

REVIVAL OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Abstract

Public transportation plays a key role in the progressive development and well-being of society. It has been the most economical and efficient source of communication and social mobility. Over the years public transportation is faced with challenges of congestion, grid locks, rider parking concerns, absence of fuel-efficient vehicles and increased road fatalities, thereby adversely affecting socio-economic development. Efficient public transportation needs to be established by specifying various types of public transport network designs. The present study aimed at the revival of public transport system in Jammu and Kashmir addressing specific regional mobility concerns. Jammu and Kashmir with distinct topography, climatic adversaries and growing population demands, needs effective and affordable accessibility. The study analyzed various government initiatives taken for revival of public transport system and suggested steps for effective execution of these initiatives.

Keywords: Public transport system, social mobility, accessibility, socio-economic development, ring-road mechanism.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Public transportation plays a key role in the progressive development and well-being of society. It has been the most economical and efficient source of communication and social mobility. Due to rapid growth of population, there is increase in the demand of mobility. If the transport system is not able to meet the demands, it will lead to increase the waiting times and congestion in public transport and roads (Samek Lodovici and Torchio, 2015).

In recent years, the public transport system in urban areas has gained much more importance. The economic and environmental situation can be made better by enhancing mass mobility and by connecting resources to destinations (Bok and Kwon, 2016). The Public transport can be more attractive by facilitating "Door to door mobility" and development of transportation services is an important factor of social quality (Jackiva Yatskiv et al., 2017). Since the poor access to transportation leads to social exclusion, transport and land use policies, focus on accessibility and enable the people to reach their destinations at reasonable costs and times (Hawas et al., 2016). Transportation, public health and economic conditions of an area can be uplifted by shifting the private transport system to public transport system (Elias and Shiftan, 2012). This shifting is possible when the public transport is widely available and accessible to the public (Muhammad Atiullah Saif et al., 2017).

Jammu and Kashmir with distinct topography, climatic adversaries and growing population demands needs effective and affordable accessibility. Strenuous efforts are needed for smooth public movement. Though, various measures were taken by successive regimes for development of transport sector but with ever-increasing population and lackadaisical implementation approach, optimum public transport system is still a distinct dream. This impacted adversely on economic development and social mobility. Hence, the study aims to explore avenues for revival of this core sector of socio-economic development.

II. CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Public transport system in Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing both infrastructural and operational challenges for its survival and up gradation due to its topographical features. There are alarming challenges in public transport system which need to be tackled at earliest in order to uplift and upgrade the socio-economic development of the Jammu and Kashmir. Main challenges faced by public transport system in Jammu and Kashmir are listed below:

1. Distinct topographical concerns like availability of least number of all-weather connectivity road and train infrastructures, frequent road damages due to inclement climatic conditions.
2. Un-organized road widening policies disproportionate to ever increasing population leading to frequent traffic snarls.
3. Absence of intracity metro rail and hyperloop services resulting in time and cost loss.
4. Increase in private motorization due to lack of sufficient public transport resulting in alarming increase of road traffic accidents.
5. Absence of fuel-efficient vehicles posing serious environmental concerns like poor air quality.

6. Least availability of parking slots, poor maintenance of traffic signals and absence of GIS mapping leading to traffic chaos.

III. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR THE REVIVAL OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Over the years, successive governments have taken various initiatives for revival and up gradation of public transport system keeping in view the rapid population growth and need for better mobility. Some of the initiatives which government has taken are listed as below:

1. To address issues of distinct topography and enable all weather connectivity, development of alternate national highways, train services and tunnels have been undertaken.
2. Various inter-district roads have been widened.
3. Proposal for construction of metro services under mass rapid transit system has been approved.
4. Policy for purchase of new fleet of public transport as well as subsidizing the replacement of old vehicles.
5. Electric buses and E-rickshaws as eco-friendly transportation have been purchased by government.
6. In order to address the parking issues particularly in urban areas, several multi-layered parking facilities are at various stages of construction.
7. To tackle with road accidents Jammu and Kashmir administration has recently launched comprehensive emergency medical response system (CEMRS). GIS enabled ambulances are made available through this system for timely intervention to save the precious lives.

IV. FINDINGS

During the course of research study, it was observed that although various initiatives have been taken by successive governments for development of public transport system, there still exists scope for revival of the core sector. It was found that all weather connectivity across Jammu and Kashmir is still a distinct dream as construction of highways, train services and tunnels is either incomplete despite crossing several deadlines, resulting in cost over-runs also. The inter-district roads although widened but lack proper maintenance which has often led to fatal accidents. Least focus has been given to rural connectivity forcing several hilly areas like Uri, Tanghdar, Karnah remain cut-off from rest of the world for most of the year and intracity road infrastructure is also in shambles. The proposed metro services under mass rapid transit system has not moved beyond conception stage. Purchase of electric buses and E-rickshaws to address environmental concerns has been a welcome step. However, the purpose of such services is losing its significance due to lesser availability of such vehicles and absence of widespread charging slots. A remarkable finding of the study is non-availability of parking spaces as the proposal for development of parking areas suffered administrative apathy leading to chaos on the streets and fatal accidents (Table 1). Although government launched CEMRS but there are less number of ambulances of such kind and lack of professional and trained staff to run this system.

Table 1: Accident Cases (2020)

ACCIDENTS FOR THE YEAR 2020										
Sl.No	Name of District	Type of Accident				Total	No. of persons involved			Total Injured
		Fatal (F)	GI	MI	NI		Killed	GI	MI	
1	Srinagar	44	0	209	22	275	45	0	275	275
2	Ganderbal	13	70	22	0	105	13	103	36	139
3	Budgam	9	4	114	1	128	9	4	153	157
4	Anantnag	36	10	203	16	265	38	44	280	324
5	Kulgam	20	0	107	20	147	21	0	168	168
6	Pulwama	13	12	36	4	65	13	20	63	83
7	Shopian	2	20	2	6	30	2	23	3	26
8	awantipora	20	0	65	6	91	22	0	91	91
9	Baramulla	20	21	158	13	212	20	24	231	255
10	Bandipora	12	0	57	1	70	12	0	101	101
11	Kupwara	14	108	32	4	158	15	151	45	196
12	Handwara	15	2	92	12	121	15	2	151	153
13	Sopore	14	28	57	8	107	16	35	93	128
14	Railways Kmr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Jammu	88	758	0	128	974	92	1117	0	1117
16	Samba	42	194	26	41	303	51	293	37	330
17	Kathua	63	4	262	19	348	75	7	464	471
18	Udhampur	52	244	0	60	356	66	465	0	465
19	Reasi	20	108	0	15	143	32	206	0	206
20	Doda	26	0	119	52	197	36	26	181	207
21	Kishtawar	11	2	43	11	67	28	3	94	97
22	Ramban	43	118	0	39	200	51	242	0	242
23	Poonch	24	81	37	23	165	25	160	51	211
24	Rajouri	22	262	0	49	333	31	452	0	452
25	Railways Jmu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL J&K		623	2046		55	4860	728	3377	2517	5894
				1641	0					

Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India.

V. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study suggested that there should be proper implementation of the government policies proposed for the revival of public transport system and apart from this many steps are to be taken for immediate redressal of the problems and issues related to the sector. Some of the suggestions are listed below:

1. Timely completion of the pending projects. The projects like ring-road, intercity metro project under mass rapid transit system must be completed within a stipulated time limit.
2. Proper utilization of the funds proposed for different policies should be ensured in a stipulated time and the cost overrun concept should be abolished to bring economy and efficiency.

3. The use of skilled, professional and trained man power should be made necessary for proper execution of the projects and a provision of capacity development training must be imparted among the existing staff.
4. The electric buses and E-rikshaws should be made available at larger scales for proper mobility.
5. There must be availability of critical care facilities and trauma hospitals to meet any unforeseen emergency like road accidents.
6. CEMRS be available at a wider range to tackle with medical emergencies.
7. Integrated approach of various administrative departments is needed for effective execution of different projects related to transport system revival and maintenance of roads. It will help to streamline the overall development of public transport system in particular and of society as a whole.

In current scenario where the problem and issues related to public transport system in Jammu and Kashmir are mounting day by day, it is required that government must adopt constructive strategy for the revival of public transport system in Jammu and Kashmir which will lead to socio-economic development of the society and this is the prime concern for revival of public transport system.

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