



# HUA Minister Shri Hardeep Singh Puri seeks review of FSI/FAR norms in mega cities

## Voices concern over disconnect between urban land use and transport planning

### Minister releases new Metro Policy; urges States to set up UMTA for mega cities quickly

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Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs today directed review of FSI and FAR norms in mega cities to ensure better utilization of scarce urban land resources in the context of rapid urbanization in the country. He addressed senior officials from different states and chief executives of Metro Rail Corporations from across the country at a National Dissemination Workshop on New Metro Rail Policy here today. The Minister released the new policy which was approved by the Union Cabinet last month.

Shri Puri referred to the recommendation of NITI Ayog for relaxation of Floor Space Index (FSI) and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) norms in urban areas to give a push to urban development and asked the Ministry officials to take up a time bound review of these norms in all the 53 cities with a population of one million and above each. He also suggested a similar review for State Capitals with less than million population each in due course. The review to be taken up in consultation with States and cities is to cover an assessment of the existing norms and to what extent it could be enhanced. The Minister also directed to identify short and long term interventions to be taken up in respect of improving infrastructure pertaining to ensuring water supply and sewerage systems, road spaces etc.

Expressing concern over poor public transport infrastructure in cities, Shri Puri stressed on the need for integrated land use and transport planning with the objective of promoting compact and dense urban development to minimize the use of personal motorized transport.

Referring to NITI Ayog Report, Shri Puri said "In 1984, Shanghai had only 3.65 sq.mt of space per person. Through liberal use of FSI, despite increase in population since 1984, the city had increased the available space to 34 sq.mt per person. In contrast, in 2009, Mumbai on average had just 4.50 sq.mt of space per person". The Minister further noted that increasing the availability of land in urban areas is critical to meet the demand for affordable housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).

Shri Puri noted that compact, dense and vertical urban densification is beneficial to both the citizens given the rising demand for urban spaces and urban mass transit systems being developed and proposed to be developed.

Expressing concern over what he called the crisis like situation with regard to urban mobility, Shri Puri urged all the States to set up Unified Metropolitan Transport Authorities in all the 53 cities with over million population each to ensure integration among all modes of transport on a regional basis. He voiced concern over only 14 such cities setting up UMTA so far though the National Urban Transport Policy in 2006 prescribed UMTA.

Stating that Metro Rail is not an end in itself to solve urban mobility problems but only one of the means, the Minister called for a holistic approach with proper integration of various modes of transport based on local context.

Shri Puri noted that "It is paradoxical that while the developed countries and particularly, the Nordic countries like Norway are going back to cycles, developing countries including India are relying more on cars". He said investment in developing cycling and walking pathways makes good urban investment. Referring to his first posting in Tokyo, Shri Puri recalled that even CEOs of leading companies use metros and other means of public transport there.

The Minister said "It is difficult to imagine Delhi without Metro Rail which is now carrying about 30 lakh passengers every day". Shri Puri said that the new Metro Rail Policy provides useful guidance on making viable metro rail proposals since sanctioning an unviable proposal pulls down the whole system of a city.

Referring to the explosion of vehicles on the roads, Shri Puri noted that there were 825 million cars in the world in 2010 and the same is expected to rise to 1,600 million in 2035 and to 2,100 million in 2050 which has the potential of bringing cities to a grinding halt.

FSI is the ratio of a building's total floor area to the size of the piece of the land on which it is built. In Indian cities, it is generally about 1.50, which is said to be on the lower side given the needs of rapid urbanization. NITI Ayog in their report noted that a comparison of Mumbai and Shanghai illustrates the deleterious effects of restrictive FSI.

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