

## Press Release

11 April 2011

### **Proposed Bus Rapid Transit System in Pune Region violates agreement made by PMC, PCMC and PMPML with Ministry of Urban Development, Govt. of India.**

Over the last several weeks there has been great confusion regarding the plans for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit system in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. This has ranged from whether the buses will have dedicated corridors, to the placement of the bus stations and consequently the design of the buses. There has also been debate about the formation of a separate entity to manage BRT.

Various NGOs and professionals who have supported the idea of BRT as a viable, equitable and cost-effective solution for transportation in the Pune Metropolitan area, have also consistently insisted that the planning authorities must meet the minimum criteria of a BRT system and follow a proper and comprehensive procedure for planning and implementation, and do so in a transparent manner.

The plan to have “mixed BRT”, meaning that the buses will not have dedicated lanes, for as much as 57% (67 km) of the total planned 118 km of BRT in Pune, is not only a mockery of the very concept of BRT but also totally against the explicit agreement made by the Pune Municipal Corporation with the Ministry of Urban Development of the Govt. of India, under whose JnNURM scheme, BRT has been funded.

A meeting chaired by Mr. S. K. Lohia, Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, was held on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the Council Hall in Pune, and attended by top officials from PMC, PCMC, PMPML, consultants from both IL&FS and UMTC (who have made the current “mixed BRT” plans), experts from ITDP (who are currently advising PMPML) and representatives from the World Bank. At this meeting, it was clearly stated and agreed that the Central Government funding for the BRT projects in the twin cities is subject to dedicated bus lanes on all corridors and not allowing any other vehicles (in fact, not even non-BRT buses!) to ply on it. Furthermore, it was agreed that width of the roads cannot be a limiting factor for dedicated lanes, since one can have designs that will allow for a dedicated bus lane on all the selected corridors for Pune. This makes the demand for road widening completely unnecessary. On the issue of street parking, it was agreed that parking should be removed where required, and charged as per guidelines of the Ministry, which essentially recommend high parking charges which are graded.

In light of these clearly articulated provisions, which were agreed to by officials from PMC as well as the consultants for the project, there seems to be no room for dilution of the BRT being planned.

Furthermore, we strongly believe that only a system implemented as per these guidelines will actually deliver the quality, convenience and speed, which

people of Pune fully deserve and only if this is done will people opt to use BRT instead of their own personal vehicles. As the BRT network becomes operational, the need for people to use their own vehicles, and therefore the need for so much parking itself will be significantly reduced. Off-street and some limited on-street parking facilities (charged appropriately) can cater to the needs that will still exist.

There is clearly a need to put in place a dedicated team for management of BRT, as has been done in Ahmedabad. Such a BRT Management Cell must be headed by a professional with requisite expertise and a proven track record and must be given a term that lasts until the full network of BRT in both Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad is fully operational.

Finally, it is absolutely essential for both the Municipal Corporations to take public into confidence and share all the plans and time lines. The BRT Management Cell must also undertake a comprehensive public awareness program. Such public outreach programs have been conducted very effectively in Ahmedabad, and this has contributed to the success of the BRT in that city.

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