

5.2m vehicles and nowhere to park

Demand For Parking Space In Delhi Exceeds Capacity Over Three Times

Neha Lalchandani / TNN

New Delhi: Fears of our cities turning into concrete jungles can now take a backseat – they are turning into parking lots much sooner. With around 1,100 vehicles being added to Delhi's streets each day, the city is struggling to find parking space for more than 5.2 million vehicles, in addition to those coming in daily from across the border.

Vehicles occupy an estimated 10.8% of the city's urbanized area, increasingly threatening its green spaces. Their sheer numbers are also threatening to undo any benefits that Delhi might have accrued in switching over to CNG and mass transport systems like the Metro. Experts say unless using vehicles is aggressively discouraged, in the form of prohibitory parking charges, taxes and congestion fees, the air quality is unlikely to improve.

"The demand for parking space has clearly overshot the available capacity by as much as three times. The shortfall of space is in the range of 16-52%. The government needs to formulate a parking policy in which parking rates reflect the cost of real estate. That would make it a deterrent for car users," says Sunita Narain, director of Centre for Science and Environment.

Going by 2005 records of daily registration of cars, demand for parking space exceeded 2.5 million sqm. "Transport planners consider 23sqm of land as appropriate to park an average car. This means in the prime business district of Connaught Place, the rent of such an area can be as high as Rs 36,000 per month. But users pay a minuscule sum for parking," said Anumita Roychoudhury, in-charge of the Right To Clean Air Campaign for CSE.

The government has failed to come up with a comprehensive policy for parking. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) started charging land users a one-time fee for constructing parking space but that only serves to increase cost of parking to nearly Rs 4-6 lakh per car space, barely any of which will be recovered from the users. Underground parking lots, mostly beneath parks and green spaces, met with resistance from not just the Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority but also resident welfare associations.

The New Delhi Municipal Council has recently introduced a graded parking fee in its areas.

"A shift to public transport can only be achieved if driving is not a convenient mode of travel. Big cities such as Portland, Seattle, Bremen, San Francisco, New York, Tokyo and Bogota among others have hiked parking fees and limited parking space to reduce car usage," said Roychoudhury.



GROWING ROOTS: As of now, vehicles occupy 10.8% of the city's space
Advertisement