

Winners and losers in Johannesburg's BRT

Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) was very nearly discredited beyond redemption by the way it was done in Delhi, but its reputation has been restored by the achievements of Ahmedabad, capital of Gujarat state in India and home to 5.6 million people.

Introduced in October 2009 along a 26-km stretch, Ahmedabad's Janmarg system has shown, according to the Hindustan Times, "that if implemented properly, the system can go a long way in decongesting traffic and reducing dependence on private vehicles". (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/In-Ahmedabad-BRT-has-clicked/Article1-555097.aspx>)

The Hindustan Times article was based on a study by the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT), which found that just seven months into its operation, 34 per cent of commuters had shifted from private vehicles to BRT. Further expansion to as high as 60 per cent of commuters was expected.

Most BRT users were found to have switched from two and three-wheelers, but 11 per cent had switched from cars, which is a very important step in the right direction in a city in which vehicle ownership has been growing at a rate of 7 per cent every year.

So what went wrong in Delhi? According to Prof. P.K. Sarkar, Department of Transport Planning, School of Planning and Architecture, and quoted in the Hindustan Times: "Poor planning and implementation was responsible for the mess in Delhi. The corridor that was selected was narrow which instead of decongesting the traffic added to traffic snarls. Considering Delhi's traffic — the city has six million vehicles — the BRT was not properly integrated to the Capital's transport planning."

[Another study by Embarq](#) found that another lesson learned from Delhi was to use Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled buses, a passenger information system (PIS) and closed bus shelters with smart-card based ticketing at the bus-stops and not inside buses.

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“The bus-stops are located 200 metres before the intersections and have platform screen doors operated by sensors to prevent people from getting hit by buses passing by.

The doors open when a bus arrives and all buses, standard floor ones, stop in perfect alignment with the bus shelters. Delhi spent much more on buying low-floor buses to provide stepless entry to people, but even two years later, drivers seldom stop the bus in alignment with the platform.”

Ahmedabad’s BRT was in 2010 awarded the Sustainable Transport Award by Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) in Washington. By 2014, it is planned that Janmarg will have expanded to serve 90 kilometers and carry 175,000 daily passengers.

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