

# 'Better public transport will discourage people from driving'

**SDP**  
**EXCLUSIVE**

Anu Bhambhani South Delhi

*It is chaotic  
It has taken away road space  
The jams haven't reduced*

Ever since the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT) came up, it hasn't been as popular as the other public transport systems, like the Delhi Metro for instance. Something or the other has had the BRT in news, mostly for the wrong reasons. So much so that the government even considered scrapping the whole project at one point. However, things are better now and the BRT corridor is moving towards Central Delhi now.

So, what went wrong? Is the BRT a good thing or a bad thing for the city? Should it continue or not? South Delhiites debate over many such questions every time they step out on the roads. While there are several theories to explain the above, experts believe that BRT is definitely a positive step for the city. Jamie Osborne, a rehabilitation engineer and transit planner from San Francisco who was in the city recently to study how transportation networks shape a city, spoke to *South Delhi Plus* in detail about the same.

**How effective will the BRT be if the stretch is red-light (traffic signal) free?**

**JO:** I think it is important that the traffic (especially pedestrians and bicyclists) on either side of the BRT should be able to cross the path so you need the traffic signals. I am strongly against subways and foot overbridges as they put a heavy burden on the pedestrians to accommodate car traffic.

An effective solution may be to put the BRT line below or above grade. Traffic signals and BRT corridor can peacefully co-exist. More permanent stations and crossings with actual maintenance and increased enforcement will help.



VINOD KUMAR

**Since the tickets (challans) are being issued to the vehicles getting into the BRT Corridor, do you think this will work?**

**JO:** Yes. Enforcement is essential for getting people to follow new traffic patterns. Also essential to get two wheelers out of the bike lanes and off the pavements.

**Do you think doing away with physical segregation of dedicated tracks will make the corridor more effective?**

**JO:** No way. Physical separation and dedicated right of way is completely necessary for BRT to function. I am worried about the new stretches of BRT that will push the buses to the left. This is a recipe for failure as left turning traffic will stop the buses from going forward. It is likely to be a big mess.

It is most efficient when buses are in the center. They have to be separate from other traffic. Please try to think in terms of the numbers of people being moved versus the numbers of vehicles. Roads need to be designed for buses, pedestrians and bicyclists. If there is room for cars, then fine.

There are a great number of private motor vehicles, but the number of people who use this mode is comparatively small. They should not be given precedence. The relatively few car drivers will find other routes.

Cars are great, but they are neither sustainable nor efficient. With good planning, we can create better transit services that discourage people from driving. The BRT line starts to do this, but the execution is haphazard.

**What kind of pedestrian facilities are still needed on the stretch?**

**JO:** All transit users are pedestrians at some point during their journeys, so this is an important question.

I think that the pedestrian crossing facilities implemented along the corridor are better than most in Delhi, but they are still severely lacking or in disrepair. I am worried about the lack of maintenance or care for the pedestrian facilities that do exist (I strongly suspect that those controlling the budget may not want positive outcome for BRT in Delhi - Under funding is a good way to demonstrate that a project won't work).

From the beginning, dedicated traffic police should have been at crosswalks making sure that pedestrians are safely getting across the street. All too often I witnessed red-light running and near pedestrian misses - if people are not going to be held responsible for breaking traffic laws why would they follow them?

And, improve pedestrian signals! Indian pedestrian movement (disabled and non-disabled pedestrians) should be studied and a mean crossing time should be established. Signals on the corridor should be set to this crossing time and should be maintained when they break. Plain and simple, not doing this or not funding these efforts is an attempt to increase pedestrian deaths!

I want to add that if DTC substantially increases number of buses on the corridor, people will have more comfortable time in boarding and finding a seat on vehicles. This is especially true for people with disabilities.

## EXPERT COMMENTS

- > The new stretches of BRT will push the buses to the left. This is a recipe for failure as left turning traffic will stop the buses from going forward. It is likely to be a big mess
- > It is important that the traffic (especially pedestrians and bicyclists) on either side of the BRTs should be able to cross the path so you need the traffic signals
- > Pedestrians are climbing through barriers and jumping over broken fences to access the system. This non-consistent pedestrian movement creates a high likelihood for pedestrian/motor vehicle accidents