D.A.V Post Graduate College, Varanasi

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Report of the Survey on Transportation Facilities and Associated Problems in Varanasi City

Department of Political Science

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Executive Summary

This report, titled *"Survey on Transportation Facilities and Associated Problems in Varanasi City,"* is the product of a field study undertaken by final-year M.A. students of the Department of Political Science at D.A.V. Post Graduate College, Varanasi. It emerged as a pilot project designed to introduce students to field research methods and provide an empirical understanding of transportation challenges in a city renowned for its cultural and spiritual significance.

1. Background and Purpose

The report's genesis lies in the keen interest of postgraduate students to learn about research methodologies, culminating in a two-week intensive seminar that combined classroom instruction with fieldwork. The students selected transportation as the focal theme, inspired by their everyday experiences of navigating Varanasi's congested streets. With guidance from academic supervisors and expert trainers, they designed an interview schedule to collect data on the city's transportation modes, challenges, and perceptions of residents.

The primary aim was to develop foundational skills in data collection, analysis, and interpretation while producing a ground-level perspective on the state of urban mobility in Varanasi. This also lays the groundwork for future in-depth research in the area.

2. Methodology

The survey employed a convenience sampling method, engaging 86 respondents from diverse localities and age groups within the city. The Interview schedule gathered detailed information about vehicle ownership, preferred modes of transport, perceptions of traffic congestion, and expectations from the government. Data was meticulously analyzed using tools such as MS Excel and SPSS, and findings were presented through tables, pie charts, and bar graphs to ensure clarity.

3. Key Findings

The study's findings provide a nuanced picture of transportation in Varanasi, a city balancing its rich historical heritage with modern urban pressures.

- **Dominant Modes of Transport:** The survey revealed that motorcycles and walking (as pedestrians) are the most common modes of transport. Bicycles remain a significant choice for many, particularly for local commuting. Public buses and auto/e-rickshaws are used less frequently, especially given the narrow streets and congestion.

- **Vehicle Ownership:** Motorcycle ownership was found to be widespread, indicating a reliance on two-wheelers as an affordable and convenient option amidst congested roads.
- **Perception of Crowding:** A staggering 99% of respondents felt that the city has become overcrowded, attributing this to rapid urban growth, unregulated development, and the continuous influx of tourists and pilgrims.
- **Preferred Modes to Key Locations:** For trips to the market and nearby localities, motorcycles and walking dominated, while e-rickshaws and autos were common choices for trips to the railway station and airport. These choices reflect the city's infrastructure constraints and traffic severity.

4. Challenges Identified

The survey systematically identified various challenges causing transportation bottlenecks:

- **Narrow Roads:** Over 75% of respondents cited narrow roads as the primary cause of traffic congestion, reflecting the mismatch between ancient city layouts and modern vehicular demands.
- **Over-reliance on Private Vehicles:** Both auto/e-rickshaws and private vehicles were major contributors to congestion, cited as primary causes by 73% and 65% of respondents, respectively.
- **Street Vendors and Encroachments:** Street vending and unauthorized encroachments on roads were consistently highlighted as impediments to smooth traffic flow.
- **Tourism Pressure:** Varanasi's status as a major pilgrimage and tourist hub was identified as a significant challenge, with respondents noting that the influx of visitors exacerbates traffic issues.
- **Lack of Traffic Management:** Nearly 34% of respondents pointed to poor traffic management as a key reason for congestion, indicating gaps in governance and enforcement.
- **Behavioral Factors:** Disobedience of traffic rules and VIP movements were also flagged as issues, suggesting a need for better regulation and public discipline.

5. Severity of Problems

Respondents rated the severity of specific transportation challenges:

- **Parking and Traffic Congestion:** Over two-thirds of respondents categorized these as severe or most severe, underlining the scale of the problem.

- **Road Rage and Driving Stress:** Both were deemed severe by more than 60% of participants, reflecting the stress and frustration of navigating congested roads.
- **Air and Noise Pollution:** These were almost universally recognized as serious to most severe, attributed to heavy vehicular emissions and incessant honking.
- **Non-compliance and Accidents:** The majority of respondents felt that disregard for traffic rules and frequent accidents added to the transportation crisis.
- **Role of Traffic Police:** Around 73% of participants were dissatisfied with the effectiveness of traffic police, indicating a perceived lack of enforcement and proactive traffic management.

6. Government Efforts and Perceptions

The survey revealed a mixed picture of government initiatives:

- **Satisfaction Levels:** Only 35% of respondents were satisfied with government efforts to manage transportation, with the majority expressing concerns about inadequate interventions.
- **Smart City Mission:** Responses were evenly split on whether the Smart City Mission had improved transportation facilities, suggesting that while some progress is visible, much remains to be done to align with ground realities.

7. Expectations from the Government

When asked about their expectations, respondents overwhelmingly called for infrastructural improvements and better enforcement:

- **Top Priorities:** Widening roads (22%) and better traffic management (17%) were the most frequently mentioned. Other expectations included stricter traffic rules, more police presence, public awareness campaigns, and promotion of public transportation.
- **Public Engagement:** Notably, 10% of respondents emphasized the importance of public awareness and community engagement in addressing traffic issues.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** A small yet significant group of respondents advocated for greater use of public transport and environmentally friendly vehicles.

8. Recommendations

The report puts forward a series of recommendations to address these challenges comprehensively:

1. **Widen Roads and Remove Encroachments:** Implement road widening projects and systematically clear unauthorized encroachments.
2. **Enhance Public Transport:** Expand and modernize bus services, introduce reliable AC buses, and create dedicated lanes for buses and e-rickshaws.
3. **Strengthen Enforcement:** Deploy smart traffic lights and improve the capacity of traffic police for better rule enforcement and real-time monitoring.
4. **Promote Walkability and Cycling:** Develop safe pedestrian pathways and cycle tracks to encourage non-motorized transport.
5. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct targeted campaigns to educate residents and visitors on traffic rules and the benefits of public transport.
6. **Sustainable Urban Mobility:** Encourage the adoption of electric and low-emission vehicles to reduce pollution and improve air quality.
7. **Inclusive Planning:** Engage local communities in transportation planning to ensure that solutions are sensitive to Varanasi's unique cultural and social landscape.

9. Conclusion

The survey underscores the urgent need for a balanced, inclusive, and sustainable approach to transportation planning in Varanasi. It highlights the tensions between heritage preservation and modern urban demands and calls for an integrated strategy that combines infrastructural development, governance reform, and citizen participation. While this pilot study provides crucial baseline data, it also signals the need for larger, more comprehensive research and policy initiatives to make Varanasi's transportation system more efficient, equitable, and resilient.