



Empowering Women: Unveiling the Importance of Public Transport

*“A Ticket to Ride Can Become a
Ticket to Greater Opportunity”*

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BRIEF

**Bureau of Research on Industry & Economic
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Summary

Background

The policy paper is based on the seminar "Empowering Women: Unveiling the Importance of Public Transport," which took place on September 16, 2024. The seminar brought together experts and stakeholders to delve into crucial topics concerning gender and transport, such as safety, accessibility, and respect. Its main objective was to enhance understanding of the significance of public transport in empowering women economically and advocate for gender-responsive policies that prioritize women's needs and requirements in transportation planning. This paper consolidates the discussions from the seminar and offers practical recommendations to assist policymakers in nurturing inclusive transport systems.

Bridging the Gap: The Intersection of Gender, Public Transport, and Economic Empowerment for Women

Women's empowerment stands at the core of achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive development, necessitating systemic transformations to eliminate barriers hindering women's full participation in social, economic, and political spheres. The global economic repercussions of gender-based violence are substantial, amounting to around 2% of the world's GDP, underlining the critical need to address this issue as underscored by UN Women. In the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index, India holds the 129th position out of 146 countries, facing notable challenges in economic participation, where it ranks 142nd, unveiling significant disparities in women's workforce engagement and resource accessibility.

The deficiency of safe and dependable transportation severely constrains women's opportunities to access employment, education, and healthcare, magnifying existing inequalities. This could be mitigated by enhancing public transport to cater to women's distinct needs and requirements, augment mobility, and encourage economic engagement. India's transportation sector has undergone expansion across various modes, encompassing aviation, metro systems, railways, road transport, and waterways. Public transportation holds particular significance for women, given their comparatively lower ownership of private vehicles and limited access to household transportation.

Research demonstrates pronounced safety apprehensions in public transport networks, dissuading women from utilizing these services. Surveys unveil alarming rates of sexual harassment in numerous cities, with over 90% of women in Delhi recounting experiences of

harassment within the past year. The availability of affordable, secure, and efficient transportation is pivotal in enabling women's involvement in education, healthcare, employment, and communal engagements. To reach the Government of India's economic development goals, policymakers must address women's safety at home, at, and on the way to work as a critical barrier to increased women's labour force participation.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges highlighted, recommendations made by the speakers, and secondary research, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

S. No.	Existing Challenges	Recommendations	Key Stakeholders
1	Lack of centralized research and sharing of best practices on inclusive transport systems.	Establish a National Level Research and Development (R&D) Department under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to study, develop, implement, and scale gender-sensitive and inclusive transport systems. This should include sharing best practices across states and municipalities to move beyond pilot approaches.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), state and local transport departments, academic institutions, private sector, and international organisations.
2	Insufficient safety policies and lack of enforcement mechanisms to address sexual harassment in public transport systems.	Implement a Zero Tolerance Policy for Sexual Harassment for all transport service providers across public and private sectors. Train drivers and conductors on their role and responsibility in enforcing this policy.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), transport service providers, state and local transport departments.
3	Women and marginalized communities lack awareness of safety resources and helplines to address harassment in public spaces.	Advisory for Mandatory Awareness Sessions on Women's Safety and Harassment Response Mechanisms in all educational and skill development institutions, as well as workplaces. Advertisements on public transportation and at bus stops.	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Labour & Employment, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), state & local transport departments, and Civil Society Organisations.

S. No.	Existing Challenges	Recommendations	Key Stakeholders
4	Gender-insensitive transport planning and education lead to the exclusion of women and marginalized communities in transport systems.	Integrate gender sensitivity and inclusivity into transport education programmes in universities, technical institutes, and training centres.	Ministry of Education, institutions offering transport engineering, urban planning, and public policy programmes. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), state and local transport departments
5	Absence of a structured gender-sensitive approach in national, state, and local transport policies.	Systematically integrate women's needs and requirements into transport policies through the creation of a National Gender-Inclusive Transport Policy and Toolkit. Ensure women are consistently & meaningfully consulted in transport planning from the beginning of projects.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), state and local transport departments
6	Public reluctance to intervene during incidents of harassment in public transport systems leads to unsafe environments.	Encourage volunteerism among commuters for bystander interventions in public transport to foster a culture of safety and active citizenship. Conduct bystander intervention campaigns nationally and tailored to states/municipalities.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), local transport authorities, civil society organisations.
7	Inadequate facilities for women and families at transport hubs, make travel inconvenient and unsafe.	Provide gender-sensitive amenities such as restroom facilities, and multipurpose shops for essential travel needs of women and children at transport hubs and along highways.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD)
8	Absence of dedicated gender teams to address gender sensitivity in transport systems.	Mandate the establishment of dedicated gender teams in all transport departments to focus on gender-sensitive planning and implementation.	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), state and local transport departments

S. No.	Existing Challenges	Recommendations	Key Stakeholders
9	Insufficient surveillance and monitoring in public spaces and transport facilities lead to increased crime and harassment.	Mandate the installation of CCTV cameras and panic buttons, and emergency call facilities in transport facilities, public transportation, and public spaces to enhance security and deter crime.	Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), state and local transport departments
10	The transport sector faces significant gender disparities, with women underrepresented in various roles, including driving, management, and technical positions.	Implementing Policies to Increase Women's Recruitment in the Transport Sector and City Planning	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Ministry of Skill Development, state and local transport departments

Background

This policy paper results from the seminar "Empowering Women: Unveiling the Importance of Public Transport," held on 16th September 2024. The event convened experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from government, urban transport, aviation, land ports, academia, and NGOs. It served as a platform for in-depth discussions on gender and transport, focusing on critical issues such as safety, accessibility, reliability, affordability, design, comfort, respect, and dignity.

Key insights from the seminar highlighted the pressing need for targeted policy interventions to address these challenges. This paper synthesizes the main outcomes of those discussions and offers actionable recommendations to enhance women's access to safe and equitable public transportation.

The following sections present the key findings and policy proposals that emerged from the seminar, providing a comprehensive strategy to improve transport systems. These recommendations are intended to guide policymakers in fostering inclusive, safe, and accessible public transport for women.

Seminar Objectives

The objectives of the seminar encompass:

- ❖ Raising awareness about the critical importance of public transportation in advancing women's empowerment.
- ❖ Advocating for gender-responsive policies that prioritize women's needs within transportation planning frameworks.
- ❖ Sharing best practices and showcasing successful case studies from diverse regions to promote learning and implementation.
- ❖ Engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including policymakers, transportation authorities, non-governmental organisations, and community representatives, to ensure inclusive dialogue and action.
- ❖ Analyzing the impact of public transit safety on women's economic empowerment and workforce participation.
- ❖ Establishing a collaborative platform to strengthen the US-India partnership in addressing women's travel and safety requirements.

Bridging the Gap: The Intersection of Gender, Public Transport, and Economic Empowerment for Women

The importance of women's empowerment is highlighted in the global effort to achieve gender equality and inclusive development, which involves increasing access to resources and opportunities while removing systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in social, economic, and political realms. ***Empowerment in this context goes beyond individual advancement and requires fundamental changes in the institutional and structural inequalities that sustain gender-based disparities.*** This comprehensive approach involves ending discriminatory practices, improving access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, and addressing the pervasive problem of violence against women.

In India, progress has been achieved in the fields of education and healthcare; however, there are still significant barriers to achieving full empowerment for women. ***Challenges persist in the form of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence and sexual harassment, while women regularly encounter discrimination in both public and private domains.*** The limited involvement of women in the workforce, worsened by societal norms and systemic disparities, hinders their ability to access crucial political and economic opportunities. Addressing these issues is crucial for cultivating a more inclusive and fair society and achieving India's economic development goals.

The economic impact of gender-based violence is significant, with global costs estimated to be around 2% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), amounting to approximately \$1.5 trillion. This highlights the urgent need to address violence against women, a key concern supported by UN Women.

In line with global initiatives, Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) strives to attain gender equality and empower all women and girls. ***This goal includes crucial targets aimed at eradicating violence against women and girls, such as trafficking, sexual exploitation, and harmful practices like child, early, and forced marriage, as well as female genital mutilation.*** Achieving these targets is crucial for establishing a secure and fair environment for women globally.

In the ***2024 Global Gender Gap Index, India is ranked 129th out of 146 countries,*** signalling ongoing challenges in reducing gender inequalities in education, health, and political representation, despite its global obligations. Specifically, in terms of economic participation and opportunity, ***India is ranked 142nd out of 146 countries,*** underscoring significant

discrepancies in women's workforce involvement, pay equality, and access to economic resources. India exhibits one of the lowest levels of economic participation and opportunities for women. **According to the World Bank, India's labor force participation rate in 2023 stood at 32.7% for females and 76.8% for males.** This notable contrast results in a gender disparity of 44.1 percentage points, underscoring the considerable barriers that women face in accessing economic opportunities compared to men.

These disparities are influenced by several factors, such as deeply ingrained cultural norms that uphold gender roles, inadequate support for women balancing work and family responsibilities, and insufficient transportation infrastructure. Women's access to employment, education, and healthcare is significantly restricted by the lack of dependable and safe transportation options, which worsens existing inequalities. Numerous research reports consistently emphasize the difficulties women encounter in using public transportation.

The World Bank's report titled Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces in India underscores the interplay between safety concerns, accessibility, and societal norms, which often limit women's mobility and presence in public spaces. Addressing the critical nexus between gender equality and public transport is essential.

By enhancing public transport facilities with a focus on women's unique needs, policymakers can enable greater mobility, independence, and economic participation for women. This strategic shift not only mitigates their vulnerability to violence and harassment but also improves access to opportunities, thereby contributing to gender equality and broader economic development.

Empowering Women through Safe and Inclusive Public Transportation

The sustained growth of a nation relies heavily on a well-connected and efficient transportation system. ***In India, the transport sector has expanded significantly over the years, encompassing various modes such as aviation, metro, railways, road transport, and waterways, both in terms of network coverage and system output.***

Transportation is crucial for promoting economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. ***In a country like India, where gender disparities are pronounced, the development of gender-responsive transportation systems can significantly empower women by addressing the specific challenges they face, including safety concerns, societal norms, and limited economic means.*** Access to affordable, safe, and efficient transportation is vital for women to participate in education, healthcare, employment, and social activities. Public transportation becomes a crucial factor in women's travel, as women have lower ownership of private vehicles and less access and autonomy in using household vehicles. Therefore, initiatives focused on enhancing the safety, dependability, and convenience of public transportation could have a particularly positive impact on women's mobility.

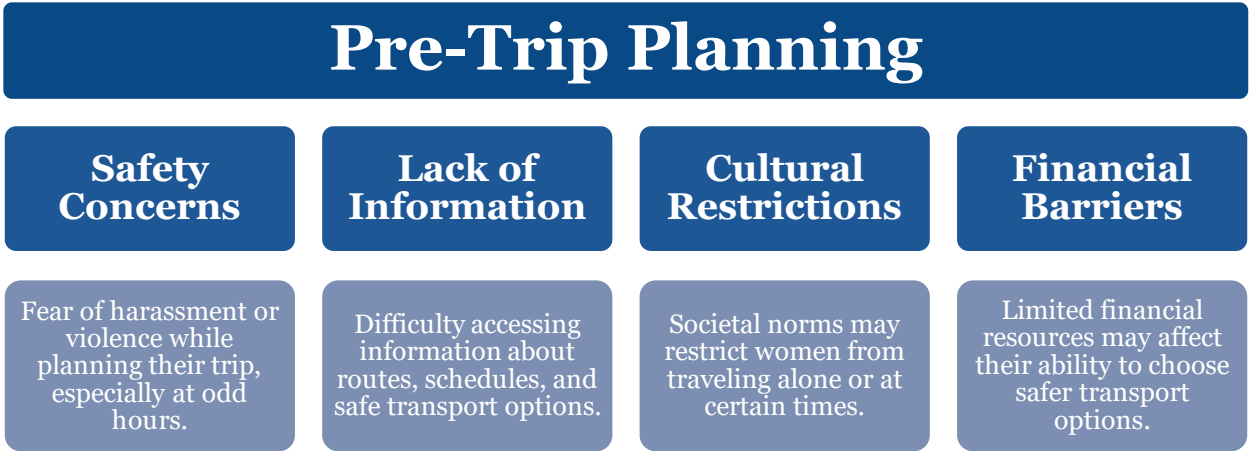
Safety concerns in public transportation systems significantly discourage women from traveling across various demographics, as numerous studies in India highlighted.

For example, a survey in Delhi found that more than 90% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in the past year (Jagori, 2010). Research revealed that 51% of respondents encountered harassment while using public transport, while 42% experienced it while waiting for transportation. Similar studies in Mumbai, Kerala, Guwahati, and Bengaluru reported disturbingly high incidences of sexual harassment and violence against women. In a 2010 study by Sakhi focusing on two cities in Kerala, 71% of women in Kozhikode faced harassment while waiting for public transport, and 69% reported similar experiences while using it. In Trivandrum, over 80% of women indicated they had experienced sexual harassment during their journeys or while waiting. A survey conducted in Mumbai by Akshara in 2013 found that 46% of women experienced harassment on buses, with 17% reporting similar encounters on trains. Furthermore, a collaborative study by Safe Safar, Safetipin, and University College London (UCL) in Lucknow revealed that 88% of participants had received sexual comments while using public transport. The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) survey in 2013, indicated that two-thirds of female commuters regularly experienced harassment. Additionally, the 2014 Thomson Reuters Foundation survey ranked Delhi as the fourth most dangerous city for

public transport users worldwide, following Bogota, Lima, and Mexico City (Social Policy Research Foundation SPRF, 2024). A global Labour survey by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2017 identified limited access to safe transportation as the greatest challenge to participation that women face in developing countries, reducing their participation probability by 15.5 percentage points. According to a 2021 study by the Observer Research Foundation, 56% of women reported being sexually harassed while using public transport. This study also found that half of the respondents avoided pursuing work or educational opportunities due to safety concerns during commutes. Furthermore, 63% of women cited inadequate infrastructure and a history of accidents as primary reasons for their safety apprehensions, while 86% expressed a willingness to utilise public transport more frequently if it were perceived as safer, cleaner, and better connected. The persistent safety issues faced by women on public transportation led to travel patterns skewed towards daytime hours and shorter distances.

Specific challenges and context of women's transport issues in India

To understand the issues women, face while traveling, it is essential to examine the different stages of their journey. Each stage presents unique challenges that affect their overall travel experience. The stages of traveling, especially in the context of public transport, can be broken down into several distinct phases. These stages represent a passenger's complete journey, from planning to arrival at their destination.



Access to Public Transport

Limited Availability

Insufficient public transport options, particularly in off-peak hours and in rural areas.

Physical Barriers

Lack of accessible infrastructure (e.g., ramps, designated seating).

Harassment

Fear of verbal or physical harassment while waiting for or boarding transport.

Cost

High fares can be prohibitive, especially for low-income women.

Waiting Stage

Insecurity

Feeling unsafe while waiting at bus stops or train stations, especially at night.

Long Wait Times

Extended periods of waiting due to delays can be frustrating and increase vulnerability.

Lack of Facilities

Inadequate waiting areas, including the absence of proper seating, lighting, or sanitation facilities.

Boarding the Vehicle

Crowding

Difficulty boarding crowded vehicles, leading to discomfort and vulnerability.

Harassment

Increased risk of harassment during the boarding process.

Accessibility Issues

Challenges for women with disabilities in finding suitable boarding options.

In-Transit Experience

Harassment and Misbehaviour

Facing unwanted attention or harassment from fellow passengers.

Safety Concerns

Worrying about personal safety, particularly in crowded or poorly monitored vehicles.

Lack of Privacy

Difficulty finding personal space in crowded vehicles can be uncomfortable.

Transfers (if any)

Navigational Challenges

Difficulty finding connections or navigating transfer points.

Inadequate Infrastructure

Poorly designed transfer points can lead to longer wait times and exposure to risk.

Accessibility Issues

Lack of ramps or elevators at transfer stations complicates transitions for women with children or disabilities.

Alighting/Disembarking

Crowding

Difficulty safely disembarking from crowded vehicles.

Harassment

Increased risk of harassment when exiting a vehicle, particularly in busy areas.

Physical Barriers

Lack of accessible facilities at disembarkation points can be challenging.

Last Mile Connectivity

Limited Options

Difficulty finding reliable transport options from the last public transport stop to their final destination.

Safety Concerns

Feeling unsafe while walking or waiting for additional transport.

Inadequate Infrastructure

Poorly lit or maintained pathways and streets can pose safety risks.

Post-Trip

Lack of Support

Difficulty accessing support services if they face issues or harassment during their trip.

Reflection on Experience

Emotional toll from negative experiences during the journey may affect future travel choices.

Transportation Availability

Challenges in arranging further transport to reach their final destination.

Each stage impacts the overall travel experience, especially regarding accessibility, safety, design, infrastructure, affordability, comfort, and amenities. Focusing on all these stages in public transport planning ensures that passenger needs are met at every point of the journey.

Stage of Journey	Accessibility	Safety	Design	Affordability	Comfort	Amenities
Pre-Trip Planning	Accessible digital platforms for all users, including the disabled & elderly. Increased route options at off-peak hours.	Provide safe route & vehicle information	Easy-to-navigate apps	Affordable digital passes, fare calculators	Seat reservations for long trips	Public toilets information
Access to Public Transport	Feeder services (e-rickshaws, autos, etc.) to stations	Well-lit pathways, CCTV, police patrolling	Women-friendly designs of Intermediate Public Transport	Low-cost IPT services	Adequate seating, personal space	Public toilets, multipurpose stores
Waiting Stage	Designated areas for differently abled and elderly; clear announcements	Security personnel, CCTV, lighting	Well-lit, spacious waiting areas	Information on ticket fares	Comfortable seating, weather protection	Public toilets, multipurpose stores, nursing rooms, sanitary pad vending machines, and diaper-changing stations for women with children
Boarding the Vehicle	Reserved/Assisted boarding for vulnerable groups	Security personnel for safe boarding	Priority zones for differently abled/elderly/pregnant women	Affordable pricing models	Spacious boarding areas, queue management	Easy ticketing facilities (lower ticket counters for PWDs/elderly/pregnant women)
In-Transit Experience	Dedicated seats for women, elderly, & disabled	CCTV, alarms, real-time tracking, emergency buttons, & direct communication facility with the	Designs for varied needs (such as height, clothing, and strategic placement of reserved seats)	Subsidized fares for marginalized groups	Comfortable seating, proper ventilation	N/A

Stage of Journey	Accessibility	Safety	Design	Affordability	Comfort	Amenities
		driver or station staff.				
Transfers (if any)	Ramps, clear signage for differently abled	Security presence, CCTV, lighting	Intuitive design to reduce confusion, proper signages, wayfinding features in mobile apps or QR code-generated maps	Seamless and cost-effective transfers	Sheltered walkways, clean spaces	Toilets/multipurpose stores at major transfer points
Alighting/Disembarking	Reserved exit areas for vulnerable passengers	Security support during alighting	Safe, well-marked exit zones	Low-cost last-mile solutions	Safe, comfortable disembarking spaces	N/A
Last Mile Connectivity	Affordable & accessible options (rickshaws, ride shares)	Monitored, affordable last-mile modes	Universal design for all users	Subsidized last-mile services	Reliable, comfortable ride-share options	Toilets at last-mile hubs
Post-Trip Experience	Accessible feedback mechanisms for all	Channels for reporting safety issues	User-friendly feedback systems	Free/affordable reporting methods	Satisfaction-oriented feedback mechanisms	N/A
Across all stages	Establishing rules for the unorganized transport sector, including autos, cabs, and bike taxis, to enhance accessibility for safe and reliable first, and last-mile connectivity. Increased route options at off-peak hours.	Training of transport staff/ Bystander Campaigns/ Comprehensive SOPs of complaint redressal/ Police Patrolling/ Monitoring of CCTVs/emergency buttons and other safety measures	Designing spaces that provide ample room for both comfortable standing and seating	Affordable fares with off-peak and needy passenger concessions.	Design stations and vehicles to be welcoming and comfortable for women, with women-friendly signage and posters.	Well-maintained toilets and multipurpose stores.

Insights from Speakers

Geeta Rao Gupta

**Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, U.S.
Department of State (S/GWI)**

- ✦ **Personal Experience:** Highlighted the role of personal experience in understanding barriers women face in public transportation.
- ✦ **Accessibility Importance:** Minor adjustments, like altering bus driver height criteria, significantly enhance women's participation, stressing the need for inclusive policies.
- ✦ **Statistical Evidence:** Cited Observer Research Foundation data on women's dependency on public transport and their concerns about safety.
- ✦ **Economic Impact:** Linked safety issues to reduced educational and job prospects for women, impacting Labour force participation, with parallels in global South studies.
- ✦ **Interconnected Issues:** Addressed gender violence and safe transportation as intertwined factors crucial for women's economic security and societal participation.
- ✦ **Collaborative Solutions:** Advocated for cross-sector partnerships (government, private sector, NGOs, academia) to ensure women's safety in transit.
- ✦ **Commitment to Change:** Reinforced commitment to championing women's rights and transforming public transport into an empowerment tool.
- ✦ **Collective Action:** Called for joint efforts to eliminate transport barriers, connecting safety to economic opportunities and promoting systemic change.

Sudhendu J. Sinha

Advisor, Infrastructure-Connectivity, NITI Aayog,
Government of India

- ✦ **Transport as a Tool for Inclusivity:** Emphasized the integral role of inclusive transport systems, ensuring accessibility for women, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups. Citing Rosa Parks and Mahatma Gandhi, he highlighted transport's impact on social change and empowerment.
- ✦ **Economic Potential:** Noted that enhancing women's access to transport could add \$28 trillion to global shipping by 2025.
- ✦ **Global Best Practices:** Referenced cities like Barcelona, Vienna, and Tokyo, known for their emphasis on safe, affordable, and accessible public transport, which has integrated gender considerations and boosted women's public participation.
- ✦ **Women's Participation in Infrastructure Design:** Advocated for greater involvement of women in public transport planning to better address their needs, enhancing safety and accessibility.
- ✦ **Adopt Gender-Sensitive Design:** Suggested practical changes, such as lowering bus steps, to improve accessibility and comfort for women.
- ✦ **Women-Led Development:** Promoted women-led development, positioning women at the forefront of public transport policy and infrastructure design.
- ✦ **Call to Action:** Urged targeted interventions to improve transport systems for women, stressing the need for stakeholder collaboration.

Rekha Raikar Kumar

Member (Finance), Land Port Authority of India, Government of India

- ✦ **Importance of Gender Mainstreaming:** Emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation, particularly in land ports, highlighting its critical role in ensuring safety and security for all, especially women.
- ✦ **Focus on Basic Amenities:** Highlighted the importance of fundamental amenities, like clean and accessible toilets, enhancing the travel experience and safety of women and should be prioritized in planning and development.
- ✦ **Safety Measures:** Implementation of safety measures, such as CCTV monitoring and women-operated help desks, is necessary to create a secure environment for all users of the land ports.
- ✦ **Transportation Services:** Establishing shuttle services for women commuting to and from work or traveling as passengers can improve accessibility and safety, particularly for those coming from nearby villages and towns.

Mehnaz Ansari

USTDA Sr. Regional Representative- South Asia, US Embassy

- ✦ **Establishment of Gender Empowerment Group:** Formed in 2016 due to embassy staff's personal safety issues in public transport.
- ✦ **Women Drivers for Safety:** The U.S. Embassy introduced women drivers for late evening transport, enhancing safety for female employees.
- ✦ **Inclusive Design Advocacy:** Highlighted the need for gender-sensitive design in airports and aircraft to address women's travel needs.
- ✦ **Limited Opportunities in Aviation:** Noted the lack of roles for women in aviation, despite aspirations from young women in smaller towns.
- ✦ **Gender Representation in Delegations:** Emphasized the need for higher female presence in policymaking and delegation teams to address gender-specific issues effectively.
- ✦ **Ground-up Call for Action:** Advocated for integrating women into decision-making

Kalpna Viswanath

Co-founder and CEO of SafetiPin

- ✦ **Global Safety Context:** Safety concerns impacting women are a global issue, transcending cultural boundaries. While contexts vary, safety challenges for women persist universally.
- ✦ **Perception's Influence:** Safety perception heavily shapes women's choices in employment, education, and mobility—often outweighing the actual threat of violence.
- ✦ **Shared Safety Responsibility:** Ensuring safety is a collective responsibility, not solely on women. Shift the narrative from protection to rights, promoting shared accountability for safer spaces.
- ✦ **Distinct Travel Needs:** Women's travel patterns differ due to caregiving roles and varied travel schedules, requiring gender-sensitive transport planning.
- ✦ **Economic Impact of Travel:** The "pink tax" imposes extra travel costs on women, limiting their access to opportunities and economic freedom.
- ✦ **Last-Mile Connectivity:** Poor last-mile solutions undermine public transport's effectiveness, making safe, accessible connectivity critical for women.
- ✦ **Natural Surveillance:** Higher visibility of women in public spaces enhances safety. Urban designs should prioritize active street-level engagement to deter crime.
- ✦ **Inclusive Policy Development:** Gender-responsive planning must integrate diverse perspectives—young, elderly, and low-income women—to address varied experiences effectively.
- ✦ **Holistic Urban Planning:** Transport strategies should align with broader public health, infrastructure, and urban design initiatives for truly inclusive, safe cities.
- ✦ **Evaluating Progress:** Define and monitor change indicators to assess the impact of gender-responsive policies in transport and urban environments.

Sonal Shah

Executive Director, The Urban Catalyst

Case Study 1: Safe and Secure Public Transport in Delhi

Background

This case study examines an initiative designed to improve women's and girls' safety and travel experience using public transport in Delhi, India. The project was spearheaded by The Urban Catalysts in collaboration with the Delhi Government. The primary goal was to address existing service gaps and mitigate safety concerns for women on public buses.

Location: Delhi, India

Transport Issue/Challenge:

The core challenge was the lack of safety and reliability in the city's public buses, particularly for female passengers, due to overcrowding, limited access to real-time information, and prevalent harassment concerns.

Objectives

The initiative set out to establish a safer and more dependable travel environment for women and girls on public transportation in Delhi.

Primary Objective:

- Improve women's safety and security during bus commutes.

Secondary Objectives:

- Provide real-time bus information to facilitate safe travel decisions.
- Raise awareness of safety measures such as SOS buttons and reporting mechanisms.
- Gather gender-disaggregated data to better tailor transport services for women.

Description of the Initiative

The project adopted a multifaceted approach to addressing the safety needs of women using public buses in Delhi, particularly focusing on implementing safety features in a pilot e-bus route.

Key Components:

- **Target Population:** Women and girls commuting on public buses in Delhi.
- **Pilot Route:** An e-bus pilot route was selected for the deployment of safety enhancements.
- **Onboard Surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Conducted with 692 female commuters and depot staff to understand existing safety concerns and service gaps.
- **Technological Improvements:** Real-time bus arrival information was made available through the One Delhi mobile app.

- **Safety Measures:** Panic buttons were installed on buses, and an awareness campaign was initiated to educate passengers about how to use the new safety features and reporting mechanisms.
- **Awareness Campaign:** Focused on educating female passengers regarding the available safety initiatives, fostering a culture of vigilance and active reporting.

Lessons Learned

The initiative yielded critical insights for improving the safety of women in public transportation:

- **Success Factors:** The integration of technology, such as real-time information systems and the deployment of panic buttons, significantly enhanced passengers' sense of security.
- **Scalability & Transferability:** This model can be effectively replicated in other cities facing similar safety challenges in public transport.

Conclusion

The initiative demonstrated that a technology-driven approach, complemented by targeted awareness campaigns, can significantly elevate both the perception and actual safety of women using public transportation. The emphasis on gathering gender-disaggregated data allowed for more informed planning and service delivery. This comprehensive strategy not only improved security but also empowered women to travel with increased confidence and autonomy, thereby contributing to their broader economic and social empowerment.

Monica Kumar

Founder Member, Manas Foundation

Case Study 2: Gender Responsive Public Transport System- Mera Imaan, Mahilaaon Ka Sammaan

Background

This project focuses on empowering auto, taxi, and cab drivers to take an active role in ensuring women's safety in public transportation. Through targeted training, drivers are educated about harassment laws, professional conduct, and their role as key agents of change in creating safer travel environments. The goal is not only to improve service quality but also to foster a cultural shift where women feel secure, respected, and empowered to move freely within the city. By transforming both the perception and reality of safety, the project aims to make public transport an inclusive and supportive space for women.

- **Location:** Delhi, India
- **Transport Issue/Challenge:**

Women in Delhi face significant safety concerns when using public transport, particularly during last-mile connectivity with auto-rickshaws, taxis, and cabs. The challenge includes both real and perceived threats of street harassment, contributing to anticipatory anxiety in public spaces.

Objectives

- **Main Objective:**
To transform public transport drivers into active agents of change, enhancing the safety and perception of safety for female passengers.
- **Secondary Objectives:**
 - Raise drivers' awareness of gender-based harassment.
 - Promote professionalism and work ethics among drivers.
 - Build ongoing partnerships with drivers to sustain long-term behavioural changes.

Description of the Initiative

- **Key Components:**
 - **Gender Sensitization Training:** Workshops for auto and taxi drivers on how subtle behaviours can contribute to harassment.
 - **Awareness of Legal Changes:** Educating drivers about new laws related to public and sexual harassment.
 - **Professionalism and Ethics:** Reinforcing the need for drivers to view their role as contributing to public safety.
 - **Ongoing Engagement:** Scholarships, cohort meetings, and home visits to sustain a personal connection to the cause.
 - **Helpline Services:** A dedicated helpline for drivers to safely report incidents or seek assistance without being treated as perpetrators.

Lessons Learned

- **What Worked Well:**
 - The gender sensitization workshops were effective in changing the behaviour of drivers, turning them into allies for women's safety.
 - The continuous engagement, including cohort meetings and scholarships, helped sustain the drivers' connection to the cause.
 - The introduction of helpline services empowered drivers to safely report or intervene in incidents.
- **Transferability/Scalability:**
 - The initiative can be replicated in other cities, such as Mumbai or Kolkata, with appropriate modifications to fit local contexts.
 - Collaboration with local governments and transport unions would help scale the programme further and ensure long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The initiative demonstrates the potential of gender sensitization and community engagement to transform drivers into partners in promoting women's safety. The programme has fostered significant behavioural changes among drivers, helping create safer, more inclusive urban spaces. With further refinement and expansion, the initiative could be scaled to address similar challenges in other urban environments across India.

Rajalakshmi Selvaraj

Additional General Manager, Chennai Metro Rail Limited

Case Study 3: Enhancing Women's Safety and Accessibility in Chennai Metro

Background

This case study explores the initiatives undertaken by **Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL)** to create a safer, more accessible, and gender-sensitive public transportation system in Chennai, India. The project focused on providing safer commuting experiences for women and addressing the unique challenges they face in public transport.

- **Location:** Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
- **Transport Issue/Challenge:** While Chennai's Metro system is efficient and modern, concerns about women's safety, particularly during off-peak hours, remain a barrier to the full utilization of public transport by women.

Objectives

The initiatives by Chennai Metro aim to ensure a safe, inclusive, and comfortable commuting experience for women and other vulnerable groups.

- **Main Objective:** Improve the safety and accessibility of the Chennai Metro for women and marginalized groups.
- **Secondary Objectives:**
 - Create safer public spaces within metro stations and on trains.
 - Encourage greater use of public transport among women by addressing safety concerns.
 - Implement technological solutions to enhance real-time monitoring and response to safety incidents.

Description of the Initiative

Chennai Metro undertook several measures to enhance the safety and accessibility of its services, particularly for women commuters. These measures ranged from infrastructural improvements to technological innovations aimed at ensuring a safer environment.

- **Key Components:**
 - **Dedicated Women-Only Coaches:** Introduction of women-only coaches in metro trains to provide a safer travel environment.
 - **CCTV Surveillance:** Installation of 1,000+ CCTV cameras across metro stations and trains for 24/7 surveillance, monitored by a dedicated security team.
 - **SOS Buttons:** Panic buttons were installed inside metro stations and trains for immediate response to emergencies.
 - **Women Security Personnel:** Deployment of female security officers 'Pink Squads' at all metro stations to assist and safeguard women passengers.
 - **Lighting and Infrastructure Improvements:** Enhanced lighting and improved pedestrian pathways in and around metro stations for safer access, especially during night hours.

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Public campaigns to promote safety protocols and inform commuters about available safety measures, including emergency helplines.

Lessons Learned

Chennai Metro's safety initiatives offer several important lessons for improving public transport safety in urban environments.

- **What Worked Well:** The combination of women-only coaches, real-time CCTV monitoring, and the presence of female security personnel was highly effective in improving safety perceptions.
- **Transferability/Scalability:** The model of women-only coaches, safety infrastructure, and real-time monitoring is easily scalable to other urban public transport systems across India and globally.

Conclusion

Chennai Metro's initiative to enhance safety and accessibility for women is a successful example of a gender-sensitive public transport system. By combining infrastructure improvements with real-time safety measures, the metro has become a safer and more appealing option for women commuters in Chennai.

Meenu Vadera

Founder of Sakha Consulting Wings

Case Study 4: Women with Wheels: The Sakha Initiative

Background

This case study explores the **Sakha Initiative**, an innovative programme aimed at providing marginalized women with sustainable livelihoods in the transport sector. The initiative focuses on employing women as drivers in the traditionally male-dominated public transport industry, ensuring their economic empowerment while creating safer transportation options for women passengers.

- **Location:** Delhi, India
- **Transport Issue/Challenge:** Women, particularly from marginalized communities, face limited employment opportunities in the transport sector. Additionally, many women commuters feel unsafe while using public transport, further exacerbating gender inequality in mobility.

Objectives

The Sakha Initiative aims to create a safe, gender-sensitive environment in the transport industry while providing marginalized women with dignified, remunerative livelihoods.

- **Main Objective:** Empower marginalized women by providing them with employment opportunities in the transport sector.

- **Secondary Objectives:**
 - Create safer public transport options for women passengers.
 - Influence policy and the transport industry to hire women drivers.
 - Foster gender-sensitive social infrastructure and markets.

Description of the Initiative

Sakha Consulting Wings operates through multiple verticals, including chauffeur services and rider placement, to provide employment to women and promote safe rides for female commuters.

- **Key Components:**
 - **Sakha Cab & Chauffeur Hire:** A service employing women drivers to offer safe rides to women and families.
 - **Sakha Chauffeur Placement & Rider Placement:** These verticals place women as professional drivers with private clients and companies.
 - **Training Programmes:** Marginalized women receive rights-based and technical skills training to become professional drivers.

Lessons Learned

The Sakha Initiative has provided valuable insights into empowering women through non-traditional livelihoods in the transport sector.

- **What Worked Well:** Engaging marginalized women with rights-based training and technical skills was key to their retention and success in the transport sector.
- **Transferability/Scalability:** The Sakha model has been successfully scaled to multiple cities across India and has inspired similar initiatives globally, in places like Timor-Leste and Ghana.

Conclusion

The Sakha Initiative demonstrates the impact of women's empowerment in transforming public transport. By training marginalized women as professional drivers, Sakha not only provides dignified employment but also improves safety for female passengers. Expanding this initiative to include various transport roles can further enhance safety perceptions and encourage more women to use public transportation.

Meera Sundararajan

Gender and M & E Expert, Gender and Policy Lab, Greater Chennai Corporation

Case Study 5: Gender and Policy Lab: Promoting Gender-Inclusive Urban Development in Chennai

Background

The **Gender and Policy Lab**, is a part of the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and focuses on addressing gender disparities in urban spaces, particularly in transportation, public safety, and infrastructure development. By integrating gender-sensitive policies into urban planning, the lab

seeks to create inclusive and safe environments for women, transgender individuals, and other marginalized communities.

- **Location:** Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
- **Transport Issue/Challenge:** Chennai, like many Indian cities, faces challenges related to gender inequality in public spaces and transportation. Women and other marginalized communities experience heightened safety concerns, limited mobility, and a lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure, which hampers their access to education, employment, and public services.

Objectives

The Gender and Policy Lab aims to integrate gender considerations into urban policy-making and planning to make cities safer and more inclusive.

- **Main Objective:** Develop gender-inclusive urban policies that address the mobility, safety, and infrastructure needs of women and marginalized groups in Chennai.
- **Secondary Objectives:**
 - Conduct research and data collection on gender disparities in urban spaces.
 - Collaborate with city departments to integrate gender-sensitive designs into public transportation, infrastructure, and services.
 - Raise awareness about gender equality and inclusivity in urban policy-making.

Description of the Initiative

The Gender and Policy Lab operates as a think-tank and policy development center focused on improving the accessibility, safety, and inclusivity of urban spaces in Chennai. Its work spans across various areas of urban planning, transportation, and public services, aiming to integrate gender perspectives into policy design and implementation.

- **Project Start Date:** 2022
- **Key Components:**
 - **Data-Driven Policy Design:** The lab collects gender-disaggregated data to identify mobility patterns, safety concerns, and infrastructure gaps. This data informs the creation of gender-sensitive policies.
 - **Public Transportation Initiatives:** Collaborations with Chennai Metro and the city's bus services focus on making public transportation safer and more accessible for women and marginalized groups.
 - **Safe Public Spaces:** The lab works with urban planners to redesign parks, streets, and public areas with a focus on lighting, security, and ease of movement for women and vulnerable populations.
 - **Community Engagement:** Workshops, focus group discussions, and surveys are conducted with women, transgender individuals, and the urban poor to ensure that policy recommendations reflect their lived experiences.

Lessons Learned

The Gender and Policy Lab has provided key insights into how cities can be redesigned to meet the needs of all genders.

- **What Worked Well:** The lab’s data-driven approach and community engagement model were highly effective in identifying and addressing gender-specific issues in public spaces and transportation.
- **Transferability/Scalability:** The success of the Gender and Policy Lab in Chennai has inspired other Indian cities to consider similar gender-focused urban policy initiatives.

Conclusion

The Gender and Policy Lab in Chennai has set a new benchmark for gender-sensitive urban planning in India. By integrating gender considerations into transportation, public safety, and infrastructure policies, the lab has successfully created a more inclusive and equitable urban environment for women and marginalized groups.

Summarising Key Challenges Identified by Speakers

The challenges faced by women in accessing public transportation are multifaceted and have been powerfully articulated by various speakers.

1. **Barriers to Women's Access to Public Transportation:** Women encounter significant obstacles in accessing public transport, including issues related to safety, convenience, and infrastructure that fail to address their unique mobility needs.
2. **Safety and Security Concerns:** A large proportion of women report feeling unsafe while using public transportation, with gender-based violence and harassment acting as substantial barriers to their mobility.
3. **Lack of Awareness of Rights and Resources:** Many women are unaware of their rights and available resources related to public transportation, such as reporting harassment or accessing safe travel options, which can hinder their ability to advocate for themselves and navigate transportation systems effectively.
4. **Underreporting of Harassment Incidents:** Harassment cases on public transportation are often underreported due to social stigma, ineffective reporting mechanisms, and lack of trust in authorities, further exacerbating safety concerns.

5. **Indifference of Transport Staff Toward Women's Issues:** A pervasive lack of sensitivity and awareness among transport staff regarding the specific challenges faced by women, and transport staff's role and responsibility in creating a safe environment, contributes to an unsafe and unwelcoming environment for female passengers.
6. **Lack of Respect and Dignity in Service:** Women often face disrespectful treatment from transport staff and other passengers, leading to feelings of humiliation that deter them from using public transportation.
7. **Deficient Real-time Information on Transport Services:** The absence of accurate and timely information regarding transport routes, schedules, and services limits women's ability to plan safe and efficient journeys.
8. **Inadequate Amenities for Women on Long-Distance Routes:** Long-distance transportation options often fail to provide essential amenities such as well-maintained restrooms, proper seating, and well-lit waiting areas, compromising comfort and safety for women.
9. **Insufficient Involvement of Women in Transport Planning:** The limited participation of women in the design and planning of public transportation infrastructure leads to systems that are not responsive to their safety and accessibility requirements.
10. **Economic Impacts of Limited Transportation Access:** Inadequate access to safe and reliable transportation restricts women's participation in education and employment, adversely affecting labour force inclusion and contributing to broader economic disparities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Establish a National Level Research and Development (R&D) Department under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of India to Foster Inclusive Transport Systems

An R&D department at the national level will provide a **centralized and specialized body** to study best practices, identify challenges, and implement and scale data-driven solutions tailored to the diverse needs of India's population.

Rationale:

By concentrating expertise in one entity, this department can support state and local transport bodies with:

- **Innovative designs** for safer, more accessible transport infrastructure.
- **Evidence-based policy recommendations** rooted in cutting-edge research.
- **Custom solutions** for different regions, accounting for urban and rural differences.
- **Technical support and training** to ensure transport departments nationwide are equipped to implement gender-sensitive and inclusive systems.

This will enable a **coordinated national effort** toward making India's transport systems more inclusive and efficient while ensuring that no group is left behind. It will also foster **cross-sector collaboration** with government departments, academic institutions, private sector experts, and international organisations, enhancing India's capacity to innovate and build world-class inclusive transport solutions. A focus should be on sharing and scaling best practices that are already being piloted.

Recommendation 2: Zero Tolerance Policy for Sexual Harassment Across All Transport Service Providers

It is recommended that a **Zero Tolerance Policy for Sexual Harassment** be mandated for all public and private transport service providers across India.

This policy should be enforced by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)**, ensuring strict measures against any form of harassment within transport services.

Rationale:

- **Women's Safety and Mobility:** Sexual harassment is one of the primary barriers to women using public transport, which limits their mobility and access to employment, education, and healthcare. By establishing and implementing a **zero-tolerance** policy, women can feel more confident and safer in public spaces, encouraging their participation in public life and boosting economic and social opportunities.
- **Creating a Culture of Accountability:** A zero-tolerance policy will set a clear standard of behaviour in public transport, where all forms of harassment are met with immediate and firm action. This sends a strong message to perpetrators that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not go unpunished, thus creating a safer environment for everyone.
- **Strengthening Reporting Mechanisms:** Often, harassment in public transport goes unreported due to a lack of clear reporting channels or fear of inaction. By providing accessible reporting tools and ensuring prompt redressal, victims can be encouraged to come forward, thereby improving the system's responsiveness and transparency.
- **Training Transport Drivers & Staff:** Standardized training on gender sensitivity and respectful conduct will equip drivers and staff to handle situations appropriately, enhancing safety for all passengers. By fostering professionalism and awareness, this training will help create a safer, more respectful environment in public transport.

This initiative aligns with India's broader goals of achieving gender equality and enhancing women's participation in the workforce, contributing to safer and more inclusive public spaces.

Recommendation 3: Empowering Women through Awareness Generation in Educational and Skill Development Institutions, and workplaces

It is recommended that a mandatory awareness session on safety, including information on helpline numbers, complaint mechanisms, and how to address instances of harassment or violence, be incorporated into the orientation programmes of all educational and skill development institutions, and workplaces across India for all genders. This initiative can be driven by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and the Ministry of Labour & Employment in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).

Rationale:

- **Strengthening Women's Safety:** Raising awareness among women and young girls about the resources available to them in cases of harassment or violence will significantly enhance their safety and confidence. Often, women are unaware of the tools and mechanisms available to protect themselves or how to navigate legal and institutional procedures. By incorporating these sessions into orientation programmes, institutions/organisations can empower women to take informed actions when needed. By raising awareness among men and boys as well, a culture of prevention is created.
- **Promoting a Culture of Empowerment:** Educational institutions are key spaces where cultural and societal norms are shaped. Incorporating gender safety awareness from the start will encourage a culture of empowerment, where students—both male and female—understand their role in creating a safe, harassment-free environment. It will also help sensitize young men to the issues women face, promoting more respectful behaviour.
- **Addressing Knowledge Gaps:** Many women, especially those from marginalized or rural backgrounds, may not have easy access to information about legal protections or complaint mechanisms. Making this part of institutional orientation programmes ensures that such crucial information reaches women across different socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Institutional Accountability:** By mandating awareness sessions in educational and skill development institutions, and workplaces, the government can ensure that these institutions/organisations are not just places of learning/work but also safe spaces that actively promote the well-being of their students/employees.

This recommendation aligns with the objectives of government initiatives like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, promoting gender equality and safety, and supports the larger framework of building inclusive and safe environments for women in India.

Recommendation 4: Incorporating Gender Sensitivity and Inclusivity into Transport Education

It is recommended that gender sensitivity and inclusivity be integrated into transport education programmes at universities, technical institutes, and training centres specializing in transport engineering, urban planning, and public policy. This initiative can be led by the Ministry of Education in partnership with various institutions specializing in transportation studies.

Rationale:

- **Creating a Responsive Future Workforce:** Transport professionals play a critical role in designing systems that influence the daily lives of millions of people. By incorporating gender sensitivity and inclusivity into their education, future professionals will be equipped to design transport systems that cater to the unique mobility needs of different genders and marginalized communities. This proactive approach will foster a workforce that is **more aware, empathetic, and responsive** to these issues.
- **Addressing Gender Disparities in Transportation:** Women and marginalized groups often face significant challenges in accessing safe and reliable transportation, from harassment to lack of physical accessibility. Educating future transport planners on these issues ensures that such disparities are addressed from the planning and design stages, resulting in a **more equitable and inclusive transportation network**.
- **Supporting National and Global Gender Goals:** Incorporating gender sensitivity into education aligns with India's national goals for **gender equality** and inclusion, as outlined in the **National Policy for Women 2016** and international frameworks like the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality)**. This will also contribute to the government's efforts to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (SDG 11).
- **Long-Term Impact on Infrastructure:** A workforce trained in gender-sensitive transport design will help **build long-term, sustainable, and safe infrastructure** that benefits

all, promoting greater participation of women and marginalized groups in public life and the workforce.

This recommendation is aligned with the broader vision of **creating inclusive public spaces** and empowering individuals through gender-sensitive urban development.

Recommendation 5: Integration of Gender Sensitivity in Transport Policies

It is recommended that transportation systems be designed and managed in a way that considers and addresses the specific needs of different genders, particularly women and marginalised groups, at all levels of governance, including national, state, and local transport planning. This can be achieved through the creation of a National Gender-Inclusive Transport Policy and Toolkit, led by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). This should include mandates for consistent and meaningful inclusion of women throughout the transport policy development, implementation, and monitoring process.

Rationale:

- **Improving Women’s Mobility and Economic Participation:** Gender-sensitive transport policies are crucial to improving **women's access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation**, which is directly linked to their ability to access education, employment, and healthcare. Without policies that address their specific needs and transport usage, women often face barriers such as harassment, poor last-mile connectivity, and unsafe transport hubs, limiting their mobility and economic opportunities.
- **Creating Safer Public Spaces:** Gender sensitivity in transport policy contributes to making public spaces safer. Policies that focus on **enhancing women’s safety**, such as better lighting, safe last-mile connectivity, women-only services, and accessible complaint mechanisms, will reduce instances of harassment and violence. Safer transport environments encourage more women to use public services, increasing ridership and promoting gender equality.
- **Aligning with National and International Commitments:** Gender-sensitive transport policies are aligned with India's commitments to **gender equality** under national programmes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, as well as international frameworks such as

the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality)**. The integration of gender into transport planning helps India meet its broader developmental goals of **inclusive, sustainable urban development** (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities).

- **Enhanced Planning for Vulnerable Groups:** By integrating gender sensitivity, transport policies can also address the needs of other vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, differently-abled individuals, and those from rural or marginalized communities. A gender-sensitive approach is, by nature, inclusive and leads to **more equitable transport systems** that serve a diverse range of users.

This recommendation promotes a long-term, sustainable approach to transport planning that aligns with national development goals and global gender equality frameworks.

Recommendation 6: Encouraging Volunteerism Among Commuters for Bystander Interventions

It is recommended to actively encourage **volunteerism among commuters** to promote **bystander interventions** in public transport systems. This initiative can be led by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, collaborating with local transport authorities and civil society organisations. These stakeholders can develop and implement bystander intervention campaigns at a national level, and tailored to regions and states. The goal is to empower commuters to step in and intervene when they witness harassment or unsafe behaviour in public transport, creating a safer and more inclusive environment.

Rationale:

- **Creating a Safer Public Transport Environment:** Bystander interventions are one of the most effective ways to prevent harassment and violence in public spaces. Empowering everyday commuters to take responsibility for the safety of others will foster a **culture of shared responsibility**, where passengers are more likely to intervene and prevent incidents before they escalate. This will significantly enhance the overall safety of public transport systems.
- **Encouraging Active Citizenship:** Encouraging volunteerism in public transport promotes **active citizenship** by fostering a community-driven approach to safety.

When people feel empowered to intervene, they contribute to a sense of solidarity and mutual protection. This will make public spaces more inclusive, where everyone feels they have a role in ensuring safety and respect for others.

- **Mitigating the Bystander Effect:** Research shows that people are less likely to intervene when they feel that others will take action—a phenomenon known as the **bystander effect**. By actively encouraging commuters to take responsibility and providing them with the tools and confidence to act, this initiative will help **overcome the psychological barriers** that often prevent people from stepping in during critical moments.
- **Supporting Law Enforcement:** Encouraging commuter participation can support law enforcement efforts by **bridging the gap** between the occurrence of incidents and official intervention. Bystanders can provide immediate assistance or report incidents promptly, ensuring a quicker response from authorities and better protection for victims.

This recommendation supports the broader goal of creating safer, more inclusive public transport systems while promoting civic engagement and responsibility among the public.

Recommendation 7: Provision of Gender-Sensitive Amenities, Including Multipurpose Shops for Basic Travel Needs of Women and Children at Transport Hubs and Highways

It is recommended that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), along with state governments ensure the provision of gender-sensitive amenities, including sanitation facilities and multipurpose shops that cater to the basic travel needs of women and children at all transport hubs, petrol pumps and along national highways.

Rationale:

- **Access to Basic Necessities:** The availability of sanitation facilities and multipurpose shops that offer essential travel items such as sanitary products, childcare supplies, and nutritious snacks will significantly enhance the travel experience for women and families. These sanitation facilities and shops should be strategically located at bus terminals, train stations, and petrol pumps, along national highways.

- **Family-Friendly Environment:** By providing access to necessary goods and facilities along with sanitation facilities, transport hubs can create a more accommodating atmosphere for families traveling with children. This not only supports women’s mobility but also ensures that families can travel comfortably without worrying about accessing necessities during their journey.
- **Promoting Local Businesses:** Collaborating with state governments, non-governmental organisations, local vendors, and small businesses to operate these sanitation facilities and shops can empower women by enhancing their mobility, while also providing opportunities for entrepreneurs and contributing to the local economy. This initiative can further create job opportunities for women, fostering economic empowerment within communities.
- **Improving Travel Confidence:** When women and families know that they can access sanitation facilities and essential products during their travels, it can alleviate anxiety and promote greater confidence in using public transport systems.

This recommendation supports a safer, family-friendly travel environment by providing essential amenities for women and children, boosting local business opportunities, and enhancing comfort and confidence in public transport and highways.

Recommendation 8: Mandate the Establishment of Gender Teams in All Transport Departments

It is recommended that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) make it mandatory for all transport departments at national, state, and local levels to establish dedicated gender teams.

Rationale:

- **Focused Expertise:** Establishing gender teams within transport departments will ensure that there is a dedicated focus on integrating gender sensitivity and inclusivity into transport planning, policy formulation, and implementation. These teams will be responsible for assessing the gendered impacts of transport projects and services.
- **Enhancing Gender Inclusivity:** Gender teams can conduct regular assessments and surveys to identify the specific needs and challenges faced by women and marginalized communities in accessing transportation. This will facilitate the development of targeted strategies and solutions to address these challenges.

- **Training and Capacity Building:** The teams will also be responsible for training transport department staff on gender issues, harassment prevention, and creating inclusive transport environments. This capacity-building will enhance the overall effectiveness of transport services and policies.
- **Accountability and Reporting:** Having dedicated gender teams will promote accountability within transport departments by establishing clear reporting mechanisms for gender-related issues and progress on gender inclusivity initiatives.

This recommendation will institutionalize gender teams, driving sustained and proactive efforts to achieve inclusivity in transport.

Recommendation 9: Mandate the Installation and Monitoring of CCTV Cameras and other security measures

It is recommended that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), mandate the installation and monitoring of CCTV cameras, lighting, panic buttons, emergency call facilities in public spaces, transport facilities, and key roads across national, state, and local levels.

Rationale:

- **Crime Deterrence and Investigation Support:** CCTV cameras will act as a deterrent to criminal activities in high-risk areas, such as transport hubs, marketplaces, and highways. They will also provide critical evidence for law enforcement agencies during investigations and help in resolving crimes faster.
- **Enhanced Public Safety:** The installation of CCTV systems will contribute to the overall safety of citizens, especially vulnerable groups like women and children, by improving monitoring and response mechanisms for incidents of harassment, theft, and violence. Additionally, proper lighting improves mobility, increases visibility, and fosters a safer environment for all, particularly women, children, and vulnerable groups.

- **Addressing Gender-Specific Safety Concerns:** MWCD will play a key role in identifying areas where CCTV surveillance is most needed to address gender-based violence and harassment in public spaces, thereby enhancing safety for women and other vulnerable groups.
- **Enabling immediate assistance:** Panic buttons and emergency call facilities offer direct access to emergency assistance during harassment, violence, or medical emergencies. They ensure quick responses, deter threats, and reassure commuters, boosting confidence in public transport and spaces while promoting mobility, independence, and well-being.

This recommendation aims to strengthen the public security framework while fostering a safer environment for all citizens across urban and rural spaces.

Recommendation 10: Implementing Policies to Increase Women's Recruitment in the Transport Sector

It is recommended that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), develop and implement targeted policies aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of women in the transport sector.

Rationale:

- **Enhancing Gender Diversity:** Increasing the number of women in the transport sector will enhance gender diversity, bringing varied perspectives and experiences that can lead to more inclusive and effective transportation solutions.
- **Improving Safety and Sensitivity:** A workforce that includes more women is likely to foster a safer and more sensitive environment for female passengers, as female employees can contribute insights into specific safety and comfort needs.
- **Role Models for Future Generations:** Promoting women in the transport sector creates role models for young girls, inspiring them to pursue careers in transportation and related fields, thereby gradually shifting societal norms regarding women's roles in this industry.
- **Access to Funding and Incentives:** Establishing policies that encourage companies to hire and retain women in transport roles can be accompanied by financial incentives, such

as grants or tax breaks, which will encourage more organisations to participate in this initiative.

- **Comprehensive Training Programmes:** Implementing training programmes focused on skills development for women in the transport sector will ensure they are well-prepared for various roles, from driving to management positions, thus enhancing their career prospects.
- **Addressing Gender-Based Barriers:** Targeted recruitment policies can help identify and address systemic barriers that prevent women from entering the transport sector, creating a more equitable workforce.

This recommendation seeks to promote gender equality in the transport sector by encouraging the recruitment of women, thereby enhancing safety, representation, and overall service quality.

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Annexure

Agenda of the Seminar

“Empowering Women: Unveiling the Importance of Public Transport Facilities”

Seminar Objectives: The objectives of the project encompass:

- Fostering awareness about the pivotal role of public transportation in facilitating women’s empowerment.
- Championing gender-responsive policies that place women’s needs at the forefront of transportation planning.
- Disseminating best practices and successful case studies from various regions.
- Engaging diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, transportation authorities, non-governmental organisations, and community representatives.
- To examine how public transit safety influences women's economic empowerment and workforce participation.
- Establishing a platform that fosters US-India partnership in addressing women’s travel and safety needs.

Session Plan

Sequence	Scheduled Time	Session Particulars
Registration	9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Registration of invitees
Welcome and Inaugural Session	10:00 AM - 10:45 AM	Welcome Address Shri Afaq Hussain Director, Bureau of Research on Industry & Economic Fundamentals (BRIEF) Private Limited
		Inaugural address Shri Sudhendu J. Sinha Advisor, Infrastructure-Connectivity, NITI Aayog, Government of India
		Greetings Speech Shri Philip Cummings Deputy Economic Minister Counsellor U.S. Embassy, New Delhi
		Keynote Speaker Ambassador Geeta Rao Gupta Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, U.S. Department of State (S/GWI)
Sequence	Scheduled Time	Session Particulars
Panel Discussion	10:50 AM– 11:50 AM	Dr. Kalpana Viswanath

<p>Transportation, Gender, and Women's Empowerment</p>		<p>Co-founder and CEO of SafetiPin (Topic- Safety as a predominant concern for women in public transport and public spaces)</p> <p>Ms. Rekha Raikar Kumar Member (Finance) Land Port Authority of India, Government of India (Topic: Empowering Women in Land Transport: Addressing Safety and Inclusiveness)</p> <p>Ms. Mehnaz Ansari USTDA Sr. Regional Representative- South Asia, US Embassy (Topic: Building Inclusivity in the Aviation Sector: Empowering Women and Enhancing Safety)</p> <p>Ms. Meera Sundararajan Gender expert, Gender Lab, Chennai, Tamil Nadu (Topic: Gender Lab, Chennai - Enhancing Inclusivity and Safety for Women in Public Spaces and Public Transport)</p> <p>Shri Sudhendu J. Sinha Advisor, Infrastructure-Connectivity, NITI Aayog, Government of India (Topic: Overall View of Country-Level Efforts in Women's Empowerment and Transportation)</p> <p>Shri Afaq Hussain Director, Bureau of Research on Industry & Economic Fundamentals (BRIEF) Private Limited (Moderator)</p>
<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Empowering Women Through Public Transport: Progress and Possibilities</p>	<p>12:00 noon – 1:00 PM</p>	<p>Ms. Sonal Shah Executive Director, The Urban Catalyst (Topic: Decarbonizing Transport Through a Gender Lens: In Public Transport and Electric Mobility)</p> <p>Ms. Monica Kumar Founder Member, Manas Foundation (Topic: Crucial Role of Transportation Staff: Sensitization for Enhancing Women's Safety)</p> <p>Ms. Meenu Vadera Founder of Sakha Consulting Wings (Topic: The Experience of Women-Only Cabs: Impact on Women's Economic Empowerment and Commuter Safety)</p>
<p>Sequence</p>	<p>Scheduled Time</p>	<p>Session Particulars</p> <p>Ms. Rajalakshmi Selvaraj</p>

		<p>Additional General Manager, Chennai Metro Rail Limited (Topic: Chennai Metro: Enhancing Safety, Accessibility and Empowerment for Women Commuters)</p> <p>Ms. Raj Shree Singh Senior Consultant, BRIEF Private Limited (Moderator)</p>
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