

The 2026 RELIEVE Summit on energy transition

1. Introduction

RELIEVE is a non-profit worldwide network of universities, NGOs, companies, and governmental organizations focused on building capacities in energy and environment across Latin American countries in a way that each local node of RELIEVE could become the technical support of government and companies in their initiatives of reducing energy consumption and GHG emissions. Aiming to achieve this general objective, RELIEVE has three main specific subobjectives, all of them related to energy and environment:

- Develop joint research projects.
- Strengthen scientific work and its dissemination.
- Train the next generation of decision makers.



One of the strategies implemented by RELIEVE during the past 10 years to achieve these objectives is the development of an annual summit organized and implemented in collaboration with local partners.

2. The 2026 RELIEVE Summit

This year, the 2026 RELIEVE Summit was held at the University of California, Davis, between the 20th and 24th of July 2026. This year marked a milestone for RELIEVE as it was held outside Latin America for the first time. RELIEVE organized it, hosted it at the Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS), and presented it with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SAQMD).

The Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Davis (ITS-Davis) is the world's leading academic center for sustainable transportation. Its mission is to serve society's needs and promote a more effective, sustainable, and equitable transportation system.

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District is responsible for advancing the greater capital region towards meeting all national ambient air quality standards and state and national decarbonization commitments for the protection of the global climate. Its vision is clean air and a low-carbon future for all.



RELIEVE 2026 provided an important platform for strengthening the connection between the objectives of the project and initiative “Accelerating Access to Low-Carbon Urban Mobility Solutions through Digitalization (ACCESS)” and the broader goals of the event. The participation of several ACCESS partners, including Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, Universidad EAFIT, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and Tecnológico de Monterrey, further strengthened this connection and created opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange around low-carbon urban mobility. In this context, the connection between ACCESS and RELIEVE 2026 contributes to strengthening both initiatives simultaneously, advancing shared objectives related to decarbonization, sustainable mobility, digitalization, and capacity-building.



Confirmed participants	96
Countries	10
Universities	16
Associations or research centers	8
Companies	4
Keynote speakers	14
Workshops	20
Oral presentations in parallel sessions	53
Posters	18
Extended abstract submissions	35
Photo competition	
Teams in the Women on Wheels competition	10
Tours	6

3. Activities included in the 2026 RELIEVE Summit

The 2026 RELIEVE Summit included the following main activities, which will be described next:

- The opening ceremony
- The VIII international conference on energy and environment
- WinRELIEVE and Women on Wheels. Promoting gender equity in energy and environment in partnership with ACCESS.
- ACCESS Workshop: Accelerating Access to Low-Carbon Mobility Solutions through Digitalization: Workshop with government, industry and academia.
- The closing ceremony and the photo competition

3.1. The opening ceremony

The 2026 RELIEVE Summit began with a brief opening ceremony. Dr. Alissa Kendall, Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS), welcomed the participants and officially opened the event. Dr. Alberto Ayala, Director of the Sacramento Air Quality Management District, emphasized the importance of the summit for fostering collaboration between Latin America and California. Dr. José Huertas, leader of the RELIEVE network, reminded participants of the network's mission and the summit's objectives. Finally, Dr. Oscar Serrano, RELIEVE Coordinator, presented the summit agenda and provided an overview of its organization.



Participants in the Open ceremony. Alissa Kendall (Director, Institute of Transportation Studies, UC Davis), Alberto Ayala (Air Pollution Control Officer and Executive Director, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District), Jose Ignacio Huertas (Professor, leader of the Sustainable Energy research group, Tecnológico de Monterrey), Oscar Serrano (Researcher of the Sustainable Energy Research Group, Tecnológico de Monterrey) and Juan Carlos (JC) García (Ph.D. Candidate, Transportation Technology and Policy, ITS, UC Davis).

3.2. The VIII international conference on energy and the environment

The VIII edition of the international conference on energy and the environment focused on key topics related to energy transition: i.) hydrogen and batteries, ii.) emission and air quality, and iii.) smart transportation. The conference included 14 keynote speakers from the USA, England, Italy, and Spain, who described, through magisterial conferences, the state of the art in knowledge on those topics.

The VIII international conference also included 20 workshops where participants learned by doing concepts and skills related to energy transition. Those workshops were provided by experts from RELIEVE, the invited keynote speakers, and researchers from UC Davis.



Álvaro Videla. Associate Researcher Faculty of Engineering, Universidad Católica de Chile
Simelys Hernandez. Associate Professor, Department of Applied Science and Technology, Politecnico di Torino.
Janice Lam Snyder. Director, Community Air Protection, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
Luisa F. Chaparro. Assistant Research Professor. Tecnológico de Monterrey

Miguel Ángel Fernández. Director, CNH2, Centro Nacional del Hidrógeno. España.
Colin Murphy. Co-Director, UC Davis Low Carbon Fuel Policy Research Initiative. USA.
Roland Hwang. Policy Director for ITS-UC Davis.
Miguel Jaller. Co-Director, Sustainable Freight Research Program. ITS. USA.

Carlos Agudelo. Director of Applications Engineering. Link Engineering Company, USA.
Antonio Multari. VERT Association. Switzerland
Jesús M. Velázquez. Associate Professor of Chemistry, UC Davis
Sam Stephenson. Research Associate, University of Cambridge

Keynote speakers in the VIII International conference on Energy and Environment

The conference also included 12 parallel sessions where 53 research works were presented and evaluated. Those works reported the recent findings in energy and environment obtained by researchers, mostly from LATAM. Extended abstracts of all works presented are published in the digital version of the conference proceedings. The works presented by Diego Gutierrez from IPN, Mexico; Sebastian Bermúdez from Institución Universitaria Pascual Bravo; Leydi Leonor Torres and Daniela Zambrano from Unidades Tecnológicas de Santander, Colombia; and Joshua Huertas and Gaby de la Garza from Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, were awarded in the undergraduate student category. The work presented by María Canchola from Tecnológico de Monterrey was awarded as the best work presented by a graduate student. Additionally, 14 research works were recommended for publication as full research papers in a special edition of the RedIn by Universidad de Antioquia journal, which is indexed in SCOPUS. Finally, the conference included a poster session where 18 works were presented and evaluated. The poster presented by Esteban Pallares from Unidades Tecnológicas de Santander was awarded under the category of best poster.



Trainers of the workshops in the VIII International Conference on Energy and Environment. John Ramiro Agudelo from the Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia. Ernesto Reyes, Miguel Gijón and Manuel Ávila from Tecnológico de Monterrey. Miguel Modestino from New York University and Samuel Lara from Chalmers University.

The combination of keynote talks, hands-on workshops, oral presentations, and poster sessions created multiple opportunities for participants to engage with experts, exchange knowledge, and divulge their work.

3.3. WinRELIEVE and Women on Wheels. Promoting gender equity in energy and environment

The initiative Women in RELIEVE (WinRELIEVE) aims to promote and highlight the participation of women in actions related to reducing energy use and emissions of air pollutants. During the RELIEVE Summit, this initiative led two activities: i.) A workshop named WinRELIEVE and ii.) a bike competition named Women on Wheels.

In this year's WinRELIEVE session, led by Dr. Luisa Chaparro, MSc. Anggie Rincón, and Eng. María Canchola, focused on identifying actionable strategies that this community suggests implementing in the transport demonstration projects being implemented under the ACCESS project initiative in LATAM and in the future RELIEVE summits.

During the workshop, participants highlighted the importance of gender disaggregated data in baseline mobility studies and project evaluations, rather than adding it only after the project has been implemented, as it can help identify differences in travel mode, frequency, and distance. Another team highlighted the importance of safety perceptions rather than just assessing reports or crime incidents, as women may feel discouraged from using transportation systems and modify their travel behavior because they perceive certain routes unsafe. Participants also noted that users may not always know how or where to report incidents or situations that make them feel unsafe. This also highlights the need to strengthen capacity-building communication and awareness mechanisms in mobility projects.

One important suggestion mentioned during this workshop was incorporating “family-friendly” spaces or activities to facilitate family participation, which goes beyond promoting gender parity in leading roles. Creating family-friendly spaces can contribute to more inclusive participation, as traditional workshop spaces often assume that participants have no care responsibilities outside of work, which can disproportionately create barriers for women and other caregivers.



Participants in WinRELIEVE.

The Women on Wheels competition was designed by RELIEVE leaders as an academic challenge to teach participants in electric mobility, logistics, leadership, and social inclusion. Teams of about 4 participants started by naming their team. “Petunia” and “XXXXY” were the most appealing team names. Each team converted a traditional used bicycle into an electric bicycle by changing its front wheel to an electric wheel made by the team. Each team received the same electric motor (500 W, 36 V), Lithium-polymer batteries (231 Wh), and controller.

During the competition, loads were distributed among seven checkpoints located across the UC Davis campus. The electric bicycles were ridden exclusively by women. The objective was to collect all assigned loads in the shortest possible time while minimizing the total energy consumed. To encourage strategic planning, each rider was allowed to transport only a limited number of loads at any given time. Consequently, multiple trips between the home base and the checkpoints were required, following the logistics strategy established by each team. While the rider traveled between checkpoints, the remaining team members stayed at the home base and completed educational challenges. Each challenge had to be completed within three minutes of the rider reaching a checkpoint and was designed to reinforce knowledge related to the competition themes. The final competition score was determined by combining route completion time, total energy consumption, and the points earned in the educational challenges, with the winning team achieving the best overall performance across these criteria.

In RELIEVE 2026, 10 teams participated, and the team “XXXXY,” led by Marion Raux from UC Davis, “Tec on wheels,” led by Aya Higashi, and “Petunia,” led by Gaby de la Garza, obtained third, second, and first place, respectively. The electrified bicycles were delivered to UC Davis and UC Riverside, where they will be lent to students for free.

The Women on Wheels competition required the development of a digital twin to monitor the operation of the electric bicycles. The platform provided real-time visualization of each rider's location on a digital representation of the university campus, the cumulative energy consumption of each bicycle, and the instantaneous payload being transported. In addition, it supported live video streaming from each rider and included a real-time data entry tool for recording the loads collected at each checkpoint. The digital twin platform was developed by a team of 14 students from different universities across Mexico during a summer research internship with the Sustainable Energy Research Group at Tecnológico de Monterrey. The competition involved 19 judges stationed at various checkpoints and the home base to oversee the event and validate competition activities. The event was also broadcast via live streaming to audiences throughout Latin America.

Most of the assistants to RELIEVE 2026 participated in the Women on Wheels competition. Several times it was heard that this competition was one of the most exciting activities experienced during RELIEVE 2026.



Participants in the Women on Wheels, an electric bike competition.

3.4. ACCESS Workshop: Accelerating Access to Low-Carbon Mobility Solutions through Digitalization: Workshop with government, industry and academia.

The RELIEVE summit includes a workshop where government and industry are the protagonists. It aims to identify the fundamental needs of these sectors that the academic community should address. In RELIEVE 2026, this workshop was dedicated to ACCESS (Accelerating Access to Low-Carbon Mobility Solutions through Digitalization), an ongoing project led by UNEP and implemented with a consortium of partners, aiming to accelerate access to low-carbon mobility solutions through digitalization in Latin America. The project focuses on supporting the transition toward more sustainable urban mobility by strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders, developing and testing pilot solutions, and promoting the use of digital tools to facilitate access to low-carbon mobility.

Several RELIEVE nodes are participating in this project, Felipe Quirama from UNEP described the project; Michael Giraldo from the University of EAFIT; Julio Cuisiano from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú; Rogelio Escamilla from the company INWAY from Chile; and Jose Ignacio Huertas from Tecnológico de Monterrey described the status of that project. All participants were invited to participate.

The session highlighted the main priorities and progress of ACCESS, including the development of pilot activities, particularly in Colombia and Peru, as well as the regional capacity-building program led by Tecnológico de Monterrey. Participants also discussed key technical challenges related to advancing low-carbon mobility solutions, with particular emphasis on strengthening coordination among the different actors involved. The workshop provided an opportunity to identify common priorities and challenges, discuss potential areas for collaboration, and invite participants to contribute to the ongoing development of ACCESS and its future activities.



Felipe Quirama. UNEP

Julio Cuisano. PUCP. Perú

Michael Giraldo. Universidad EAFIT. Colombia.

Participants in the ACCESS Workshop.

3.5. The RELIEVE annual meeting

Representatives of each node participated in the RELIEVE annual meeting. A summary of the main achievements of the RELIEVE network was presented by its leader, Dr. Jose Huertas. The conversation was focused on the decision on where the next editions of RELIEVE are going to be. It was decided that RELIEVE 2027 will be held in Bogotá, Colombia, organized in collaboration with several universities that participate in RELIEVE from that city. It was also decided that RELIEVE 2028 will be in the city of Naples, Italy organized in collaboration with the National Research Council (CNR), which is the primary center of research in Italy. The potential alignment between RELIEVE 2027 in Bogotá and a future regional ACCESS event remains subject to review and confirmation by the ACCESS consortium, considering ACCESS objectives, regional participation, and the project's commitment to reducing travel-related emissions.

3.6. The Closing ceremony and the photo competition

The closing ceremony was organized by Gaby de la Garza, an Engineering Physics student, and Dr. Mariela Cerrada. The program included a summary of the outcomes of the summit activities, the presentation of awards and recognitions in the different competition categories, and concluding remarks delivered by Dr. Cerrada.

A highlight of the closing ceremony was the announcement of the photo competition results, an activity designed to encourage active participation throughout the RELIEVE Summit while documenting memorable moments from the event. Hundreds of photographs were submitted, of which nine finalists were selected (Figure below). During the closing ceremony, attendees voted for their favorite image, and the photograph submitted by Francisco Javier Sierra from the Government of Jalisco received the most votes, earning the award for Best Photo.

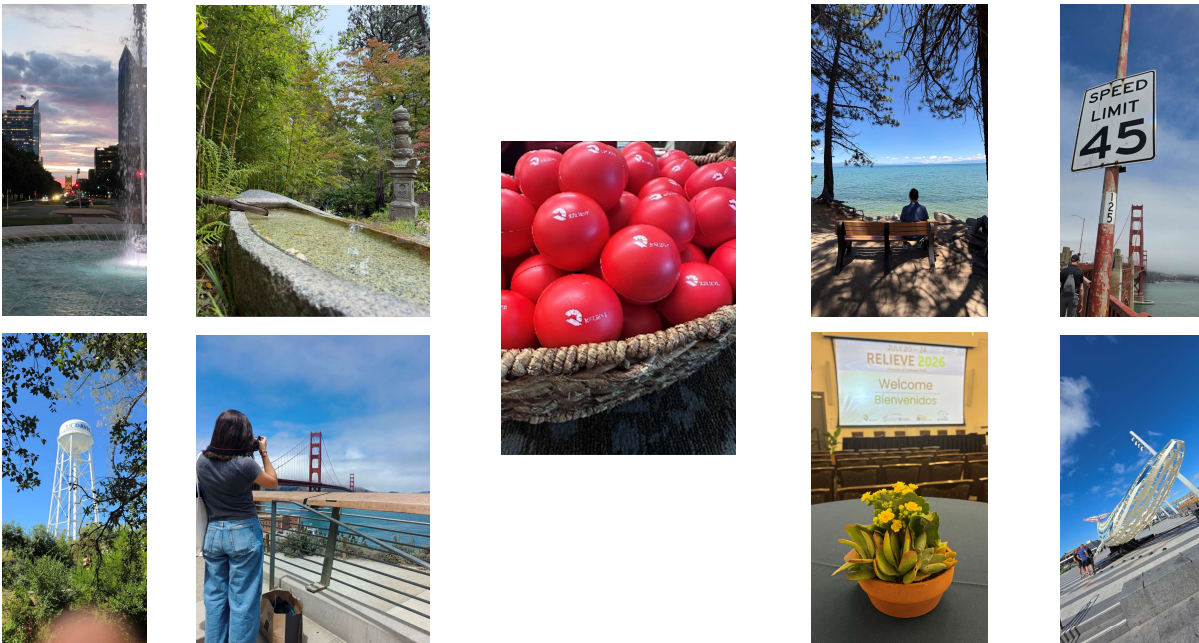


Photo competition. Best photos submitted by participants during the 2026 RELIEVE summit, according to the jury led by Darinel Gonzalez, which considered elements in the field of photography arts.

4. Acknowledgments

The RELIEVE Network sincerely thanks all speakers, participants, sponsors, volunteers, and members of the organizing committee for their invaluable contributions to the success of the 2026 RELIEVE Summit. Special recognition is extended to the logistics team, led by Natalie Ruiz, whose dedication and careful coordination ensured the timely and successful execution of the numerous activities conducted throughout the summit. The RELIEVE Network also expresses its sincere gratitude to Juan Carlos (JC) García, a Ph.D. student at the Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) in UC Davis, whose exceptional commitment, including personal contributions of time and resources, played an important role in supporting participants and ensuring the success of the event.

The RELIEVE Network gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided by the Sacramento Air Quality Management District and Tecnológico de Monterrey, whose contributions were fundamental in the successful organization of the 2026 RELIEVE Summit.