

The Times of India - Chandigarh 31.07.2009 **City's 16% use public transport**

Vibhor Mohan, TNN 31 July 2009, 02:16am ISTCHANDIGARH: Only a few decades ago, 36 sq km was acquired to develop Phase I of the city. Today, Chandigarh has 487 km of roads and some of the busiest intersections witness close to 1.5 lakh vehicles crossing path every single day. And only 16% motorized trips are being made using public transport.

These disturbing facts have been revealed in an extensive traffic study conducted by RITES to get a sense of chaos that Chandigarh and its adjoining areas could witness in the year 2041 if the present transit habits prevail.

But there is a silver lining — 45% commuters would willingly shift to a new improved public transport system, even at a fare that's 1.25 to 1.5 times higher than the prevailing bus charges. Given the rising concern about inadequate parking space and the unsettling increase in pollution, this indeed assumes significance.

The comprehensive mobility report submitted to UT administration highlights that given only 16% commuters ride on public vehicles, there is a need to provide a better system. The share of two-wheelers and cars in travel is a whopping 73% of the total trips, which, RITES says, is disturbingly high and needs to be arrested. A reflection of this is the fact that where the average household income per month is Rs 15,890, the standard expenditure on transport per household is Rs 1,590 for the same period. About 24% of the journeys are made for

work and business purposes.

Not just this, household traffic surveys indicate high ownership of cars and two-wheelers in Chandigarh. About 86% households own at least one car or two-wheeler. In the absence of city-wide and high quality mass transport system, their use is growing. The survey also indicates high share of work trips and this segment of traffic demand needs to be mostly satisfied by public transport system.

A senior UT official said given the growing consciousness about judicious fuel consumption and improved quality of public transport, there is a change in the mindset in favour of buses.

In the report, RITES has also shared a thought for walkers and has pointed out that even though there is high pedestrian traffic in the heart of the city and some other parts, footpath facilities are generally not adequate and their condition is deteriorating. Besides, the share of cycle traffic has declined over the years and this green mode of transport needs to be promoted by providing tracks along the roads.

As part of suggested solutions, the short-term measures or low-cost solutions would be attempted through maximum utilization of existing facilities through Transport System Management techniques.

To highlight the overdependence on private transit, RITES took a count of vehicles crossing from different locations. For instance, on Vidya Path between sectors 14 and 15, if a total of

43,884 private vehicles passed during the day, then the figure for public ones was only 13,705.

The consultancy arm of Indian Railways also checked the feasibility of constructing multi-level parking lots at sites identified by UT.

Finance secretary Sanjay Kumar said about 1.2 acre at the back of Sahib Singh block, Sector 17, is being upgraded as a multilevel parking and work had been assigned to the municipal corporation.