

NATIONAL CHARTER OF DEMANDS FOR URBAN BUS BASED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

SUM Net India

A well-established and efficient public transport system is an essential service for the economic and emotional well-being of a city. The inherent characteristics of the Bus transport system make it the ideal mode for meeting the huge and increasing demand for passenger transport services. Bus transport makes the most optimum use of the available road space and fossil fuel by transporting the maximum number of people per unit of road space.

In spite of this, the share of buses in India has declined to an abysmal 1.1 per cent of all registered vehicles in 2011 from 11.1 per cent in 1951.¹ At the end of the fiscal year 2014-2015, out of total registered vehicles of over 2100 lakh in India, only 0.94% were buses. Private vehicles, on the other hand, are growing at a devastatingly tremendous rate. The number of cars registered in India between 1951 and 2005 stands at 10.3 million which has only increased over the years, as almost twice that number of cars were registered in just the next 10 years. The two-wheelers in India witnessed a similar trend.²

Interestingly, according to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) [annual survey](#) of household expenditure on service and durable goods in India, the bus is the most preferred means of transport in both rural and urban areas. About 66 percent of households in rural areas and 62 percent of households in urban areas reported expenditure on this mode. This is the case even when the share of public transit in work trips has dropped to 18 percent.³

There is no scientific benchmark of how many buses a city should have, as it often depends on the shape of the city and how it is organized. However, [Service Level Benchmarks](#) (SLBs) adopted for buses by the Union Ministry of Urban Development (now Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs) considers 60 buses per lakh of population as appropriate. As per this, just the cities or urban areas in India require around 2 lakh buses.⁴ As of 2015-2016, however, a total of 1.4 lakh buses are owned by the State Road Transport Undertakings which are run in both rural and urban areas.⁵

According to the Seventh Schedule (Article 246) of the Indian Constitution, urban development, which includes urban transport, is in the State List. While in some states, the transport department undertakes urban transport planning, in others, it is the urban development or municipal administration at the urban level that performs this role. Among the central, state and local government, the responsibility of provision of urban transport services is somewhat diffused because of which it has been termed a [constitutional and institutional orphan](#). This diffusion and lack of horizontal and vertical coordination makes assigning accountability and ensuring governance ownership difficult.

In the last two decades, however, the Central Government has actively taken the [leading](#) role in Public transport through missions like JnNURM, AMRUT and now with its resolute support for Metro

Rail. As a result, despite the prevalent federal structure with regards to Urban Transport, the Central Government continues to be a significant stakeholder and intervening authority.

Therefore,

In recognition of the role that the Central Government can and must play to encourage the shift to sustainable and affordable modes of transport

We, the ***SUM Net (Sustainable Urban Mobility Network)***, put forth the following demands with a focus on intra-city bus services.

CHARTER OF DEMANDS

This Charter of Demands recognizes that:

1. Bus-based public transport (BBPT) is a basic, flexible, affordable mode of public transport which can meet the accessibility and mobility needs of all sections of society.
2. Affordable, efficient and effective bus transport service is a collective right to accessible Mobility
3. BBPT helps to save road space and energy consumed per passenger-km thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thus plays a key role in climate change mitigation commitments made by the nation
4. BBPT is a cost-efficient mode of transport
5. There is a severe deficiency in the quantity and quality of BBPT across the country
6. BBPT is needed in all types of cities, from mega metropolises to emerging towns, and can play the role of complementing mass transit modes or be independent system in itself
7. It is the commuters and their convenience, comfort and time which needs to be at the center of every policy, and operational, financial and legal decision
8. Local and state governments should be represented and must have a say in the decisions pertaining to intra-city bus services

The Charter of Demands is as follows:

1. In recognition of the importance of a public policy to ensure
 - a. effective decisions concerning the distribution of power and allocation of resources,
 - b. management and regulation of existing transportation modes and networks
 - c. public transportation is a public service, an obligation of the government towards its citizens
 - d. setting service level benchmarks
 - e. integration of land use planning

We demand a **Bus Transportation Policy** as part of the National Transportation Policy.⁶ We also demand the revision of the National Urban Transportation Policy and its integration with the National Transportation Policy.

2. In recognition of the fact that
 - a. urban transport will always require public subsidy and consistent provision of funds to ensure good quality, safe and affordable services to people
 - b. a good quality public transport service ensures overall cost-benefit to society
 - c. existing urban local bodies and states have financial limitations, while public bus agencies are financially stressed which inhibits their ability to procure buses and improve services
 - d. buses have the potential to deliver high quality frequent service akin to the metro at lower costs
 - e. funds for better bus services need to be linked with bus standards to ensure consistent and sustainable funding linked to performance and institutional reforms.

We demand a **Central Bus System Fund** for dedicated financial support to ensure long-term financial viability of operations and improved quality of service.

3. In recognition of the need for
 - a. standards in planning, bus design and provisioning of bus infrastructure and technology
 - b. urban transport to be integrated into cities' expansion and development plans, and land use transport integration
 - c. central government to set standards as per its mandate

We demand a comprehensive **Set of Standards** that will cater to the need for bus services in all types of cities we demand. We also demand that the Central Government makes it mandatory for all state governments to develop a **Comprehensive Bus Plan**.

4. In recognition of the current scenario where
 - a. State Transport Undertakings and Urban Local Bodies have limited bandwidth and capacity to plan and provide high quality urban transport services

We demand that Bus-based Public Transport **Centers of Excellence** are set-up with the mandate to proactively provide technical, operational and managerial assistance enable the set-up and improvement of BBPT systems in the country

References:

1. http://planningcommission.nic.in/reports/genrep/NTDPC_Vol_01.pdf
2. The number of two-wheelers registered in India from 1951 to 2004 was 51.9 million. Almost twice the same number of two-wheelers were registered in 10 years (2005–15)—102 million. In these 10 years, the growth in the cars and two-wheelers segments has been 10.5 per cent and 10.3 per cent, respectively. Download the full report by CSE, here-
<https://www.cseindia.org/the-urban-commute-8950>
3. <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-articles/21458/city-public-transportation-india/>
4. 60 buses per lakh population. By this metric, India would need approximately 7.2 lakh buses (total population of India is 120 crore). Also, urban India would need about 2 lakh buses for the total urban population of 37.7 crore.
5. [http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Review%20of%20the%20Performance%20of%20State%20Road%20Transport%20Undertakings%20\(SRTUs\)%20for%202015-2016.pdf](http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Review%20of%20the%20Performance%20of%20State%20Road%20Transport%20Undertakings%20(SRTUs)%20for%202015-2016.pdf)
6. The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, 2019 already mentions National Transportation Policy which the central government may develop in concurrence with states. National Transportation Policy as mentioned in the Indian Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, 2019-
<http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/210413.pdf>