

URBAN TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate change is one of the biggest challenges to sustainable development. It is pertinent that policies emphasise on measures that are conducive to mitigating Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and to facilitating adaptation to changes that are likely to take place.

Transport sector is a key contributor to global GHG emissions. According to IPCC AR5 (2014), the sector accounted for 7.0 GtCO₂eq of direct GHG emissions and was responsible for approximately 23 % of totalenergy-related CO₂ emissions in 2010. It is also estimated that at this rate and with no additional policies and measures, emissions could increase at a faster rate than emissions from the other energy end-use sectors and just double to reach around 12 GtCO₂eq per year by 2050. In India alone, transport sector emissions in 2007 were estimated to be 142.04 MtCO₂eq accounting for approximately 13% of total energy related CO₂ emissions (MoEF, 2010), of which majority of emissions were from road transport. These emissions will further increase given that India is witnessing rapid economic growth and owing to dramatic increase in urbanisation leading to multi-fold increase in number of registered vehicles in the country.

While the transport sector is the second largest contributor to GHG emissions in India and emissions in the sector are still continuing to grow, the sector is struggling to meet the mobility demands of the country required for its economic growth. Besides the challenges to provide access to affordable means of mobility, the sector is also grappling with issues like public health & safety, air pollution, congestion and loss of productive time.

Some of these challenges are likely to be aggravated by future climate change as it will impact the urban transport sector in more ways than one. For example, extreme rainfall events could disrupt transport networks, causing waterlogging and hardship to travellers; extreme events and floods can harm the infrastructure imposing higher economic costs and financial burden on the economy. Given that the sector plays a vital role in economic growth of the country, it is only important to ensure a resilient urban transport system that also aims to provide access to affordable mobility means consistent with future climate change. First step in this direction would be to constrain GHG emissions and to integrate climate proofing into urban transport planning and policy process thereby synergising development, mitigation and adaptation concerns.

A new research project supported by the Research Council of Norway titled 'CLIMATRANS – Coping with Climate: Assessing Transport Sector Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation for Indian Cities' will be examining the GHG emissions contributions of transport sector in cities in India. It will also assess the climate change impacts in cities in India. The project will focus on three large cities- Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. The project thereby aims to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies for the transport sector, crucial to the framing of transport policy towards sustainable development. The Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2015 will feature a thematic track titled 'Urban Transport and Climate Change: Policy Challenges for Indian Cities' to introduce the project to stakeholders and highlight key policy challenges faced by urban transport in Indian cities in the context of climate change.

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