

ESTABLISHMENT OF GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES

To improve the transport system

- **Enhancing public transport accessibility**

Existing transport route network is almost three decades old. City size and population has doubled over this period and is expected to further grow in future. Widening of road network and construction of new residential areas mean new transport nodes have developed over time. There is a need to re-examine the route network with a greater focus on bus based transportation system. Designing an integrated transport system with feeder routes is the answer to limit the growth of paratransit service and provide accessible public transport service to all the urban residents at convenient walking distance. Lack of availability of public transport has contributed to the growth of private vehicles in the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Strict enforcement of service levels in residential areas is required to provide an inclusive public transport system.

- **Improving affordability and quality of the service**

It is contended that the exiting public transport network need not be overlooked for improvement as it is still serves as the main mobility system in the area and provides livelihoods to thousands of individual operators. The existing transport service badly needs measures for improving affordability and quality of service. Provision of subsidized public transport for the unemployed, students and elderly is desirable as is an introduction of express bus routes that serve fewer stops, and a reduction in the maximum limit of passengers per vehicle. Again, as it will involve a trade-off with cost of travel, it is recommended to use multiple fare structure depending on the type and quality of service offered by the transport mode. Public transport should be made affordable for the urban poor by various means such as free service and concessionary fares, where applicable. Special considerations need to be given for safe and affordable mobility of students and women along with improvement in the behaviour of transporters. Student or female only busses can be a good option to start with.

- **Innovative use of ITS in traditional public transport**

Innovative use of ITS can go a long way in improving the quality of public transport system in the area, electronic fare collection and integration, bus schedule, ticketing and a feedback system are some of the important improvements needed in the existing system.

- **Gradual improvement in the of BRT**

An accessibility analysis of the BRT network presented in this study highlights that it serves only a minority of the urban population. Even within its coverage area, concerns remain over its suitability for the young, elderly and women because the passengers would need to walk up stairs to reach the overhead bus bays. Furthermore, BRT further needs to cover the previously unserved residential neighbourhoods particularly in Islamabad, and the gated communities.

- **Integration of paratransit system**

Regularization and improvement of the organic Qingqi service can also facilitate mobility and accessibility in certain disadvantaged areas with reduced public transport coverage. While Qingqi is working without any binding service standards, they carry a considerable risk of safety during their journeys. If properly regulated, they can serve in the areas of low ridership as the feeder network for the main public transport system.

- **Active role of transport and planning agencies**

Lastly, urban management and planning has an important role to play in ensuring convenient access to activities in urban areas. The existing built environment and public transport service does not match with the needs of women, low income and those without a personal automobile, let alone the people facing physical mobility challenges. It seems that the current trend in urban planning has turned middle-income groups into a car-based society. Lack of coordination between suburban gated communities, transport providers and the development authorities has further forced people to turn towards personal automobiles. Appropriate connectivity between locations through walkways, traffic calming measures in residential areas and ‘demand responsive’ land use management can go a long way in reducing the automobile dependency of women, income less and elderly population. What remains to be seen is whether the urban and transportation officials have the will to do it and whether political decision makers would encourage management rather than construction practices.