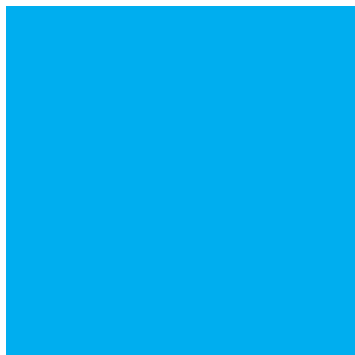


# WHERE NEXT FOR URBAN TRANSPORT POLICY?

## LESSONS FROM THE SMART CITIES MISSION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2015 the Government of India launched the Smart Cities Mission, aiming to harness the opportunities afforded by technological innovations to address India's challenges of urbanisation. The Mission's five year funding programme intended to stimulate innovation within 100 cities, primarily to support initiatives across e-governance and citizen services; waste, water and energy management, and urban mobility.

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The Under Reform project (<https://underreform.org/>) studied the process around the development of transport projects within the Smart Cities Mission. Transport is important for three reasons. First, it is integral to all aspects of environmental, economic and social progress. Second, it is at the vanguard of shifts to connected, increasingly automated and networked mobility services which are synonymous with 'smart' solutions. Finally, the governance challenges of integrated delivery of urban transport in India have remained largely unresolved.

This report focuses on understanding the implications of the governance reforms associated with the Mission on transport policy, implementation and outcomes within cities. In particular we examine the role of the new institutional arrangement of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) and how this institution works alongside the more established institutions within India's urban governance space (across centre, state and local scales). The project therefore provides lessons beyond, and not bounded by, the Smart Cities Mission itself.

The findings and insights provided in this publication are based on a sustained engagement with the Mission and city stakeholders through three workshops, and over 90 interviews, all conducted between 2018 and 2019 at both a national and local level. Four case cities were selected for study (Jaipur, Bengaluru, Kochi and Indore) each with distinct characteristics that enabled an understanding of some of the diversity of implementation of the Smart Cities Mission.

This report sets out to answer the following questions:

1	How did the establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle for delivering the Smart Cities Mission work in conjunction with existing institutions?
2	How did the process of delivering the Smart Cities Mission work out in the case study sites and how did this relate to the goals of the Mission?
3	What were the key impacts on urban mobility and what learning can be taken from this about future urban transport reforms?

It finds that the Smart Cities Mission has enabled a number of positive developments. In particular, the proposal development process was accompanied by high levels of citizen engagement. The establishment of the SPV has brought with it a focus on programme management and an ability to contract new skills to accelerate the delivery of projects, tackling a weakness of previous initiatives. Moreover, after initial start-up delays, it appears that the SPVs are rapidly accelerating project delivery. Progress has been more rapid in States that already had established transport related SPVs, from which the new SPV structure could learn, share resources or be modelled.

The model of delivering Mission innovations through an SPV does come with a number of limitations. Some relate to the short 'mission' focus of the initiative and some are more enduring issues with establishing new task-specific bodies more generally. The SPVs have appeared as another agency in an already crowded institutional environment. Because of the focus on spend and implementation, the SPVs have not tried to implement interventions which require tackling the poor institutional coordination issues which beset cities in India. Greater attention should therefore be paid to the governance context into which any reforms are being asked to operate. Because of the 'perform or perish' ethos of the programme there has been a focus on what can be done quickly. The speed of implementation, which is one goal of the programme, increasingly marginalised public participation in our case study sites, which was another goal.

We are certain, given the challenges of dealing with a rapidly urbanising economy this will not be the last urban reform initiative. We make ten recommendations for improvement, some of which are relevant to the Mission today and some that are of wider importance to future urban reform processes. Our overall reflection is that the appeal of smart as a symbol of technological and social progress will not be fulfilled without also addressing the underlying lack of strategy and weak institutional coordination which beset most Indian cities.

## KEY Recommendations

1 Urban reform initiatives should require clarity not just on how any new agencies are to be established but how they relate to and will be integrated with existing institutions.

2 Setting up new institutions creates a lag in delivery. Whilst the SPVs have demonstrated some benefits, greater freedom in proposing delivery models should be an option in bidding.

3 Development projects require continued public participation. Greater emphasis should be given to on-going influence from citizens and bodies such as the Smart Cities Advisory Forums.

4 There are tensions between the focus on rapid programme delivery and public participation. We suggest that future work focusses on understanding how public participation can improve scheme design, delivery and outcomes.

5 A wide bank of outcome oriented indicators of progress should be central to any monitoring surrounding performance of the SPVs in addition to fiscal and programme delivery metrics.

6 A clear set of options for the exit strategy at the end of time limited funding initiatives is important. Ambiguity risks focussing on short-termism or targeting behaviours towards financially self-sustaining activities rather than on those that may support longer term objectives.

7 Clearer objectives for capacity building need to be established to ensure that the longer-term value of initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission develop local governmental capacity as well as capacity in the private sector. Funding to support this should be targeted at local officials as well as with national coordinating bodies.

8 An evaluation programme should be enacted now to try and understand the extent to which different interventions have improved the key outcomes which the Smart Cities Mission was set up to influence.

9 Future pilot programmes or missions should require cities to explain how such initiatives fit in with a wider transport master plan and how this integrates with the actions of the other key delivery agencies.

10 There remains an urgent need to revisit the case for integrated Urban Metropolitan Transport Authorities or alternative structures which can take action on urban mobility at a whole city scale, including maximising the benefits of smart solutions, and which can attract the talent necessary to lead the development of India's cities.

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LESSONS FROM THE SMART CITIES MISSION



## FUNDER ORGANISATIONS

Economic and Social Research Council | Indian Council of Social Science Research | Newton-Bhabha Fund



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