

Sustainable Public Mobility System: A Socio-Economic Transformation Multiplier

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At REPL, Prabhakar Kumar leads Urban Planning team by guiding on technical aspects, such as physical, social and economic analysis; land use analysis as per master plan; analysis of government policies/programs/regulations/bylaws and its level of implementation; region delineation; identification of land for development; SWOT analysis, infrastructure analysis, projections, gap assessment, benchmarking & assessment of urban governance; value chain analysis for various business and industrial development; identification of business/industrial potentials in the region; identification of land for Greenfield megacity /Township development on the basis of potential of the regions; concept master planning; land suitability for various type of developments; identification of various projects for development and its broad cost estimation; investment plan preparation; and phasing & implementation strategy formulation for sustainable development. His other areas of expertise include thematic mapping & base map creation on GIS and AutoCAD platforms.

Public Mobility Systems are the backbone of any modern city. A city is as smart as its public transport system. Sustainable public transport systems not only call for faster and more efficient mobility of people, materials and services across the cities, but also for sustenance of the environment and socio-economic transformation of the communities. A lot has been said and written about environmental and financial impact of smart public transport system, however in next few paragraphs we will talk about sustainable public transport as an enabler and multiplier of socio-economic transformation.

Public transport systems, like all infrastructure projects, have a dual impact on economy. Not only do they benefit the economy in short run, but they also help it in long run. In the short run, they generate employment and help circulate capital. In long run, they help localities to prosper, save costs and assist in environmental conservation.

Primary utility of public transport systems is fast and convenient movement of people. It enables people to travel long distances for employment and education. Safer transport systems encourage more women to come out for education and work. More contribution by women results in better transformation in society. Same is true in case of specially-abled people. An efficient public transport system also helps increase the accessibility of various parts of cities which would otherwise be difficult to access in its absence. Improved accessibility leads to higher economic activity. Higher economic activity leads to employment generation and increased income of locals, which further helps in development and prosperity of community. It is no rocket science that communities with higher financial status have improved nutrition, education, hygiene etc. More importantly, crime rates in such localities also fall down. Therefore, it can be said that efficient and sustainable public mobility systems have a domino effect on community transformation.

Sustainable public transport means a lesser number of private vehicles on roads. Lesser number of private vehicles means lesser congestion on roads, lower air pollution and lesser number of road accidents. The Lancet study on Health states that economic impact of premature deaths due to air pollution in India was approximately 1.4 percent of national GDP. Vehicular emissions are one of the leading causes of air pollution in India. Sustainable public mobility could help reduce air pollution significantly. Improved air quality not only means improved health conditions of individuals; it also helps in saving millions of rupees for economy. This saved money can be utilised by government for providing better services to communities.

Presence of a sustainable public transport system will lessen dependency on private vehicles. This will further lessen the need for parking around homes and in public areas. This free-up space can be used to create green spaces, recreational areas, public conveniences, kiosks for street vendors etc. This will improve the living standards of people, reduce congestion on street, help street vendors do their business with dignity and improve mental health of citizens.

Public transport systems like buses and metro trains are also used by government to spread awareness regarding various initiatives and welfare schemes. This leads to increased participation of general public in government schemes. As economy was gradually opening after the pandemic, government used Delhi Metro as an effective means of spreading awareness regarding the Covid-19. An aware society is the most empowered society.

Since ancient times, public transport systems have been known to be triggers of socio-economic revolutions in the cities. With rapid transport of people, goods and services, they generate income, employment and broaden the horizon for people and save costs. Services like education and healthcare also find their way to communities connected with public transport systems. With addition of sustainability to mobility systems, concerns about environment are also being addressed. With increased safety and convenience, participation of women and specially-abled people, the concept of a balanced and sustainable society can be achieved.