As cities grow, transportation plans must head for future

Radheshyam Jadhav | TN

Pune: One of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) visions is to have cities where the public mass transport system rules. This is why projects like the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) have become so important in Pune and Ahmedabad.

But experts say that in states like Maharashtra where urban corridors are vital for the growth of cities, there is a need for more investment in urban transportation systems.

The government of India’s National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO) had identified 100 urban corridors. The Centre for Policy Research (CPR) study specifically looked at Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The findings of this study confirmed the emergence of the earlier corridors with a few new corridors.

The CPR study identified four corridors in Maharashtra—Mumbai (to Navi Mumbai), Pune-Nashik-Dhule-Aurangabad-Nagpur and Pune-Ahmednagar-Aurangabad-Jalgaon. It also indicated the likely percentage of population growth along these corridors. The picture that emerges is one of strong and spectre growth along the corridors.

The implications of the corridor development plan are that they will be multi-modal, but not well-connected functionally. Such connectivity will require careful planning and policy decisions on whether the corridors need to be continuous or not. The location of future economic activities, residential development, infrastructure, and integration of all-roads corridors would have to be planned and visualized.

For an assistant director of the state urban development department Ramchandra Gehlot (who is now with the Pune Metropolitan Planning Committee’s (PMPC) landuse committee) said that the project needs to be established as a metropolitan development authority (PMDA).

The study on urbanisation. Another study by the ministry of urban development, the total requirement of funds for urban transport in the year identified cities by 2020 is estimated at Rs 4,26,360 crore.

The gap between the investment demand and likely availability of funds from budgetary sources of central, state and urban local bodies is wide. While it is difficult to ascertain the actual amount due to uncertainty of proposals from these government bodies, they have been advised to set up a dedicated urban transport fund at the state and city levels to mitigate the gap.

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He said the civic bodies developed a comprehensive plan even when those were in poor shape. The city has about 20 km cycle tracks and the civic body has used about Rs 31 crore to construct them. However, there is no proper planning and lack of coordination between the various civic bodies. The civic body does not have enough funds to promote cycle tracks. Non-motorised transport and public transport are the only solutions for the city’s problem, he said.

Pune is increasingly becoming a pedestrian-friendly city even though 87 per cent of the people walk to their destinations while 11 per cent use the cycle. But this 87 per cent non-motorised transport is the most ignored in the city planning and risk is taken because they have to share the same right of way with the motorised modes.

This grim picture has been put forth in the concept note for a Comprehensive Transport Policy (CTP) for the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).

Pedestrians are the most important component of traffic, transportation and one that is the most ignored, the concept note says.

Roads are designed and built with motor vehicles in mind. Not enough consideration is given to other users like pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Heritage sites and open spaces are increasingly being sacrificed to accommodate the needs of private auto vehicles, it adds.

A recent study in Mumbai concluded that more than 80% of space in the city’s arterial junctions are occupied by cars, with only around 40% for passengers. Buses at the same junctions occupy just 8% of road space and carry 14% of the passengers.

Moreover, a more 50% increase in the number of bus and designated bus lanes can ease congestion and pollution at such junctions or on arterial roads in Mumbai, the study says.

Nagar's CDP says that 27 per cent of the population use public transport. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) findings on how well people are using opportunities for public transport in India found that in most Indian cities, there is a lack of coordination between two-wheeler and public transport.

In Pune, pedestrians have come up at public places like gardens, footpaths and even inside housing societies, bringing back from political outfits.

Walkers have little space on many widened roads

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Pune. A sizeable number of people in Pune, Mumbai, Nashik and Nanded walk or cycle to their destinations. These are among the 85 identified cities which have awarded funds through the JNNURM to improve public transport. In the process, experts said, they have become pedestrian unfriendly.

Union minister of Urban Development Jyotiraditya Scindia recently directed the states to make adequate provision for dedicated footpaths for the pedestrians and cycle users wherever roads are being built or widened. "The central government’s initiative to promote public transport and create facilities for pedestrians and cycle users is clearly a laudable step. But the fact remains that the cities which have awarded funds for public transport and have promised to create pedestrian-friendly facilities have done very little," said Rajkesh Mehta, president of Cycle Prathnit in Pune.

He said the civic bodies had developed a comprehensive plan even when those were in poor shape. The city has about 19 km cycle tracks and the civic body has used about Rs 31 crore to construct them. However, there is no proper planning and lack of coordination between the various civic bodies. The civic body does not have enough funds to promote cycle tracks. Non-motorised transport and public transport are the only solutions for the city’s problem, he said.

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