

Summary of the Article "Crisis of Public Transport in India"

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(The content of the summary is relevant to bus transportation systems in the Indian cities even though the article also talks a bit about rail transportation systems.)

The Problems

The rapid growth in urban population has led to strain on the transportation infrastructure and services. Most bus services are undependable and uncoordinated, and the buses are overcrowded. Buying new buses is not feasible due to financial constraints. Public bus transportation systems are plagued with problems like overstaffing and adamant labour unions resisting any changes that would disadvantage them. The systems also suffer because they have to cover even the less profitable routes, if only to a limited extent, to provide a comprehensive coverage. Government policies encourage residential development along the city periphery, in the suburbs and along the highways connecting the city to the rest of the country by limiting the floor space index inside the city. The residents of these areas tend to use private vehicles to commute to the city due to a limited availability of bus services on their routes, which only adds to the traffic problem of already congested roads in the city. Most Indian cities have a little proportion of their total land area devoted to roads which is further decreased by parked vehicles and street hawkers.

Possible Solutions

We are limited by the available resources (buses, roads, capital). The solutions have to make the best use of what is available. Let us consider a couple possible solutions.

- Designing bus routes so as to minimize fare for the passengers while maintaining a reasonable margin for the bus service operator which would help cover the labour and maintenance expenses.
- Policies such as traffic priority for buses could be implemented.
- Privatization of the bus transport services might help.
- For people living in the suburbs and along the highways, minibus shuttle services connecting their location to the city could help discourage use of private vehicles by them.
- While gradually improving the bus transportation system in the city, use of private vehicles should be discouraged by levying taxes. The tax money could be used to further improve the bus transportation system.