

Environmental Social
Justice
&
Governance Initiatives

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Report of the fourth webinar held on 21 August 2020 as part of

“Better Bus Bengaluru”

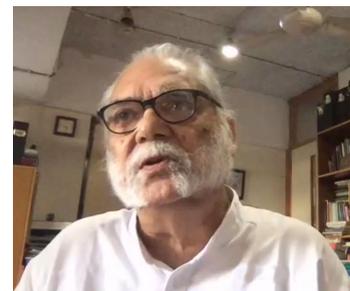
A campaign initiated by ESG in collaboration with #BengaluruMoving

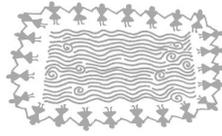
ESG’s campaign “Better Bus Bengaluru” stepped up into the 4th webinar today addressing the theme “**Making public transport affordable to all**”. In this campaign ESG, in collaboration with #BengaluruMoving, is working to develop imaginaries that would ensure this sprawling metropolis’ functionality is enhanced without any further destruction of its greenery, of homes, neighbourhoods and villages, and thus make this city a space of ingenuity moving towards carbon neutral mobility. This particular webinar’s primary focus was to bring together a wide range of voices to discuss how public transport, and buses especially, can be made more affordable and accessible for all sections of society.



Opening the webinar, **Mr. Vinay Sreenivasa, Member of Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike and Alternative Law Forum**, drew attention to harsh impacts of unaffordable bus fares prevailing in Bengaluru: “When public transport is not affordable and accessible to all, it doesn’t just curtail people’s right to mobility. Their rights to education and livelihood also get fundamentally affected”, Mr. Sreenivasa asserted.

Professor Dinesh Mohan, Transport and & Infrastructure Policy Analyst and Emeritus Professor at Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, held that in order to promote greater ridership on buses, the bus fare needs to be lesser than the cost per kilometer of riding a two-wheeler. He maintained that only bus fares lower than Re. 1 per kilometer would offer sufficient incentive for the public to transition to





buses, provided they are available everywhere. In addition to lowering fares, he also advocated making all buses air-conditioned, low-floor and fully accessible, thus making them more comfortable and accessible to users. He also highlighted how it is critical to make the entire daily trip (four times by walk and at least two bus trips) pleasant, safe and secure. For which, he stressed, it is absolutely essential to make all streets designed to accommodate street vending, who provide a variety of services and also ensure safety for all, and most times. He also highlighted the importance of making city blocks smaller and personable, so walking, cycling and bussing become possible everywhere.



Prof. Vinod Vyasulu, an economist who retired as Vice Dean at Jindal School of Government & Policy, drew

attention to larger political and economic forces that cause unaffordable bus fares. “Public transport is not a commodity, it is a utility. Since it’s being treated as a commodity, fares are atrociously high”, he declared. He criticised the Government’s

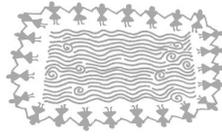
increasing transition towards privatisation of all public goods, ranging from health to education to mobility, calling it a sheer “abdication of their responsibility” to the citizens of India. He called for a political movement to engage with all aspects of urban planning, governance and mobility, ensuring decision making by the privileged is rejected and deeply democratic and representative decision making becomes the mainstay.

Ms. Mamata Yejaman, Representative of the Gamana

Mahila Samuha, highlighted a wide range of issues women commuters face while traveling buses. She pointed out that in many, if not most, families women are the sole breadwinners of their family and they must travel long distances to secure their families. Given the weak implementation of various guidelines intended at securing travel of women, third gender and children,



not merely is the steep bus fares a serious issue of concern (as most women who use buses have meagre salaries), the bus is also a place where one is forced to endure harassment, including sexual harassment. She argued for a very strong public movement to promote safety and security of women commuters, which would make the entire bus system also safe and secure for all.



Taanika Shankar and Rohit Vasishta, co-founders of the YUGMA College Students Network, brought the voice of the youth to the discussion. Having worked on popularising environmental issues in India, they highlighted the important role the humble bus has to play in mitigating the climate crisis.

“As a young girl, using the bus made me feel independent. I also saw it as a drastic step to reduce my carbon footprint”, Taanika shared. “Providing cycle racks on buses greatly improves accessibility of buses. It’s also an important step in integrating different modes of environmentally friendly mobility”, Rohit noted.



Mr. Leo Saldanha, Coordinator of ESG, drew the discussion to a close by advocating for a greater politicisation of issues surrounding public transportation, in order to make it more people-friendly. “We need to re-assert our right to the bus and reclaim ownership over the functioning of the bus system in it’s myriad dimensions, and make it central to mobility”, Mr. Saldanha submitted.



A video record of the proceedings is accessible at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/esgindia/permalink/10164041298055254/>

WEBINAR

**FRIDAY
21 AUG
4-6 P.M. IST**

Making public transport affordable to all

Leveraging the experience of experts to discuss innovative ideas to make our cities faster, smarter and more accessible

MODERATOR
Vinay Sreenivasa
Member of Alternative Law Forum & Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike

PANELIST
Prof. Dinesh Mohan
Transport & Infrastructure Policy Analyst + Honorary Professor at IIT, New Delhi

PANELIST
Vinod Vyasulu
Former Professor + Vice Dean at Jindal School of Government & Policy, Sonapat

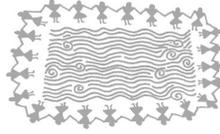
PANELIST
Taanika Shankar
Co-founder, YUGMA Network— College Student Unions' Network

PANELIST
Mamatha Yejaman
Representative from Gramana Mahila Samuha (Women's Organisation)

PANELIST
Rohit Vasishta
Co-founder, YUGMA Network— College Student Unions' Network

ESG
Environment Support Group - Trust

#Bengaluru moving



The final webinar as part of the “**Better Bus Bengaluru**” campaign with **#BengaluruMoving** is on Friday, 28th August 2020 (4-6 pm on Zoom and Facebook) when we will address the theme: “**Streamlining and calming traffic, and making cities inclusive for all**”. Participants will include Prof. Rajeev Gowda, former MP (RS), Mr. Uday Garudachar, MLA (Chickpet constituency), Mr. Ravikanthe Gowda, IPS, Joint Commissioner, Bangalore Traffic Police, with Ms. Bhargavi S. Rao, Trustee, ESG, and Mr. Leo Saldanha, Trustee/Coordinator, ESG.

Register to participate in the next webinar: <https://bit.ly/esg-bbb>

For more details of ESG’s “Better Bus Bengaluru” Campaign, please visit: <https://bit.ly/esg-bbb>

[This report has been prepared by Ashwin Lobo, Research Associate at ESG, Karthik Anjanappa, Research Associate at ESG. Leo Saldanha, Coordinator, ESG provided inputs.]