

# BUS RAPID TRANSIT → Perception Survey



May 2008

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Bus Rapid Transit Citizen Survey was carried out by members and volunteers of Delhi Greens and Center for Science & Environment. The Survey was coordinated by A.P. Jayanthi, Aastha Kukreti, Sonia Kurup, Kamal, Sumandeep Singh, Rishabh Parmar, Raghav Sarasawat and Govind Singh. The survey was carried out in the first and second week of May, 2008.

## WHY THIS SURVEY?

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System has been installed on a small section of the road in Delhi in 2008. The failures in the implementation of this System in Delhi are being shown as the failure of the BRT itself. The following survey was carried out to conduct a perception analysis of the BRT from the very people who are benefitting from it, the users of the experimental BRT System in Delhi.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

- Interact with the pedestrians and citizens using the buses on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and to find out their perception of the corridor.
- Identify the problems in the system and the reason for the same, with possible suggestive measures.
- Interact with the motorists to find out their perception of the corridor and their willingness to shift from using private vehicles to public transport.

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The pedestrians and bus commuters gave an overall positive response to the BRT. Their travel time was found to be reduced by about 20%. The small decrease is owing to the fact that Blue Line buses are still plying on the corridor and are moving at snail's speed, for the usual reason. Near the bus stand, where there is more space, a Blue Line bus was observed to "give way" to another bus in the corridor! The travel time should come down when the Government introduces more of the low-floored buses that it has promised. At the same time, the low-floored buses have changed the way people travel in the city and one cannot find people hanging from the doors anymore.



*The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System is a just and equitable system of urban transport.*

While most people gave a thumbs-up to these buses, with statements like “It feels like one is on a foreign trip” to “America (West) has come to India”, some had problems with the door being closed. The primary reason for the latter is that now it is almost impossible to get down on the Red Light or anywhere except the bus stands. With experiences like these, that we had, the Chief Secretary’s statement that Delhi needs to be taught how to use the roads, did not seem inappropriate.

The large number of jaywalking fines imposed on the people near CP, the fact that an empty stretch (like that on the Ring Road behind the Red Fort) sees cars fly at speeds over 80 and constant and meaningless honking at Red Lights, etc. only adds more sense to the Chief Secretary’s stand.

Scooters, motorcycles and even auto-rickshaws on the path meant for the cyclists is a common sight all across the BRT corridor. We also recorded two traffic policemen on a scooter (in uniform), riding away to glory, on a pathway meant for the cyclists. Occasionally, we also reported cars in the bus lane and photographed one standing right in front of a bus at the Red Light.

## PEOPLE’S PERCEPTION

The BRT has seen a mixed reaction from the people at large. However, the commuters using the stretch have all appreciated the change the corridor had brought into their lives and have wanted that:

- 1) the stretch to be extended to all parts of the city.
- 2) the stretch to be adequately connected to the Delhi Metro.
- 3) the BRT to have feeder buses as that of the Metro.

- 4) cycles to be made available (on rent) on the stretch and a proper renting-system to be put in to place.

The entire journey on the BRT was said to be more comfortable and people preferred to travel in the low-floored buses, rather than the Blue Lines. The Blue Line buses were said to remain the same, from travel-experience point of view. One gentleman working in a printing press pointed that the journey has definitely become more comfortable and that if (pointing to the media) says that the travel-time on this route is still the same, she has never been on this route before the BRT was put in place.



We did feel a lack of communication about using the BRT amidst commuters and also amidst the car drivers and cyclists. We also noticed the cars that break down, parked at the space meant as the auto-stand. However, more auto-stand like spaces need to be constructed.

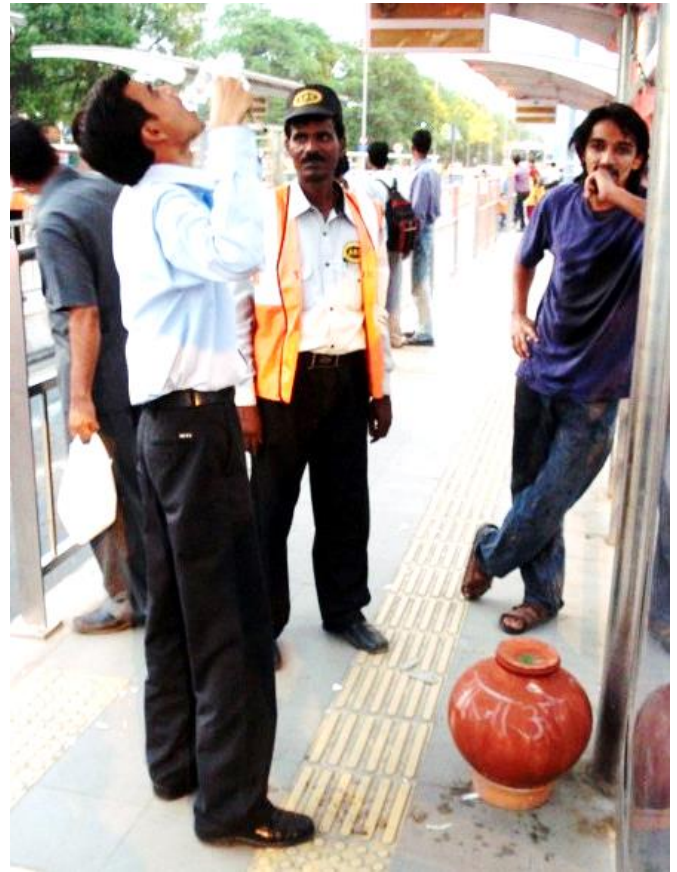
Motorists, especially the car drivers overall did appreciate the BRT but they demanded an even wider road and signal free driving for the car-users. They did not seem keen to shift to the

BRT for the simple fact that it was not “well-connected” and would not directly take them to their office, institute, etc. They however, felt the need for a separate lane only for cars, such that the cars could go at the same speed as that of the BRT buses!! A lot of them agreed that, they would not hesitate to jump to the bus lane – if they do not see a bus coming in the distance, and cover their distance in less time!

The lack of trees on the corridor and the width of the corridor makes it an urban heat island stretch and this is something that may pose a serious problem in the near future. We observed some saplings along the corridor but unlike before, since there are no dividers, there can never be trees in the middle of the road.

Some of us also got busy in arranging for earthen pots of water, to be kept at the bus stands. Since the bus stands are made for the rapid transit, and since there aren't adequate buses at present, a large number of commuters have to wait in the sun in the bus stands. Even the shades are not enough and there is no place to sit. This should improve once the adequate number of buses promised, begin to ply. However, at present commuters have to wait in the scorching heat of the Delhi summer. Besides, there are a lot of marshals (over 30 at every Red Light) appointed that have to be at these bus stands all day long.

Therefore, earthen pots were purchased, filled with water and kept at the bus stands. Some of the marshals took keen interest in this, and were put in-charge and voluntarily agreed to take care of the same. The pots were to be filled with the traffic police vehicle that passes every four hours, or by the marshals from nearby taps. The marshals were also explained ways to keep the water hygienic and resources are being generated to keep the pots on a raised platform.



## SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 1,500 people surveyed in this period, 55 per cent were bus commuters, 23 per cent were cyclists and pedestrians, 16 per cent were car and two-wheeler commuters and the rest constituted a mixed category of those using autos etc. Result of the survey was provided to CSE, media and later on to Delhi government. The survey showed that as much as 83 per cent of all commuters were contented with the dedicated lane system of BRT and wanted that the BRT system should be continued in the city.

Majority of bus commuters and pedestrians/cyclists — a whopping 88-91 per cent of these respondents said that they were in favour of the BRT system and wanted that it should be extended to more areas of Delhi. Pedestrians, however, asked for safer pedestrian crossing. Contrary to popular belief, only 8 per

cent of the car and two-wheeler commuters said that BRT should be scrapped and 73 per cent agreed that the project can be continued. When asked whether they will shift from their personal vehicles to better, faster and high frequency buses equipped with AC and GPS running on the BRT corridor -- 26 per cent of car and two-wheeler answered positively. However, they were seemingly reluctant to use the BRT corridor now because it extends for a mere 5.8 km. They were found to be more willing to shift if its network covered most of the city's roads and gets connected with the Metro. Many of car and two-wheeler commuters also said that jams on the MV lanes and at intersections should be reduced and more space should be allocated to them. The survey also brought out what people wanted further from the bus corridor in future. Most commuters wanted the BRT corridor to be connected to the Delhi Metro and introduction of feeder buses on the corridor. There were also suggestions of cycles to be made available on rent on the stretch. While there was an

acknowledgement of the teething troubles that BRT was having. It was significant that around 60 per cent of commuters on the corridor use buses, while cars actually carry less than 20 per cent of the people. Available estimates for key junctions on the corridor showed that on the BRT corridor, 200 buses carry 15,000 passengers on an average during the morning rush hour. Compared to this, the corridor has about 5,000 cars carrying merely 5,767 passengers, and 4,000 two-wheelers carrying 4,000 people in the same period.

## CONCLUSION

Giving buses a right of way will help them to improve speed, comfort, accessibility, convenience and costs. BRT is a big part of the solution and should not be abandoned. In the direction towards improving the public transport BRT according to its users was a first-of-its-kind efficient initiative.

