure safety distance between passengers is suggested. It is also recommended that staff behind the counter respect safety distance between one another, or otherwise, similar partitions should be installed to reduce the risk of droplet transmission between them.

To reduce lines and waiting times of passengers at the ticket office, the reservation or prior sale of tickets through electronic means (web, app, telephone) should be encouraged. Furthermore, the installation of automatic ticket vending machines can help to reduce lines and distribute passengers throughout the terminal.

To reduce lines at information points, information on timetables, travel conditions, departures, restrictions, safety and hygiene guidelines, etc., should be reinforced on the website (of the terminal and/or bus companies) and through signage in the terminal. These measures will help to reduce the generation of aerosols and droplets, as well as the passengers’ exposure time to the virus.
In reservation and ticket sale processes, passenger seats should be assigned. Ideally, the seat allocation system should provide for the distribution of passengers throughout the vehicle (see RNs for Boarding, Disembarking). Passenger contact details (including telephone number) should be recorded so that, in case of an outbreak, passengers that have possibly been infected may be contacted. Likewise, the passenger should be provided with a telephone number to notify of any infection in the two weeks following the trip.

Hand sanitizing stations should be provided at the terminal entrances. Staff should handle the customers’ documentation as little as possible (in the case of ticket purchases). If it is handled, staff should sanitize their hands afterwards. Likewise, contactless payment is recommended, urging passengers to swipe their payment cards themselves, if applicable, at the point-of-sale (POS) terminal. The POS should be disinfected after each transaction with contact.

Whenever possible, electronic tickets should be issued (QR, SMS, etc.).

If there are any automatic ticket machines, passengers should be urged to sanitize their hands before and after using them. These devices should be included specifically in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan of the organization responsible for this cleaning in the terminal, following the recommendations established in document R03. At least one daily clean should be guaranteed, reinforced with spot cleaning according to the number of travelers and their use, and when necessary.

Furthermore, lidded wastebaskets with a non-manual opening mechanism lined with a bag should be provided throughout the terminal. They should be emptied at least once a day and as soon as they are full, as described in document R03 in its waste management section.

**2.2.3 Risk node (RN): waiting areas**

In waiting areas, the infection risk is mainly due to closed spaces with a high influx of people, especially during peak times. This situation favors possible airborne transmission of the virus by aerosols and by droplets from direct contact.

To a lesser extent, given that the equipment in these areas is of shared use (seats, vending machines), there may be a risk of infection by contact with contaminated surfaces.
Recommendations to Minimize COVID-19 Transmission in Local Transport

1. Where safe and feasible, users should be encouraged to use outdoor waiting areas. If this is not possible, appropriate preventive measures in terms of ventilation should be established R01.

2. To reduce occupancy and aerosol generation, the recommendations included in section 2.2.1 of this document on accompanying persons and time of arrival at the terminal of passengers with tickets should be applied.

3. In addition, passengers should be urged to spread out in the waiting room in such a way that safety distance between people is respected. This can be done through signage, separating seats, redistributing seats in the terminal and/or disabling them using markers.

4. Waiting areas have points of high contact (for example, arms on seats or chairs, door handles, vending machines, etc.); therefore, it is important to include these surfaces in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan in accordance with document R03. At least one daily clean should be guaranteed, reinforced with spot cleaning according to the number of travelers and their use, and when necessary.
2.2.4 Risk node (RN): shared restrooms

⚠️ Restrooms shared by customers or staff are a source of infection, since they are usually small, unventilated spaces (or with insufficient ventilation), where many users can converge in a short space of time, favoring aerosol or droplet transmission of the virus through direct contact because safety distance cannot be maintained.

Although no cases have been described of fecal-oral transmission from aerosolized faeces when flushing the toilet\(^3\), hand-mouth fomite transmission can occur in these spaces from touching high-contact surfaces.

Finally, there is a high level of contact with surfaces (faucets, toilets, doors, etc.), that may pose a risk of infection if they are contaminated.

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3. Evidence has been presented to suggest that COVID-19 may be found in faeces. However, only one study has cultured this virus from a single stool sample, and, to date, no fecal-oral transmission has been reported: https://www.who.int/es/news-room/commentaries/detail/modes-of-transmission-of-virus-causing-covid-19-implications-for-ipc-precaution-recommendations
**Recommendations**

Ventilation in restrooms is crucial, both in communal areas and in toilet cubicles. Thus, efforts should be made to avoid crowding in these spaces and to ventilate them adequately and continuously:

- If present, external windows should be kept open whenever weather conditions allow.
- When there is a window or grill to an interior duct shared by the rest of the building it is recommended not to open it to avoid possible aerosol transmission from other spaces with which the duct is shared.
- With regards to toilet cubicles, the following is specifically recommended:
  - Encourage users to keep their mask on inside toilet cubicles although they are alone in an enclosed space, isolated from other people.
  - Install extractor fans and ensure they operate continuously throughout the day (even if there are outside windows that are kept open).
  - Urge users to close the lid before flushing the toilet, as a general hygiene measure and as a precautionary principle.

To ensure that the safety distance is maintained in restrooms, it is important to determine and indicate their capacity so that it is visible before entering.

Shared restrooms should have water, soap, disposable paper towels, and a lidded wastebasket with a non-manual opening mechanism lined with a bag to facilitate waste collection and subsequent cleaning, thus promoting hygiene and reducing the risk to staff. Supplies (disposable paper towels, soap and toilet paper) should be replenished as necessary and be checked at least daily.

Given the high level of contact with surfaces in these spaces, the terminal management should consider installing hands-free faucets, automatic soap dispensers and automatic toilet flushing mechanisms (via a pedal or sensor) if they are not already installed.

Restrooms should be included in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan, as specified in document R03. In the terminals, given the large number of users, the cleaning frequency stipulated in document R03 should be increased, with the facilities being checked at least every two hours. A log of each time the facilities are cleaned should be kept and made visible to the users.
2.2.5 Risk node (RN): elevators

Elevators are a risk hotspot given that they are small, closed spaces which are shared by several people who are unable to maintain the safety distance. They generally have poor ventilation and are used by a large number of people from different households at the same time, albeit for short periods of time.

Recommendations

Encourage passengers to use the stairs (including escalators) instead of the elevator whenever possible. Depending on the characteristics of the terminal (number of floors, arrival and departure areas, etc.), this may or may not be feasible, given that passengers frequently travel with baggage.

Furthermore, the following is recommended:

- Encourage users not to share elevators with other people outside their traveling party.
- Urge users to wear a face mask inside, even if they are alone.
- Program elevators so the doors stay open whenever they are not being used, allowing the air inside to be renewed. If this is not possible, set the doors to close a few seconds after the last user to help aerosols dissipate before the next user enters.
- Install a grill that allows air to enter the elevator. By doing so, the upward and downward movements of the elevator will help renew the air. Ideally, install an extractor fan inside the elevator (mechanical ventilation).

Elevators have points of high contact (for example, buttons). Therefore, it is important to include these points in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan, in accordance with document R03, as well as reinforcing spot cleaning according to influx and use, ensuring cleanliness as necessary. It is recommended that hand sanitizing stations be installed by the elevators.

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4. Group of people traveling together.

5. Although this is not necessarily the case in the local transport subsector, terminals operate with passengers traveling to different destinations and, therefore, the use of baggage is common.

6. The doors that should stay open are those on the same floor/level where the elevator is located.
2.2.5 Risk node (RN): food and drink

All food and drink establishments in the terminal are recommended to follow the guidelines outlined in the document R02.2 Recommendations to Minimize COVID-19 Transmission in Restaurants.

2.3 Transport vehicles

Processes related to transport vehicles, such as boarding and disembarking and baggage handling are included in this section. The interior space of the vehicle shared by passengers and staff is also included in this section.

2.3.1 Risk nodes (RNs): boarding and disembarking

⚠ During boarding and disembarking, large crowds form (especially at the start and end of the journey or at the main points of the destinations along the route). Likewise, members of staff checking the ticket and/or collection fare upon accessing the vehicle (either the driver or other staff) cannot always respect the safety distance. This implies a risk of aerosol and droplet transmission.

To a lesser extent, there is a risk of infection through contact with contaminated surfaces when handling tickets or documentation to access the vehicle.

Figure 8. Risk nodes (RNs) in boarding and disembarking
Recommendations

Boarding and disembarking should preferably be carried out outdoors and, according to the recommendations included in document R01 on ventilation conditions. Whenever possible, the terminal management should reorganize the platforms and boarding and disembarking points to avoid crowding (for example, by redistributing the coaches throughout the terminal). Possible timetable changes and other matters that may affect contact between the parties, where applicable, should be agreed and coordinated with the coach companies.

Passengers should be urged to keep safety distance wherever possible during boarding and disembarking. The organization should pay particular attention to the measures to prevent crowding, especially inside the vehicle. For example:

- When all passengers board and disembark at the same time, it should be done by rows. Boarding should be carried out from the last row to the first; disembarking, from first to last, and passengers should remain seated inside the vehicle until their row’s turn.

- If the vehicle has two access doors, the previous system can be used if the passengers are divided in two groups (one per door).

The driver, other members of staff (where applicable) and passengers should sanitize their hands on entering the vehicle; therefore, the hand sanitizing solution or disinfectant wipes should be provided at the entrance. Handling passenger tickets and other documentation by staff should be avoided.

If payment is allowed inside the vehicle, it is suggested that systems be used that prevent the handling of cash (for example, subscriptions, card payment, QR codes, etc).
2.3.2 Risk node (RN): baggage handling

The main risk during baggage loading and unloading is the possible infection by close contact (droplets) between passengers handing over and collecting their belongings in a confined area. Due to the nature of the service, it is not always possible to maintain a safety distance and crowding occurs, thus risk of aerosol and droplet transmission is increased for both passengers and baggage handlers.

To a lesser extent, baggage handling promotes risk of infection by contact with contaminated surfaces.

Figure 9. Risk node (RN) in baggage handling

Recommendations

Passengers are urged to maintain the safety distance during loading and unloading baggage. While loading, it is recommended that the passengers, on arrival at the coach and before boarding, place their luggage in the hold of the vehicle themselves. At unloading, passengers should be urged to stay inside the vehicle while the staff takes the luggage out of the hold and places it in an orderly manner for passengers to collect on disembarking from the coach.

Given the high level of contact with surfaces, passengers and members of staff should be urged to sanitize their hands after handling baggage.
**2.3.3 Risk node (RN): inside the vehicle**

Transport vehicles are enclosed, narrow spaces that travelers share with other passengers and staff on board. The risk of infection is due to the difficulty in maintaining a safety distance inside, especially in local transport used by the population in their daily lives. Furthermore, many people are concentrated in this confined space (coming in and going out), and prolonged exposure to the virus may occur, so ventilation plays a key role in reducing the risk of aerosol transmission. It should be noted that some coaches may not have the appropriate ventilation equipment (e.g., due to their age), and others may not have windows.

![Inside the Vehicle](image)

**Figure 10.** Risk node (RN) inside the vehicle

**Recommendations**

Ideally, the level of occupancy inside the vehicle should enable passengers to keep the safety distance from other passengers and staff. Passengers should be distributed within the vehicle, respecting this safety distance. This may be facilitated by assigning seat numbers in advance through reservations. Nevertheless, the logistical difficulties inherent to these measures and the need to optimize existing resources for the mobility of the population make this task difficult. Adequate ventilation inside the vehicle is crucial to prevent infection of passengers and staff, increasing air renewal as much as possible and avoiding air recirculation. If possible, natural ventilation by opening windows and the upper hatch of the vehicle cabin (where applicable) should be combined with mechanical ventilation. The driver should check regularly that the windows remain open at all times (and passengers should be urged not to close them through signage). In terms of ventilation, the provisions of document **R01** should be complied with.

All staff and passengers should wear masks, in accordance with recommendations of document **R01** (FFP2, N95 or KN95). Eating and drinking inside the vehicle should be prohibited. In the case of long journeys, specific stops should be set up to allow passengers to have food breaks.
If the transport vehicle has a restroom for passengers, it should be closed off, as these facilities are not connected to a sewage network, so waste is concentrated. Furthermore, they are confined spaces with limited air renewal. Therefore, on longer journeys, it may be necessary to redesign the route and review timetables, allowing intermediate stops where passengers could use public restrooms. Finally, to prevent direct contact between passengers and the driver and to reduce possible droplet transmission through direct contact, it is recommended to install a protective barrier that is easy to clean and disinfect (for example, a transparent screen). However, the driver should wear a face mask and, where possible, keep the window open.

Equipment and devices inside the vehicle should be included in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan of the coach management company in accordance with document R03. Specifically:

- Headrest protectors, which should be disposable and biodegradable, should be changed after every journey for hygiene reasons.
- Several daily cleanings should be performed on high contact surfaces, such as handrails, armrests, seat belts, etc., depending on the number of users.
- A lidded wastebasket with a non-manual opening mechanism lined with a bag should be provided. This should be emptied at least once a day, preferably twice, and whenever they are full. When bags of waste are collected, they should be securely tied, and the procedures indicated in document R03 should be followed.

2.4

Staff common areas

2.4.1 Risk node (RN): staff common areas

Staff common areas are spaces for the sole use of staff, (e.g., locker rooms, cafeterias or canteens). They are usually small, poorly ventilated indoor spaces and busy at certain times of the work day (e.g., when entering and leaving, shift changes, lunchtime, etc.), which can make it difficult to keep the safety distance. Furthermore, in canteens or cafeterias, there are the added risks of any space where people remove their masks for a prolonged period of time to eat or drink while other staff are doing the same.

7. Public restroom here means a restroom passengers are allowed to access.
Recommendations

Due to the characteristics and use made of these spaces, it is especially important to ensure the ventilation and capacity control measures set out in document R01 are applied. This is also particularly relevant to avoid outbreaks caused by staff.

In addition to ventilation, organizational measures should be established (shifts, staggering of arrival, departure and break times, establishing capacities etc.), which are necessary to avoid crowds of staff in these spaces at certain times of day and to reduce their potential exposure to the virus. For meals, establishing small groups (e.g. bubbles)\(^8\).

With regards to restrooms, the measures defined in this document regarding shared restrooms should be applied.

Staff should be urged to stay in these places for the shortest time necessary and to wear face masks at all times (FFP2, KN95, N95), even in areas without passengers.

Lockers should be provided with a space for work clothes and another for street clothes. Furthermore, lockers should not be shared, unless they are cleaned and disinfected between staff.

These facilities (lockers, restrooms, etc.) should be included in the Cleaning and Disinfection Plan of the terminal management, following the recommendations included in document R03. These areas should be cleaned at least once a day, and this frequency should be increased as necessary.

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8. A bubble is a certain number of people who are permanently grouped together for a specific period of time and helps them avoid coming into contact with others who are not in that group. By avoiding contact with other people outside the group, it reduces their potential exposure to the virus and prevents it from spreading if someone becomes infected. In tourism organizations, a bubble may consist of a group of staffs who always work the same shift, have lunch together, etc.
This document has been prepared for the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) by the Institute for Spanish Tourist Quality (ICTE)

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