



Ahmedabad BRT system © Flickr/velaparato

## INDIA, AHMEDABAD

### Connectivity, Integration and Inclusion through Transport Planning

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Ahmedabad is the largest city in the western Indian state of Gujarat, with an estimated population of 5.8 million inhabitants. The city has emerged as a key industrial, commercial, economic and educational hub. In the late 1970's, the administrative capital of the state was moved to the new city of Gandhinagr. This political shift, together with the deceleration of industrial activity and the instability brought by political and social agitation, marked the start of a long period of Ahmedabad's decline. Subsequent underinvestment in infrastructure and services led to a string of transport challenges including poor service quality, unreliability, an exponential increase in private vehicles leading to high levels of congestion and reduction in air quality.

The Janmarg Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) was designed as a strategic intervention, to attract latent transit demand, improve air quality and promote the compactness of the city. At the metropolitan scale, the project was developed under the broader framework of the Ahmedabad-Mumbai corridor, and the Ahmedabad-Pune stretch. The decision to build the Janmarg, was made in 2005 by a high-level committee chaired by the Chief Minister of Gujarat, under the broader "Accessible Ahmedabad" framework, which aimed at redesigning the city structure and transport systems towards better accessibility, efficient mobility and lower carbon emissions. The BRT initiative was developed in line with the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) prepared for the period 2006-2012, in which Ahmedabad's Integrated Transit Strategy aimed at developing a system comprising an improved public bus system, the BRTS, suburban railways and a metro.

The objective was to increase the public transport share from the existing 17% to 40% over a period of 10 years by reducing the need for travel, travel length and automobile dependence. The plan consisted of the development of 217 kilometres of BRT corridors with a radial structure and a ring corridor.

The implementation of this urban and territorial planning transportation strategy has enhanced accessibility, connectivity, social inclusiveness and environmental quality in Ahmedabad. 26 percent of two wheeler users have shifted to BRTS, which is widely viewed as being more inclusive. In off-peak hours, mainly afternoons, nearly 40 percent of the commuters are women. With an average trip length of 7km, the system saves 200,000 vehicle kilometres per day. Furthermore, the network serves as many low-income areas as higher-income communities across the city. The widening of the BRT corridor has helped to increase connectivity and has catalysed development throughout the city. From the urban planning perspective, the project has contributed with several innovations, including fully pedestrian and transit street sections and one-way bus lanes to manage narrow right-of-way. The implementation of the BRT system has also created new roads and bridges that have improved the connectivity of the city. The BRT has also encouraged urban regeneration, as former vacant mill lands have been transformed into new housing and shopping areas for the urban poor. Another remarkable innovation lies in the cross-subsidy mechanism that has used land value capture as a system to ensure the BRT affordability. The biggest achievement though, has been to showcase that the BRT system works for the Indian context if adapted to the local context and culture.