

The perception survey: Bus rapid transit system (BRT)

A joint random perception survey of commuters traveling on the capital's first BRT corridor, done by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Delhi Greens and the Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN), has found overwhelming support for the corridor from pedestrians, cyclists, bus drivers and commuters and – surprisingly – also from car and two-wheeler drivers. The findings of the survey were released by CSE today. These findings will also be shared with the Delhi government.

Between April 30 to May 5, 2008, CSE and Delhi Greens volunteers fanned out daily on the corridor, randomly stopping and asking commuters what difference – positive or negative – was the BRT making to their daily commutes. Since there have been talks of scrapping the project, the surveyors also asked whether commuters wanted the BRT to continue.

Of the 1,500 people surveyed in this period, 55 per cent were bus commuters, 23 per cent were cyclists and pedestrians, 16 per cent were car and two-wheeler commuters and the rest constituted a mixed category of those using autos etc.

We would like to share with you the key findings of this survey:

- As much as 83 per cent of all commuters are happy with the dedicated lane system of BRT and want that the BRT system should be continued in the city.
- The major support comes from bus commuters and pedestrians/cyclists — a whopping 88-91 per cent of these respondents said that they are happy with the BRT system and want that it should be extended to more areas of Delhi. Pedestrians have asked for safer pedestrian crossing.
- Contrary to popular belief, only 8 per cent of the car and two-wheeler commuters said that BRT should be scrapped and 73 per cent agreed that the project can be continued.
- When asked whether they will shift from their personal vehicles to better, faster and high frequency buses equipped with AC and GPS running on the BRT corridor -- 26 per cent of car and two-wheeler answered positively. However, they are seemingly reluctant to use the BRT corridor now because it extends for a mere 5.8 km. They are more willing to shift if its network covers most of the city's roads and gets connected with the Metro.
- Many of car and two-wheeler commuters also said that jams on the MV lanes and at intersections should be reduced and more space should be allocated to them. Pedestrians have asked for safer crossing facilities.
- Most commuters wanted the BRT corridor to be connected to the Delhi Metro and introduction of feeder buses on the corridor. There were also suggestions of cycles to be made available on rent on the stretch.

While there is an acknowledgement of the teething troubles that BRT is having, there is also support for the system in the city. It is significant that around 60 per cent of commuters on the corridor use buses, while cars actually carry less than 20 per cent of the people. Available estimates for key junctions on the corridor show that on the BRT corridor, 200 buses carry 15,000 passengers on an average during the morning rush hour. Compared to this, the corridor has about 5,000 cars carrying merely 5,767 passengers, and 4,000 two-wheelers carrying 4,000 people in the same period.

The survey's findings reinforce the argument that BRT system is an important part of the solution to pollution and congestion nightmare. Delhi, once considered to be one of the most polluted cities in the world, has managed to arrest some of its runaway pollution. However, it might soon lose this war if a future roadmap for pollution control, based on public transport, is not set immediately. Commuter friendly BRT system would have to be the key elements in such a roadmap. The city is running out of road space to accommodate the exponential increase in car and two-wheelers. Despite having maximum land area under road network per capita road availability is coming down, congestion is increasing and today the city could end up losing all the gains.

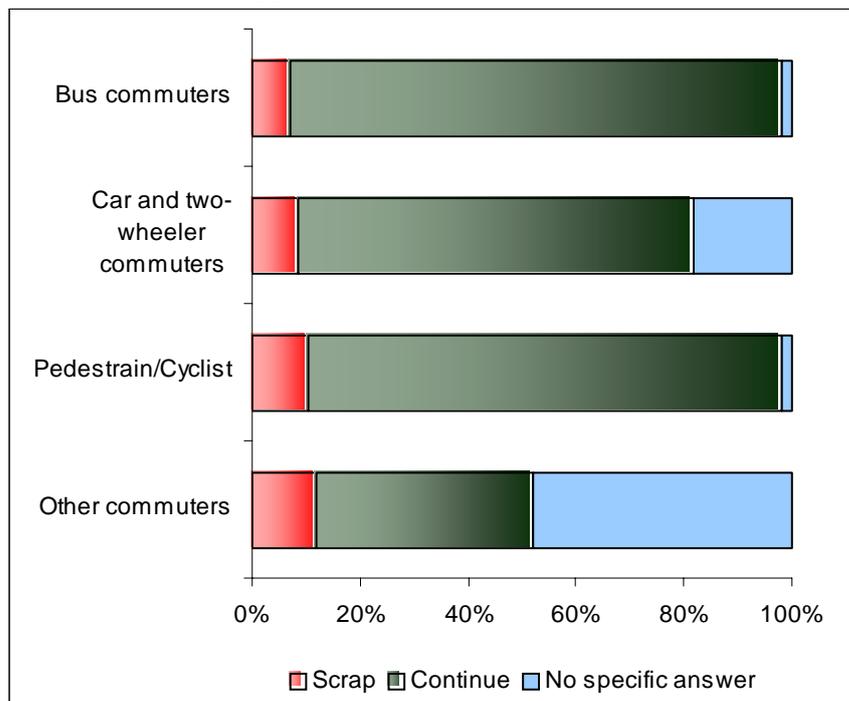
Better and more integrated public transportation service can help Delhi to meet its challenge. Affordable, cost-effective and space-efficient buses are an integral part of the public transport strategy. They do occupy twice the road space of a car, but can carry 40 times the number of passengers. They can reach areas with lower travel demand, where a rail system might not work. Buses are already the mode of commute for a large majority. About 8.7 million people travel by bus in Delhi every day; the Metro transports about 0.5 million commuters daily. These are much larger numbers than those traveling by personal vehicles.

The concept of BRT has clearly shown that it is about equitable sharing of road space by all road users – car and two-wheeler users, bus users, pedestrians and cyclists, that makes space utilization more efficient and smooth. Growing congestion hampers the performance of a bus transport system. Congestion leads to slower turn-around and affects service frequency and optimum utilisation. Buses require more time to complete one journey. Giving buses a right of way will help them to improve speed, comfort, accessibility, convenience and costs.

BRT is a big part of the solution and should not be abandoned. Teething problems faced during its implementation can be soon overcome. Delhi will have to learn from its experience and do even better in the remaining corridor in the interest of the commuting majority who has voted for the BRT system.

We look forward to your support.

Should BRT be scrapped?



Source: CSE-Delhi Greens-IYCN survey