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To decongest roads, BMC comes up with cycle-track plan

In a city with more than 17 lakh vehicles congesting roads and the number rising at 5.10 per cent annually, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is hoping to offer some relief by introducing localised bicycle tracks for covering shorter distances.

Not discouraged by the failure of a similar project in neighbouring Thane, the civic administration wants to encourage cycling as an alternative mode of transportation. Also on the cards is a redesigning of all major traffic junctions for smoother traffic movement once the cycle lanes come up.

The BMC is in the process of finalising a consultant to study the concept alongside an areawise traffic management plan. About 10 firms having international partners are willing to study the proposal. The report should be ready in a year, said officials.

“There is a need for redesigning traffic junctions, as there are conflicting movements that hamper the flow resulting in snarls. Obstructions like right-turns at junctions and the possibility of making certain roads one-way will be looked into and implemented after the study,” said Additional Municipal Commissioner R A Rajeev.

With temporary traffic diversions in Mumbai resulting in stiff opposition from commuters, as evident when the arterial Peddar Road had been turned into a one-way lane in April, the civic officials feel the need for a long-term plan. So all traffic junctions across the island city, eastern and western suburbs will be studied and an area-wise local traffic management plan prepared with the help of the traffic police, MMRDA, MSRDC and PWD.

Consultants will also study where to create cycle tracks that many residential groups and activists have been demanding. Officials said these tracks will most probably be around neighbourhoods like Malabar Hill, Juhu, Lokhandwala Complex, Carter Road, etc.

“We want to give cyclists dedicated lanes so that they can use them for short-distance commuting. At points like railway stations, we may provide them with facilities to park bicycles,” Rajeev said.

In Thane, a cycle track had been developed six years back in Wagle Estate area. It is now lying unused and has been encroached upon.

Hemant Chhabra of the Bicycle Project, an NGO that promotes use of cycles by donating old ones to poor schoolstudents, welcomed the proposal. “Air pollution is getting worse due to four-wheeler and two-wheelers. We need to tell people to use bicycles,” he said.