Shades of Shared Mobility

The Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) modes are an indispensable aspect of urban mobility in India. Also known as paratransit or feeder service, IPT includes vehicles that work as a supplement to the public transport system by providing first and last mile connectivity. There are following two categories of IPT in India:

1. Contract carriage services: flexible, demand-based services where the passenger determines the destination. These are ubiquitous in Indian cities.
2. Informal public transport services: shared fixed-route services with intermediate stops for boarding and alighting. These are typically seen in small and medium-sized cities, which may not have any or adequate formal public transport service.

The IPT is also called informal public transport because of the ownership structure (individual owners) and lack of regulation and enforcement. With the high demand for IPT services, combined with the restriction in the number of permits granted by the authorities, many IPT vehicles resort to illegal operations to meet their expenses.

The legislative framework in India did not recognize IPT until 2006 with the passing of the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) which acknowledged their role in the overall transport system. However, IPT sector continues to be largely neglected and their services are not efficiently and adequately integrated with the overall transportation system.

However, the IPT systems require due recognition in enabling them to have an optimal role in transport mix. Are they only meant to fill the interstices of mainstream public transport or is there something more? They are in dire need of new models of regulation and reform, new ways of making them emission-free and safe. For not doing so can lead to a serious deficit in public transport services and increased dependence on personal vehicles.

Here's hoping for a redefined shade of shared mobility so that they continue being the veins and capillaries of our cities.

Calendar 2020

SUM Net India

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Pedaling the wheels from past into future

Cycle rickshaws are perfect modes to provide first and last mile connectivity in cities. They are pollution-free, sustainable and instant source of livelihood for many in cities. Personal and contemporary reflections of art, cycle rickshaws are also affordable means of transport for the middle- and low-income groups. Despite their significant percentage in modal share, Indian cities are undermining the value of cycle rickshaws by increasingly banning their use from the streets.

"The cycle rickshaw must surely be a part of any 'Smart City', but sadly fails to get recognized for its contributions to the city."

- Rajendra Ravi, Delhi

January 2020

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The Third Wheel of the Third World

The quintessential mode of transport in India, auto-rickshaws account for close to 20% of passengers travelling intra-city and provides employment to an estimated 5 million drivers, as per a report by EMBARQ India in 2012. Connecting travellers to mass transit and even directly to their destinations, auto-rickshaws bridge the gap between public transport and door-to-door services, providing an essential alternative to private vehicles.

"Policy making related to auto-rickshaws is dysfunctional - it does not adequately account for the perspective of drivers nor for the fact that they provide a much-valued, cost-effective transportation service."

- Simon Harding, Madhav Badami, Conor Reynolds, & Milind Kandlikar.

February 2020

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Shehri Gramin

Gramin Sewa includes vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 6 passengers (excluding the driver). Granted contract carriage permit as per provisions of MV Act, these vehicles are mostly given permits to ply in rural areas, unauthorized, resettlement colonies and JJ Clusters in Delhi. With around 6,500 such vehicles in NCR operating in approximately 170 routes, this service provides key transportation facility in the peripheral areas of the city.

"It has been a long-pending demand of ours. We had demanded a maximum fare of Rs. 30 but then the government settled at Rs. 25. Nevertheless, we are happy the CM allowed the increase."

- Sanjay Batla, spokesperson of Gramin Sangharsh Samiti on the Delhi Government's decision to hike Gramin Sewa's fares.

March 2020

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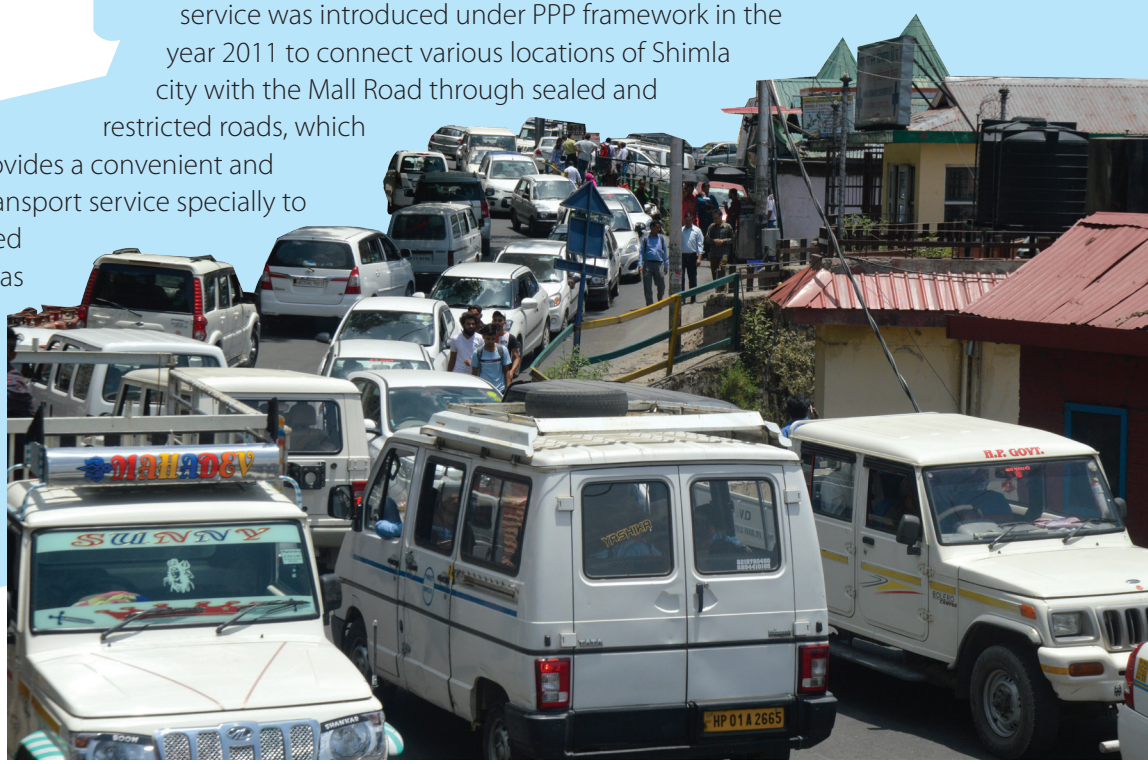
A Four-wheeler, but not a Car

The Taxi service in Shimla is run by HRTC. Currently, this service competes with the city bus service, and the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) for the city envisions integrating both the systems in a way that the Taxi service serves as a feeder to the Buses. The service was introduced under PPP framework in the year 2011 to connect various locations of Shimla city with the Mall Road through sealed and restricted roads, which provides a convenient and affordable transport service specially to disadvantaged groups such as old and physically challenged commuters.



"... to make this taxi service more attractive, reliable, and efficient, the taxi service should be integrated with both the existing and proposed public transport system and should be designed to act as a feeder service."

- Comprehensive Mobility Plan, Shimla.

April 2020

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"Messy, improvised and driven by people"

At the front line of India's electric vehicle revolution, and concentrated in the northern cities, e-rickshaws are quiet, fast, clean and cheap alternative to auto-rickshaws and other IPT modes. Declared illegal and banned by the Delhi High Court in 2014, *tuk-tuk* (as they are colloquially called) were legalized by the Parliament in 2015. Due to its affordability and convenience, and despite the risk, e-rickshaws are replacing both auto-rickshaws and cycle rickshaws.

"India's million e-rickshaws make up the second-largest collection of electric vehicles in the world. Only China's fleet of several hundred million electric motorcycles and bicycles is bigger."

- Vindu Goel and Karan Deep Singh in The New York Times.

May 2020

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At your door and on your call

Before the advent of Ola/Uber services in India, dial-in services were initiated to improve the accessibility and quality of existing IPT modes. For example, G-auto is the first and the largest organized fleet of CNG auto service of India that provides 24x7 Auto on call. It consisted of more than 10,000 auto rickshaws across Delhi, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Surat and Rajkot in 2014. Similarly, ecocabs are cycle rickshaws made available on phone call at door step through a network of call centres.

"Information Technology Service components like GPS, passenger information centre, electronic fare meter, etc. can be used effectively to increase the quality of service if plans are made keeping the improvement in service at the center and not the technological innovation"

- Shweta Vernekar, Pune.

June 2020

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The Premier IPT

Part of Mumbai's cultural, social, political and historical landscape the *Kali peeli* taxis have been the heart of Mumbai's IPT sector. The Premier Padmini taxi which once ruled the Mumbai roads is slated to phase out by June 2020 with barely 50 to 60 such taxis remaining. The Padmini model has given way to other car versions like Santro, Wagon-R, Ritz, etc. Close to 50,000 taxis in Mumbai constitute about 5% of the modal share.

"In July 2005 when there were severe floods in Mumbai, modern-day cars had problems but Padmini taxis were repaired within 24 hours and they were back on the streets to serve Mumbaikars."

- ML Quadros, leader Mumbai Taximens Union.

July 2020

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Mini-bus, maxi-benefit

The mini buses in Ranchi provide Informal Public Transport services characterized by a shared, fixed route with intermediate stops for boarding and alighting. Because of their demand-responsiveness and cost effectiveness these buses compete with formal PT systems. Ranchi has a high share of IPT at 29% with these mini buses and shared autos being the two dominant IPT modes.

"Recognize IPT as a mode of public transport. Design IPT stands to provide sheltered, safe and well-lit waiting areas with route signage and information on complaint and emergency helpline numbers."

- Sonal Shah, Kalpana Viswanath, Sonali Vyas and Shreya Gadepalli, Women and Transport in Indian Cities, ITDP and Safetipin.

August 2020

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Yellow taxis- a love letter to the City of Joy

Taxis in Kolkata ply as contract carriages with motor-cab permits granted by Regional Transport Authority (RTA), with metered fares and no fixed route. Among all para-transit transport systems in the city, the share of taxis is 17.1% which ferry around 3 lakh passengers daily through its fleet of 3,500 taxis (Reducing Footprints Report by CSE). Auto rickshaws, which came on Kolkata roads only in 1980s now create stiff competition for the taxis; a competition further aggravated by the registered app cabs.

"Almost daily, we are losing members. People are exiting the trade because running a yellow taxi has become completely unviable. The government policy of encouraging app cabs and not offering a level-playing field in terms of deciding fares is to be blamed."

- Bimal Guha, General Secretary, Bengal Taxi Association as told to Times of India.

September 2020

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The Algorithmic Mobility

Mobile or web application based shared service which provide on-demand taxi, three-wheeler or bus services by aggregating various commercial vehicles with State and All-India Permits, is the latest in the shared mobility sector. These services have witnessed rapid growth in the last decade, with only Ola and Uber, the two frontrunners having operations in more than 100 cities and an estimated combined daily ridership of approximately 30 lakh trips. However, these services are not coordinated with existing shared and public transport services in cities which results in various services competing for ridership in a few areas, and certain areas remaining underserved.

"The emergence of 'New Mobility' solutions in the form of technology based taxi aggregators have revolutionised the shared transport market. Their rapid increase in ridership and the subsequent disruption caused to the taxi and public transport markets has led Cities, globally to rethink their outlook towards shared mobility."

- Ravi Gadepalli, Dr. Caroline Fabianski, Jermoe Pourbaix, Jaspal Singh in Regulatory Frameworks for Integrated Shared Mobility Governance in India.

October 2020

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Intermediate Public Competition

The e-rickshaw versus auto-rickshaws has become an important concern in the shared mobility sector; so is the competition between the traditional cycle rickshaws and the battery-powered e-rickshaws. While e-rickshaws are supplanting auto-rickshaws in a lot of cities because they run on cheaper energy and can cram upto 4 to 6 passengers. At the same time, in terms of riding the e-rickshaws, it is mostly the cycle rickshaw wallas who are making this transition.

Mode	Fare (Rs.)	Vehicle cost (Rs.)	License	Seating capacity
E-rickshaw	10 (2-5kms)	85,000	No.	4 (if more, no fine)
Autorickshaw	25 (first 2kms)	1,70,000	License and badge mandatory	3 (if more, then fined)

Report by Ruhi Bhasin, Indian Express, New Delhi.

November 2020

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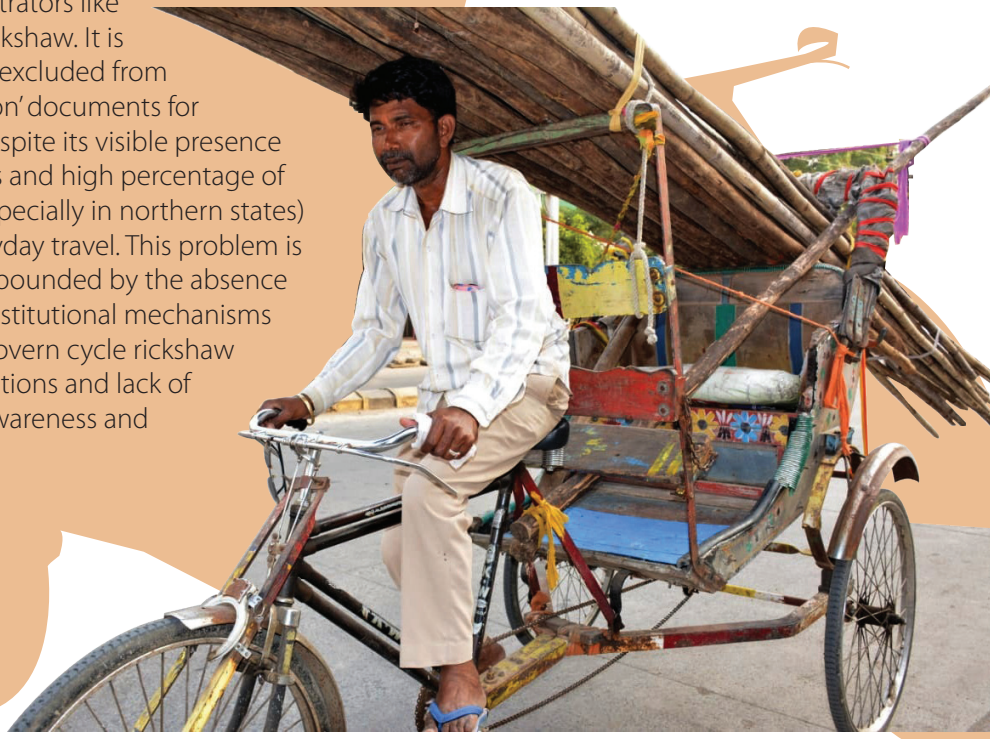
New perspective, old mode

While there is no other mode which is truly non-polluting with minimum life cycle emissions, there is also no other mode which has suffered the active neglect of policymakers, experts and administrators like cycle rickshaw. It is actively excluded from the 'vision' documents for cities despite its visible presence on roads and high percentage of usage (specially in northern states) for everyday travel. This problem is compounded by the absence of institutional mechanisms to govern cycle rickshaw operations and lack of political awareness and willingness.



"Field surveys and participatory research conducted in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand revealed the need for a comprehensive law for Cycle Rickshaws. Therefore, through SUM Net and state-wide campaigns we drafted a Cycle Rickshaw (Protection of Livelihood, Promotion of Sustainable and Eco-friendly Mobility) Act, and are now pushing for it to be tabled in legislative assemblies of both the states."

- Rajendra Ravi, Delhi.

December 2020

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