

Aam Nagrik Rashtriya Footpath Yojna 2013 – A Citizen Initiatives

Common Citizen's National Footpath Mission

Be the change you wish to see- Mahatma Gandhi

“आओ सब मिलकर बनाये फूटपाथ”

Preamble

Dear Friends, through this communication, I am delighted to announce this much awaited “Rashtriya Footpath Yojna”. After independence we got many schemes to the name of prominent leaders of our country in the area of urban and rural transportation. Felt, at least to this we must name it after the name of “Aam Nagrik” of this country. Otherwise also it is a buzz word in the corridors of power these days. It’s “Aam Nagrik” because I don’t want to create any kind of gender biasness here.

35% road fatalities deaths in Chandigarh are of pedestrians, scenario is very similar in New Delhi and other Indian Cities. They are the people at no fault and no choice. A breadwinner of a family is losing life because of someone else’s fault. This scheme in the is dedicated to the all unknown and known martyrs pedestrian who lost their lives due to non availability or because of poorly maintained footpaths across the country.

With the kind of capital intensive transport system adaptation, we have not only lost many valuable lives, quality of life and bad environment but also losing our road space which is a valuable resource for the next generations. Most of the times, citizens are being fooled, when we hear that foot over bridges or underpasses are being constructed/inaugurated in the city in order to facilitate pedestrians. Mind it; this is just a “necessary illusion” created in order to keep masses happy and to win over vote bank. Foot over bridge and underpasses are the infrastructure for motor vehicles, so that they can move freely at desirable speed of their choice. Simple logic, a human body which basically a 0.25 horse power machine has to go 6m up or down in order to cross the 7.5m wide road and cars which are having power of say more than 20 horse power have to move at same level comfortably, something scientifically wrong. Moreover, with such infrastructure security of women always remains an issue. In the recent Gurgaon Non Motor Transport Workshop, it is also concluded very nicely that “vehicle fitted with headlights are given facilities of street lights and pedestrians who are without headlights are kept in dark”. Chandigarh is the best example to quote, all footpaths are in dark and area of more than 12 sectors is only being used for car parking.

Father of our nation, Mahatama Gandhi, long back in his book “gram swaraj” given us many solutions for modern India, even related to transportation also but unfortunately no such value based teaching is given even in the best of the institutes of this country, in order to encourage local solutions.

Indeed our nation also gave us many fundamental rights but before that we do have our fundamental duties to discharge as well.. Keeping all such issues in mind, today we are launching this “Aam Nagrik Rashtriya Footpath Yojna” with this hope our concerned citizens and respective government will respond to it. Very hopeful that if nothing more, at least few Professionals in the field of transportation, who are making nice reports for others will do something for their neighborhood, in order to get more walking space. It’s purely a citizen’s initiative and together we will all make it as a grand success across the country.

Funding Mechanism

1. Sorry, No funding is available, you have to manage at your own, ask politicians or collect it at your own. E.g. “The Ugly Indians”, a facebook community doing wonderful work in Bangalore in order to beautify and maintain their Public Spaces. Many such examples are available across the country.
2. Keep electing different parties government at state and centre level. This will stop the smooth flow of central money to state. Cash crunch states will not be in a position to do much damage to our cities. This will help citizen to develop, innovate and implement local solutions. If nothing happens, than at least this will stop the transfer of more public space for flyovers or car parking.
3. Anyone found damaging the footpath in order to facilitate more raised car parking space. Feel free to file complaint to concern authority. It is very well covered under Indian Penal Court and The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act-1884.
4. For a populated country like ours numbers of people transported are more important than number of vehicle transported. Our National Urban Transport Policy ensures equal distribution of road space based upon the kind of users. Very useful and at least we can ask our government, as how the grand-in aid is being spent/ received under JNNRUM or many other such initiatives by State and Central Government via RTI.

Advocacy Tools;

1. We humans are born to Walk and run and not to drive. Constitution of India ensures “Right to Healthy Life” for its every citizen (Justice Banerjee Judgement). Snatching our road space mealy for 5% of the motor vehicle owner community is unconstitutional. Our constitution also ensures “right of equality”, from the present practices it is very much visible that how the motor vehicle class is being facilitated at the cost of public exchequer and it is not socially equitable. Under Representation of People Act, 1951, we can question our leaders for such misappropriate use/allocation of money from Public Funds.
2. First two pillars of our democracy for some reasons are biased for high cost solutions (here I am talking about majority). Reasons are very much clearer to all that the “more will spent the more they will get”. For the first pillar, mean our elected representatives, you can change their mindset, because politician is nothing but a slave of Public and in elected democracies like ours, during election times when our power to vote actually got some power to change, use it wisely.

So, pick up the wise one. Our second pillar, they are in anyways going to follow their political bosses' advice first.

फूटपाथ बनाओगे तो तभी वोट ले पाओगे

3. Many traffic management and road safety related Public Interest Litigations are (PIL) going on in the respective High Courts of the states and few at the Supreme Court of India. If you can manage, please club your "add on application" with that. Your voice will be heard.
4. Oh yes!, we need some numbers also. We got some for you. As per Ministry of Urban Development Study in the year 2008 on "traffic and transportation policies and strategies in urban areas in India", 8 car trips is about 3 million, that of walking and cycling is 8 million. 2.5 times more than of car trips in the selected 30 cities for the studies. Walking share vary from 30% to 58% from Tier I to Tier III types cities. Further Google is there at your disposal to find out some more references and best of the research work in this area. In case you won't find such numbers create the articulated one. No one is going to question you about it. From my experience I found in 90% of the feasibility studies the projected traffic figures never match with actual numbers. Delhi-Gurgaon and many other roads are example in front of all of you. Nobody is going to ask you anything. But, please keep your guess within the range. Also try to develop a correlation, as how many votes are going to be effected, if they will not do it. Further, these are some of the rules, laws and policy level guideline are available in order to implement our mission;

National and State Level Policies, which are going to be helpful

- National Urban Transport Policy: Advisory.
- Indian Penal Code (sec 283) and Sec 34 of Delhi Police Act: obstruction in public space punishable. Recently Chandigarh Police also used it.
- JNNURM – Comprehensive Mobility/Development Plans (CMP/CDP) can be effective instruments. Just pick up the numbers from these reports. Rest all is copy paste.
- Local Government – City Level Regulations and Master Plans for Small, Medium and Big Cities and Towns
- Central Motor Vehicle Safety Rules: Passive protection: but says motorist cannot enter Pedestrian way. Liable to penalty.
- Urban Street Vendor Policy, 2007, to protect livelihood rights – Guidelines for proper vending zones. They are service providers on footpaths.
- Design and Engineering Guidelines by Indian Roads Congress (IRC)
- Disabilities Act 1995 (Sec 44) – Guidelines for Differently Able Persons.
- Recent Justice Verma Report on Criminal Laws in India.
- Honorable Supreme Court and High Court Judgments.

Hope together we will all make it happen – Jai Hind

Navdeep Asija
navdeep.asija@gmail.com
March 11, 2013