

# Has BRTS helped Ahmedabad?

CEPT study reveals that poor have not benefited from transit system, nor has pollution gone down

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Only 26.2% of the total 78 km of BRTS roads have a cycle track (on either side of the corridor). Interestingly, only 65% of the total length of the BRTS network has a cycle track free of any encroachments and fit for use.

Similarly, 83.7% of the 78 km of BRTS roads have space for pedestrians (footpaths) out of which only 52.2% is unobstructed and open to use by people.

Of the 1,040 BRTS users surveyed, only 13.7% belong to households with income of up to Rs5,000 a month. The number of poor people using BRTS is low despite there being a bus stop within 500 metres of a large number of low-income housing and slums.

As many as 13% BRTS users were people who had travelled by auto-rickshaws shared with other passengers, say researchers. Another 13% were users of full auto-rickshaws before they shifted to BRTS.

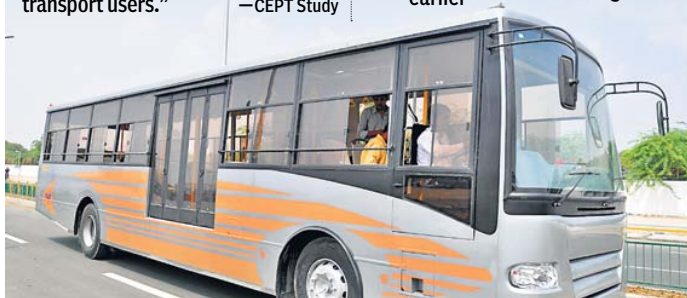
## Most users belong to middle income group

**"Only 42% commuters use BRTS for more than 21 days a month, which means the network is yet to strike a chord with Amdavadis. Overall, the BRTS serves mainly those from the middle income group most of whom are captive public transport users."**

—CEPT Study

## TELLING DATA

<b>1,040</b> BRTS users surveyed	<b>12%</b> users had actually made the switch from private vehicles to Janmarg buses
<b>47%</b> had been using AMTS service earlier	



The 58% rise in the number of vehicles on Ahmedabad's roads since introduction of Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) in 2009 is proof enough of the fact that the public transport system has failed to attract the rich.

But has it been able to attract the poor? Going by findings of a study

done by researchers at Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University, the BRTS has also failed to attract the poor.

In fact, the researchers, Prof Darshini Mahadevia and Prof Rutul Joshi, of Centre for Urban Equity at CEPT University, found that the poor preferred to walk or use the

bicycle instead of using the BRTS to commute in the city.

Janmarg, the official name of Ahmedabad BRTS, was expected to attract the poor and rich alike by offering them a comfortable and fast public transport system at affordable rates. It was hoped that increased use of public transport will reduce the number of privately-owned vehicles on the roads and, thereby, help reduce pollution in Ahmedabad.

But nothing of the sort has happened. Mahadevia and Joshi found that despite there being a less polluting (low carbon) transport system in the city, the number of private vehicles in the city had continued to increase.

Not only that. The study titled, 'Low Carbon Mobility in India and the Challenges of Social Inclusion: Bus Rapid Transit Case study of India', says that even pedestrians and cyclists are not using the space constructed for them along the BRTS corridor because of encroachments. For their research, Mahadevia and Joshi surveyed 1,040 BRTS users in the city.

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### Has BRTS

They found that only 12% of the commuters had actually made the shift from private vehicles to the swanky buses of Janmarg. Of the 1,040 users, 70% were regular users of public transportation while 47% were using AMTS service earlier. They had made the switch to BRTS only because AMTS buses were discontinued on the routes now serviced by Janmarg, the study says. The researchers found that as many as 13% BRTS users were people who had travelled by auto-rickshaws shared with other passengers. Another 13% were users of full auto-rickshaws before they shifted to BRTS.

The main aim of the study was to find out whether BRTS had succeeded in offering a low-cost option for transportation to lower income groups. Another was to determine whether it offered a service that was convenient enough to attract the relatively affluent sections habituated to two-wheelers and four-wheelers.

The study found that Ahmedabad

Janmarg was neither pro-poor nor had it made a favourable impact on the environment by persuading users of two-wheelers and four-wheelers to make the switch to BRTS. If the city poor are not using BRTS buses, then how do they travel?

**To be continued**

### State employees...

It should be noted that on September 27, an estimated 5.50 lakh government employees across the state — ranging from Class I officers to Class IV employees, as also those of various cadres, had gone on mass casual leave.

“The state government is anti-employee. It has betrayed us. It has not implemented the Sixth Pay Commission’s recommendations for the last several years. It is exploiting educated youth by paying them a fixed pay of Rs2500 to Rs4500,” GSECC said.

The meeting was attended by 700 representatives from across the state, including union leaders from officers’ federation, Class IV employees and employees of municipal corporations.