Highlights- Urbanlogue - S02 E02 - 26th May, 2020 at 3pm IST

Instant street interventions to expand space for walking and cycling

Summary *(Link to full Video)*

Ms. Aswathy Dilip, Senior Programme Manager of India Programme of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), lead the session by welcoming the speakers, panellists and participants and inviting Mr. Kunal Kumar IAS, Joint-Secretary, Smart Cities Mission (SCM), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to give the opening remarks.

The three presentations that followed were by: Ms. Aswathy Dilip on 'Creating safe streets and public spaces in India'; Mr. J Sravan Kumar IAS, Municipal Commissioner, Coimbatore, on 'Implementing tactical urbanism interventions'; and Mr. Peter Broytman, The Senate Department of Environment, Transport and Climate Protection, Berlin on 'The Berlin cycling journey'. The final session was a panel discussion and Q&A, moderated by Ms. Aswathy Dilip with Mr. Kunal Kumar, Mr. J Sravan Kumar, Mr. Peter Broytman, Ms. K Vijayalakshmi, Managing Director, Hyderabad Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority, Mr. Raj Cherubal, CEO, Chennai Smart City Limited and Ms. Nupur Gupta, Senior Transport Specialist, World Bank, as panellists

The second episode had 1153 registrants from over 130 Indian cities and 25 International cities. The participants from various universities, organizations, media houses, and city corporations raised over 500 questions. This webinar is the second one in the series organised by the Smart Cities Mission in collaboration with the ITDP India Programme aimed to help Indian city officials develop robust transport solutions in response to the pandemic. The Transport & ICT Group of the World Bank and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) are knowledge partners of the webinar series.

Introduction - Mr. Kunal Kumar IAS, Joint Secretary, Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs *(Link to Video)*

- Walkable cities are healthier and economically more vibrant.
- It is society's choice whether a cyclist or a private motor vehicle has power on the street. This choice is not driven by one individual or one organization, but by the entire social political environment in the city. A collective consciousness needs to develop amongst all stakeholders to make that happen.

- Everyone is aware of the importance of walking and cycling, and its implications for climate. Now it's about translating this understanding into action

Creating safe streets and public spaces in India - Ms. Aswathy Dilip, Senior Programme Manager, ITDP India Programme *(Link to Video)*

Four important challenges:
1. Our cities lack sufficient walking space especially as we now try to maintain physical distancing.
2. As public transport restarts with reduced capacity, it is important to identify other alternate affordable and sustainable modes of transport
3. High footfall zones like markets are also extremely vulnerable and must be made safer.
4. Recreational spaces are important because mental health has also been deteriorating in our cities.

Cities like Paris, London, Berlin, Bogota, and Mexico City are embracing quick cost effective techniques to ensure safe walking and cycling through:

1. **Expanding footpaths to ensure physical distancing** on commercial streets, high footfall zones, and around transit nodes
2. **Promoting cycling as an alternative mode for short and medium trips to reduce the strain on public transport -** Pop-up cycle lanes, slow zones in residential neighbourhood, expanding cycle sharing and rental systems, and declaring bike shops as essential businesses
3. **Managing crowds in high footfall zones, such as markets by -** decentralisation of services, expanding markets into adjoining streets, and by controlling access to the streets
4. **Repurposing streets as social spaces through** scheduled road closures and timed management of traffic flow

Political leadership in cities, such as the Mayor of London or the Prime Minister of New Zealand are also actively promoting these modes of transport through communication and outreach programs.

Implementing tactical urbanism interventions - Mr. J Sravan Kumar IAS, Municipal Commissioner, Coimbatore *(Link to Video)*

- The city has planned a 30km eco-mobility corridor, 7 kms of model complete streets, and a 300km NMT corridor with a dedicated cycling lane
- **Tactical Urbanism (TU)** - these are temporary measures, which are modified after participation and feedback and then made permanent.
  1. Crowded areas of the city, which have many pedestrians and public transport users, historical areas, and areas with mixed land use and density can implement TUs.
  2. Interventions have shown that traffic flow should be continuous, at a constant pace, in a streamlined manner and should prioritize users equitably.
  3. Since street users are mostly pedestrians and cyclists, more space must be allocated for them

- Post COVID-19, there must be safety measures for footpaths in retail and market areas - awareness should be done through campaigns.
- Using surveys and stakeholder consultations, these interventions will enhance community participation and can also be embedded in the long-term plans, ensuring that our cities become safer.

'The Berlin cycling journey' - Mr. Peter Broytman, The Senate Department of Environment, Transport and Climate Protection, Berlin *(Link to Video)*

- Unique mobility act in Berlin makes it mandatory to have bike lanes on every major street.
- The lanes are protected from illegal parking and cars using steel bollards, making it safe for cyclists.
- Streets are usually occupied by parking, leaving very little space for cyclists and motorists to move together safely.
- Since funding is available and bike lanes are inexpensive, the process to set these up can be made faster by resolving administrative issues and through extensive planning and participation.
- COVID-19 led to ~70% decrease in use of public transport, forcing the city to build proper bicycle infrastructure within weeks.
- It took only 2 weeks to implement 3.5 km of pop-up cycle lanes which were widely used immediately after installation.
- These are temporary measures but it is a permanent reallocation of space on streets. The bike lanes will become permanent by the end of the year.
- Although the city took away over 200 parking spots by building cycleways, there was a positive reaction from 90% of the people.

Key points discussed in the Panel Discussion and the Q&A session *(Link to Panel Discussion Video)*

Ms. Aswathy Dilip (moderator), *Senior Programme Manager, ITDP India Programme*

- Cities seek guidance on walking and cycling from the national government.
- New Zealand is the first country to fund tactical urbanism interventions. They've implemented a national non-motorised transport policy. Cities are invited to bid for funding to expand sidewalks and to carve out cycle lanes.
- Gary Hamel once said, 'Why are we so often satisfied with "best practice" when we should be inventing bold new practices?' Maybe it's time we close some streets for cars, to create dense networks for pedestrians and cyclists. We could start by creating hundreds of kilometers of tactical urbanism interventions for walking and cycling."

Ms. K Vijayalakshmi, Managing Director, Hyderabad UMTA

- As the lockdown is lifted, there is an increase in two-wheelers on the roads.
- Cities should plan for immediate, medium term as well as long term measures.
- The city is planning for a 120 kms network of improved walking and cycling infrastructure
- Multiple decision making agencies and the lack of standardisation is one of the main issues in implementing projects An UMTA can help standardise the practice.
- There should be an NMT policy for each city and state to inspire them to take action on this front.

Mr. Raj Cherubal, *CEO, Chennai Smart City Limited*

- Chennai is using the success from previous projects like the Pedestrian Plaza and Bicycle Sharing system to leverage change for big pan-city projects such as the Mega Streets project.
- While tactical urbanism is used to convince the people how these projects are practical, we need to move from tactical to strategic planning.
- There are 2 stumbling blocks in this process -
  a. On street parking - It is important for cities to have a parking management system and Chennai has recently implemented a smart parking project.
  b. Vending - It generates jobs and is important to the economy, especially in the COVID scenario. Going ahead, there needs to be a formal vending management system for everyone to access space on footpaths equitably.

Mr. Kunal Kumar, IAS, *Joint Secretary, Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs*

- Tactical urbanism interventions are built into the design of the Smart Cities Mission (SCM).
- Guidelines and policies for streets are usually created by incorporating learnings from projects in various Indian cities.
- Peer to peer learning can create an environment to share and implement ideas under the SCM.
- SCM gives out awards to recognise change and to bring these efforts into the national agenda
- The Mission has adequate funding for tactical urbanism and will not require a separate fund.
- City officials and changemakers need to use the scope, funding, and creativity of the SCM to imagine cities better, take stakeholders along, and create consciousness to ensure that we move forward

Ms. Nupur Gupta, *Senior Transport Specialist, World Bank*

- The World Bank is invested in funding and in pushing the ideas of sustainable urban mobility through integrated interventions. The World Bank will provide funding, knowledge, and technical support in fully pushing this opportunity for India.
- By promoting NMT during this time, we can achieve - decongesting of public transport, lesser shift to personal modes, safe commuting options, and investment in temporary opportunities that can be leveraged in the long-term.In India, exploring NMT is imperative for captive users of public transport who do not have other alternatives.

- To make these interventions permanent - Use currently empty streets to reallocate space and leverage public opinion to change political opinion. Funding will not be a constraint if we clearly show how these are sustainable options.
- While fewer women use cycles, we must understand if it's due to the female labour participation, or clothing, or inconvenience of cycles. The government can provide cycling subsidies to women and children to ensure this transformation.

Mr. Peter Broytman, *The Senate Department of Environment, Transport and Climate Protection, Berlin*

- The Berlin Mobility law, enforced in 2015-16, by a people's referendum, mandates cycling infrastructure on all roads.
- Public consultations are held, from time to time, to seek people's inputs into the design of cycle tracks. However, it's been observed that more car users attend public consultation than those who benefit from cycle tracks, as they the latter as a threat to free parking.
- Narrow streets must be dealt with differently. Here were some suggestions:
  - Narrow streets can be open to only residents of the street, and not for thoroughfare.
  - Some of them can be closed for cars. The network for cars is denser than for walking and cycling. So pedestrians and cyclists can be prioritised on some streets over cars.
  - As cities get denser, utilising road space efficiently is key. Parking is the most ineffective use of road space and it must be priced and managed effectively.

Mr. J Sravan Kumar IAS, *Municipal Commissioner, Coimbatore*

- There is coordination with various government departments like the Highways departments on different projects. Since walking and cycling projects are taken up under the Smart Cities Mission, there would be no objections from the Highways department.
- It was a pleasant surprise that we got no objection from street vendors and small shop owners when we did the tactical urbanism because they realised that wider footpaths benefitted their business and they became our champions.
- We want to take non-motorised transport to the people in a step-by-step manner. It is well implemented in European countries like Germany. Once the city gets a feel of it, then everyone would be waiting for it and then it would make things easier to implement in other areas as well.