



Environmental Social
Justice
&
Governance Initiatives

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Report of the fifth and final webinar held on 28 August 2020 as part of **“Better Bus Bengaluru”**

A campaign initiated by ESG in collaboration with #BengaluruMoving

ESG’s campaign “Better Bus Bengaluru” stepped into 5th and final webinar today addressing the theme **“Streamlining + calming traffic, and making cities inclusive for 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 measures to reduce traffic in the metropolis, and thereby enhance mobility of its citizens.



Opening the webinar Mr. Leo Saldanha, Coordinator of ESG, drew attention to the rapid shift towards urbanisation across the world. With an estimated population already over 1.3 crore today, Bengaluru is projected to have a population of 2.1 crore people by 2031. In the context of this rapid rise, Mr. Saldanha asked “How do we make sure that mobility remains inclusive and empowering in the ever growing metropolis of Bengaluru?”

Ms. Bhargavi Rao, Trustee of ESG then went on to run the audience through some of the major talking points that arose in the preceding four webinars of this series, recordings of which can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4wxkpic> .





Prof. Rajeev Gowda, Former MP (Rajya Sabha), drew an important link between usage of public transport and the quality of air in cities. “By encouraging more people to use buses and having more eco-friendly buses, we will literally be able to change the quality of air in our cities”, Prof. Gowda asserted. He also called for the introduction of ‘Smart Bus Stands’ everywhere, along with comfortable and inclusive buses, which would provide information of bus arrival times and travel routes, thereby augmenting convenience of commuters. Keeping the convenience of commuters and environmental aspects in mind, another intervention Prof. Gowda felt that the integration of bicycles and other forms of non-motorised transport along with bus priority lanes.

Mr. Uday B. Garudachar, MLA (Chickpet, Bengaluru), began his intervention by reminiscing about simpler times when nobody ever imagined Bengaluru would one day have such serious mobility problems. “As a toddler in the late ‘60s, I came to know that the first traffic signal in Bengaluru came up near the Town Hall”, Mr. Garudachar recalled. Jumping ahead to current times, Mr. Garudachar pointed out that although the number of vehicles in Bengaluru has now grown to over one crore, the city’s roads have not grown at an equal pace to accommodate this influx. He suggested that creating a few satellite townships is a critical need to decongest Bengaluru. Mr. Garudachar also extended his full support to the pedestrianisation of iconic Gandhibazaar, in his constituency, and suggested it could serve as an example for similar efforts across the city.



Ms. V. Manjula, IAS, Commissioner, Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT), Government of Karnataka, asserted that planning for public transport, and urban design in general, should focus on three major aspects: inclusivity, health and accessibility. She called for an increased use of data to improve the operations of buses and facilitate convenience of commuters. For which she said a shift in the public’s mind-set was essential: “We need to trigger behaviour change in the public to embrace cycling, walking and other forms of non-motorised transport”, Ms. Manjula submitted.



Mr. B. R. Ravikanthe Gowda, IPS, Joint Commissioner of Bangalore Traffic Police, argued that without first placing restrictions on private transport, the utilisation of public transport would not increase. He also brought to notice the poor condition of the city's footpaths, calling for them to be improved in the interest of pedestrians. Mr. Ravikanthe Gowda could not have been more effusive in his praise for the citizens



of Bengaluru who choose to abstain from using motor vehicles. "In Bengaluru, those who are not using vehicles are the real environmentalists. We need to put in good sidewalks and cycle paths for these heroes", he declared. Having to deal with the myriad mobility issues of Bengaluru city on a daily basis, Mr. Ravikanthe Gowda was adamant that the humble bus is central to fixing many of these problems. As he put it, "A safe and affordable public transport system is key to resolving the traffic issues of Bengaluru."

Mr. Leo Saldanha brought to attention the need to include more public participation in decisions relating to urban mobility. "Public administration also requires the public in administration. I would argue that so far the public has been kept out", he argued. In response to this, Ms. Manjula acknowledged that public participation is important, but simultaneously pointed out that even initiatives which are attempted by the administration cannot succeed without public participation.

With this webinar, the BetterBusBengaluru series draws to a close. In collaboration with Bengaluru Moving, we plan to take forward this campaign by organising a seminar in the coming months involving all of our distinguished panellists and the larger public as well. And though moving through Bengaluru city is almost a nightmare now, we are confident that with the right interventions things will change. As Ms. Manjula so beautifully put it, "Like human beings, cities also go through ups and downs. But I am optimistic that Bengaluru can turn things around."

A video record of the proceedings is accessible at: <https://bit.ly/2QzuhGM>

**28 AUG
FRIDAY
5-6:30 P.M.
IST**

WEBINAR
Streamlining + calming traffic

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

MODERATORS
Ms. Bhargavi Rao
Trustee, Environment Support Group
Mr. Leo F. Saldanha
Trustee/Coordinator, Environment Support Group

PANELISTS
Prof. Rajeev Gowda
Former MP (Rajya Sabha)
Dr. Uday B. Garudachar
Member of Karnataka Legislative Assembly (Chickpet, Bengaluru)
Ms. V. Manjula, IAS
Commissioner, Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT)
Mr. B.R.Ravikanthe Gowda, IPS
Joint Commissioner, Bangalore Traffic Police

ESG
Environment Support Group - Trust

**#Bengaluru
moving**

[This report has been prepared by Ashwin Lobo, Research Associate at ESG, Karthik Anjanappa, Research Associate at ESG and Sneha, Malvika and Himanshu, Interns at ESG. Bhargavi Rao, Trustee, ESG provided inputs.]