Urban Transport in India

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Bengaluru's Namma Metro has become the costliest metro service in India after a steep fare hike in February 2025. The move has raised concerns over the **urban transport** affordability. Without fair pricing, public transport risks losing commuter trust.

What are the Concerns Regarding Urban Transport Systems?

- **Affordability:** Rising **fares in metro** (Bengaluru's Rs 90 fare for more than 30 km) and bus services are making daily commuting increasingly expensive for low- and middle-income groups.
    - Additionally, surge pricing by mobility apps during peak hours or bad weather makes travel costly, undermining the **National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) 2006** and **[Smart Cities Mission](#)** that emphasize affordable and accessible mobility for all.
- **Weak Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) Infrastructure:** Most Indian cities lack safe and accessible infrastructure for NMT like pedestrian zones (pedestrian fatalities >40% in Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru) and cycling tracks.
    - Where such paths exist, they are often **encroached, poorly designed, or badly maintained,** making them unsafe and unusable.
    - Land use and transport planning are poorly integrated, with weak **[Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)](#) implementation.**
- **Congestion:** Indian cities face severe traffic congestion, private vehicles, despite serving under **20% of commuters, occupy 90% of road space.** This mismatch, along with stagnant road infrastructure, leads to long commutes and reduced productivity.
- **Environmental Impact:** In 2020, India's transport sector accounted for **14% of total energy-related CO_2 emissions**. Vehicles remain the largest source of **[Particulate Matter (PM2. 5)](#)** and **[NOx emissions](#)** in cities like Delhi, causing severe health issues and environmental damage, thereby undermining efforts to achieve **India's Net Zero target by 2070.**
    - Lack of clean fuel policies and **slow adoption of electric mobility** worsen the crisis.
- **Inadequate Public Transport Systems:** Only **63 of 458 cities with population >1 lakh have a formal bus service**. India has just 1.2 buses per 1,000 people compared to global benchmarks of 5-8 (NITI Aayog, 2018).
    - Most cities lack well-connected **transit networks,** with metro services missing peri-urban areas, while unregulated informal modes like auto- and e-rickshaws raise security concerns.

- **Financial and Capacity Constraints: Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** lack financial autonomy and rely heavily on state or central funding.
  - Their limited ability to raise resources through tools like land value capture, congestion pricing, or **green bonds** hinders affordable and sustainable transport projects.

What Can Be Done for Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Mobility?

- **Investment in NMT:** Nearly 50% of urban trips in Indian cities are under 5 km, according to the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, making them ideal for NMT.
  - Dedicated lanes and safe infrastructure for walking and cycling can promote affordable and sustainable urban mobility.
- **Adopt Best Practices**: Cities like **Kochi** (Most Sustainable Transport System), **Bhubaneswar** (Best Public Transport), and **Srinagar** (Best Non-Motorized Transport) showcase replicable models. Recognizing and scaling these practices will accelerate transformation.
- **Affordable Public Transport Access:** Promote **subsidized fare structures** (e.g., monthly passes) and leverage **non-fare revenue sources** (such as advertisements and retail leasing at stations) to reduce the financial burden on commuters.
- **Clean Transport:** Promote clean mobility through **FAME II**, **PM e-Bus Sewa**, and provide subsidies or tax cuts on EVs to accelerate the adoption of electric buses and green commuting.
- **Empower ULBs:** Enable ULBs to leverage land value capture, congestion pricing, green bonds, and parking charges under **MoHUA's Value Capture Finance (VCF) Policy 2017** to address financing challenges and support sustainable mobility services.
- **Integrated Public Transport Systems:** Fund integrated public transport systems focused on moving people, not vehicles. Encourage multimodal transport, seamless ticketing, real-time tracking, and TOD under **Transit Oriented Development Policy, 2017** to reduce private vehicle use.
  - Strengthen **Unified Metropolitan Transport Authorities (UMTAs)** for coordinated mobility planning aligned with **Smart Cities** and **AMRUT** goals.

> **What is Transit-Oriented Development?**
>
> **Click here to Read: Transit-Oriented Development**

What are the Initiatives Related to Urban Mobility in India?

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).**
- **Bharatmala Pariyojana.**
- **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) – I & II**
- **Metro Rail Policy (2017).**
- **Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF)**
- **Multimodal Transport Hub**
- **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan**

> ***Drishti Mains Question:***
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> Urban transport in India faces multidimensional challenges, suggest a comprehensive strategy for making it sustainable and inclusive.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. The Gati-Shakti Yojana needs meticulous coordination between the government and the private sector to achieve the goal of connectivity. Discuss. (2022)

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