

BACKGROUND NOTE

Parallel Session 1: Right to Walk – Creating Safe, Walkable and Well- Connected Cities

National Urban Conclave
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Abbreviations/ Acronyms

CM-GRIDS	Chief Minister Grid Scheme (Uttar Pradesh)
CMC	Cyberabad Municipal Corporation
CMIUDM	Chennai Metro Infrastructure and Urban Development Mission / State Urban Infrastructure Initiatives
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
CPWD	Central Public Works Department
DOT	Development-Oriented Transit
GCC	Greater Chennai Corporation
ICCC	Integrated Command and Control Centre
IRC	Indian Roads Congress
MMI	Multi-Modal Integration
MMRDA	Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority
MoHUA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
MUZ	Multi-Utility Zone
NIUA	National Institute of Urban Affairs
NMT	Non-Motorized Transport
NUC	National Urban Conclave
PCMC	Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation
ROW	Right of Way
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development /

Executive Summary

Walking is an integral part of urban mobility, connecting people to public transport, workplaces, educational institutions, healthcare and other essential services. However, urban mobility planning in India continues to prioritise motorised traffic, often compromising pedestrian safety, accessibility and comfort. Addressing this imbalance requires a shift towards people-centred urban planning that recognises walking as an essential component of the urban transport system.

India has progressively strengthened the policy and legal basis for pedestrian mobility through the **National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) 2006 and draft 2014**, the Smart Cities Mission, complete-street initiatives and the IRC:103-2022 Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities. Further, the Supreme Court's judgment in *Maniyar Iliyaz @ Shaik Riyaz v. P. Ayyappan* (2026 INSC 647) reinforces the right to walk on demarcated footpaths and the responsibility of public authorities to provide, maintain and safeguard pedestrian infrastructure. Despite these developments, fragmented footpath networks, inconsistent design and accessibility, encroachments, inadequate maintenance and overlapping institutional responsibilities continue to constrain implementation.

Experiences from cities such as Chennai, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi demonstrate the potential of dedicated policies, targeted investments, context-sensitive street design and participatory planning. Scaling these approaches requires stronger coordination among urban local bodies, transport agencies and other public authorities, alongside sustainable financing and performance-based maintenance arrangements.

Against this backdrop, Parallel Session 1, *Right to Walk – Creating Safe, Walkable and Well-Connected Cities*, at the National Urban Conclave (NUC) 2026 will examine practical pathways for translating policy commitments and judicial directions into effective on-ground action. The deliberations will consider a Four-Zone Walkability Model covering school zones, transport nodes, commercial streets and neighbourhood footpath networks. They will also explore pedestrian-first transit-oriented development, connected walking and green networks, inclusive public spaces, sustainable financing mechanisms, institutional coordination and data-driven performance monitoring.

The session will develop strategic recommendations for human-centric ROW allocation and street-space reallocation, identify governance mechanisms through UMTAs, outline pathways to access central funding and technical assistance, and recommend KPIs to monitor pedestrian safety, modal shifts and infrastructure quality. Overall, the expected outcome is a prioritised implementation framework that helps cities to integrate pedestrian mobility into public transport, mobilise resources for infrastructure development, strengthen accountability, and monitor progress through measurable indicators.

1. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Urban mobility planning in India is gradually shifting from an automobile-centric approach towards a people-centred framework that prioritises walking, cycling and accessible public transport. Historically, road design and capital investment have focused on increasing vehicular capacity and speed, often leaving pedestrian infrastructure with limited space and attention. This approach contrasts with actual travel patterns: **walking accounts for 31 per cent of urban trips, rising to approximately 48 per cent when cycling is included.** These figures highlight the importance of active mobility in meeting everyday travel needs and ensuring equitable access to urban opportunities.

This dependence on walking is particularly significant for women. **Nine out of ten urban trips made by women are undertaken on foot or by public transport,** while 45.4 per cent of female workers walk to work, compared with 27.4 per cent of male workers. Walking is therefore essential not only for reaching destinations directly but also for accessing public transport, workplaces and essential services. Yet, private motorised vehicles account for approximately 27 per cent of urban trips while occupying an estimated 75 per cent of available street right-of-way (ROW), highlighting the mismatch between travel needs and the allocation of street space.

The consequences of inadequate pedestrian infrastructure are reflected in the scale of road crashes and the risks faced by vulnerable road users across India. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' (MoRTH) *Road Accidents in India 2024* report, the country recorded **4,87,707 road accidents, resulting in 1,77,175 deaths.** Specifically, spatial crash data indicates that **31.7% of pedestrian crashes occur on residential streets, 6.1% at pedestrian crossings, and 7.1% near educational institutions.** Pedestrians, cyclists and two-wheeler riders collectively face a disproportionate share of road safety risks, underscoring the need to design streets around the safety of all road users rather than prioritising motorised traffic alone. These risks are particularly concerning in urban areas, where reported data indicate that 1,83,617 accidents occurred in 2024. Residential neighbourhoods, pedestrian crossings and areas near educational institutions are among the locations requiring particular attention to pedestrian safety.

The impact extends beyond loss of life to public health, household finances and the wider economy. The World Bank estimates that road crashes cost India approximately 5–7 per cent of GDP annually, while estimates cited by MoRTH place direct economic losses at around 3.14 per cent of GDP. For lower-income households, fatalities and serious injuries can result in lost earnings, substantial medical expenses and long-term care needs, increasing the risk of financial distress. These impacts reinforce the need to treat safe, continuous and accessible pedestrian infrastructure as an essential component of urban development rather than a secondary provision within road projects.

In response, national policies, technical guidelines and urban investment programmes have increasingly recognised the importance of active mobility. The **National Urban**

Transport Policy (NUTP) promotes the principle of moving people rather than vehicles. This direction has been supported by initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission, which facilitated investments in smart roads, cycle tracks, public spaces and Integrated Command and Control Centres, alongside MoHUA's **Complete Streets Framework Toolkits (2019)** and the **IRC:103-2022 Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities**. Under the Smart Cities Mission, investments in Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) have established substantial safety infrastructure, including **over 84,000 CCTV surveillance cameras, 1,884 emergency call boxes, and over 3,000 public-address systems** supporting real-time monitoring and data-driven decision-making. More recently, financing mechanisms such as the **₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund** and reforms under **AMRUT 2.0** have created opportunities to strengthen urban infrastructure investment, including pedestrian networks, subject to programme eligibility and funding priorities.

Alongside these policy developments, constitutional jurisprudence has strengthened the legal basis for pedestrian safety. Earlier judgments, including *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* (1985) and *S. Rajasekaran v. Union of India*, contributed to the recognition of livelihood, road safety and the responsibilities of public authorities. More decisively, in *Maniyar Iliyaz @ Shaik Riyaz v. P. Ayyappan* (**2026 INSC 647**), the Supreme Court of India expressly recognised the **right to walk on demarcated footpaths as a fundamental right**, integral to the right to movement under Article 19(1)(d) and the right to life under Article 21. The Court affirmed that pedestrian rights must take priority over motorised movement and identified urban development authorities, municipal corporations, municipalities and panchayats as duty-bearers responsible for endeavouring to provide, maintain and safeguard footpaths and other necessary pedestrian infrastructure. This judgment provides a significant constitutional foundation for strengthening institutional accountability and advancing the right to safe, accessible and continuous pedestrian movement across Indian cities.

2. OUTCOMES FROM THE PRE-CONCLAVE WORKSHOP

The pre-conclave workshop brought together senior administrators, urban local bodies (ULBs) and mobility experts to examine on-ground implementation models, city-level experiences and systemic barriers to advancing the Right to Walk. Discussions highlighted promising municipal and state-level initiatives while identifying persistent gaps in pedestrian infrastructure, accessibility, maintenance and institutional coordination.

2.1 City-Level Initiatives and Scalable Approaches

Chennai was among the early Indian cities to adopt a Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) Policy (2014) and a Complete Streets Toolkit (2020). The city has developed pedestrian infrastructure and public spaces, including Pondy Bazaar in T. Nagar and Khader Nawaz Khan Road, demonstrating the potential of pedestrian-oriented street transformations. Building on these city-level initiatives, Tamil Nadu allocated **₹165 crore under Phase I of CMIUDM** for pedestrian infrastructure improvements across 24 municipal corporations, alongside **₹110 crore for school-access safety and related traffic interventions**. These initiatives provide a pathway for scaling pedestrian-friendly street improvements across the state.

Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has advanced its green bond initiative, innovative financing and complete street guidelines in Harit Setu Masterplan to strengthen walking and cycling infrastructure, supported by an NMT budget allocation reported at **₹459.4 crore in 2024–25**. Further, Pune's Pedestrian Policy (2016) provides a complementary city-level framework for prioritising pedestrian mobility.

In Cyderabad, the **Walk-to-Work initiative** demonstrates the potential of integrating pedestrian infrastructure with employment centres and public transport, including pedestrian connections at both ground and elevated levels. Key interventions include the approximately 1 km elevated Raheja Mindspace Skywalk and junction improvements at locations such as Biodiversity Cross Roads. These initiatives highlight the importance of safe last-mile access for commuters using buses and walking.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has pursued multi-modal integration around mass transit infrastructure, supported by investments reported at **₹3,500 crore**. A walk-first approach to transit-oriented development (TOD), including pedestrian-access improvements and integration between transport modes, can help strengthen first- and last-mile connectivity.

Delhi – 250 Metres of Happiness initiative at **Vasant Kunj** demonstrated the value of student-led participatory planning for safer school environments. Schoolchildren mapped pedestrian hazards and contributed to street-design proposals with technical and government stakeholders, incorporating safer crossings, space for street vendors, play areas and greening.

In State-Level Initiatives, Uttar Pradesh's CM-GRIDS programme, covering major cities including Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Varanasi and Meerut, offers a framework for urban road improvement. Andhra Pradesh's Pedestrian Safety and Universal Accessibility Policy (2026) further reflects growing state-level attention to pedestrian safety and inclusive street design.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that pedestrian-oriented planning can be advanced through dedicated policies, targeted public investment, context-sensitive street design and participatory approaches. Scaling these efforts to upcoming metro and all urban centres requires stronger implementation mechanisms, consistent design standards and sustained maintenance.

2.2 Funding and Financing Pathways

Sustaining pedestrian infrastructure requires a shift from project-specific allocations towards predictable and diversified financing mechanisms that support project preparation, construction, operation and long-term maintenance. A financially sustainable framework for the Right to Walk should combine locally generated revenues with national funding programmes, market-based instruments and value-capture mechanisms, while linking expenditure to measurable improvements in pedestrian safety, accessibility and network continuity.

2.2.1 Locally Sourced Finance Options

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) should integrate pedestrian infrastructure into annual capital investment plans and multi-year infrastructure budgets, supported by standardised cost estimates, lifecycle costing and performance-based expenditure frameworks. Municipal budgets should provide for both the development of new pedestrian networks and the upkeep of existing footpaths, crossings and associated public spaces.

Cities can strengthen dedicated financing through **Urban Transport Funds (UTFs)**, using appropriate and legally permissible revenue sources such as parking charges, traffic-related penalties and other transport-linked receipts. A defined share of eligible revenues could be earmarked for pedestrian infrastructure, routine maintenance and road-safety improvements, subject to applicable legislation and municipal financial rules. Transparent fund management, regular audits and public reporting would help ensure that resources are directed towards identified priorities.

Land Value Capture (LVC) and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) offer additional opportunities to mobilise local resources by recovering a portion of the value generated through public investment in transport and urban infrastructure. ULBs and transit agencies should explore allocating a suitable share of revenues from TOD premiums, betterment levies and other value-capture instruments towards pedestrian improvements within station catchments. These resources could support continuous footpaths, safe crossings, universal accessibility and direct connections between transit facilities and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Municipal bonds and other market-based borrowing instruments may provide additional financing for cities with credible revenue streams, sound financial management and the institutional capacity to undertake such borrowing. Where appropriate, these instruments could support integrated street improvement programmes, provided that repayment obligations remain financially sustainable.

2.2.2 Other Support Mechanisms

National funding programmes can complement municipal resources and help cities implement pedestrian infrastructure at scale. The **₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund** provides an opportunity to mobilise investment in eligible urban infrastructure through central assistance and market-based financing. ULBs should prepare implementation-ready proposals that integrate pedestrian improvements with complete streets, public-space renewal and first- and last-mile connectivity, in accordance with the applicable scheme guidelines. Standardised project preparation frameworks and indicative unit costs can help municipalities estimate investments at the preliminary stage, with final costs determined by local conditions, utility requirements, street design and project complexity.

Technical assistance and credit-enhancement mechanisms can further strengthen the ability of ULBs to prepare viable proposals, access financing and implement projects effectively. Support should focus on project development, financial structuring, procurement, implementation capacity and the integration of pedestrian infrastructure with wider urban transport and public-realm improvements.

Financing mechanisms must also account for the full lifecycle of pedestrian infrastructure rather than focusing primarily on initial construction. Project budgets and public works

contracts should provide for coordinated utility management, periodic inspections, timely repairs and performance-linked maintenance agreements. Expenditure should be linked to measurable outcomes, including pedestrian-network continuity, unobstructed walking width, universal accessibility, safety and infrastructure condition. This would help shift municipal spending from fragmented, one-time construction towards sustained improvements in walkability.

The National Urban Conclave should deliberate on how locally generated revenues, national funding programmes, market-based instruments and land-value capture can be combined into a financially sustainable framework for the Right to Walk. The objective should be to establish predictable funding streams, strengthen municipal capacity to prepare and implement projects, and ensure that pedestrian infrastructure remains safe, accessible and functional throughout its service life.

2.3 Key Implementation Challenges

Despite these advances, the workshop identified several persistent challenges that constrain the delivery of safe, continuous and universally accessible pedestrian infrastructure.

Conventional road planning and engineering practices often prioritise vehicular capacity and design speeds over pedestrian safety, comfort and accessibility. Streets designed to accommodate motorised traffic travelling at 30–100 km/h frequently fail to provide adequate, continuous and protected space for pedestrians moving at an average walking speed of around 5 km/h. This approach persists even in walking-intensive metropolitan regions such as Mumbai and Chennai, where walking accounts for a substantial share of daily trips. The resulting mismatch between travel patterns and street-space allocation favours motorised movement over pedestrian needs, limiting investment in footpaths, safe crossings and other essential walking infrastructure.

Excessive kerb heights, uneven surfaces and inadequate ramps create barriers for older persons, children, caregivers and persons with disabilities. Field observations and audits have reported inconsistent footpath provision and kerb-height compliance across cities. These gaps highlight the need to apply relevant provisions of **IRC:103-2022** consistently, alongside universal-accessibility principles.

Lowered kerbs and access ramps can enable two-wheelers and other vehicles to mount footpaths where physical protection and enforcement are inadequate. Illegal parking and other encroachments further reduce the unobstructed walking width, compromising pedestrian safety and accessibility. Appropriate bollards, access management and consistent enforcement are therefore necessary.

Uneven paving, inadequate sub-base compaction, poorly reinstated utility trenches and weak site supervision can cause pedestrian infrastructure to deteriorate soon after construction. The absence of clearly defined maintenance responsibilities and performance-linked Service Level Agreements (SLAs) further undermines long-term usability.

Utility pillars, electrical equipment, signposts and billboards often obstruct pedestrian pathways and reduce clear walking width. Around transit hubs, the station catchment—often considered within an approximately 500-metre radius—may involve multiple agencies, including ULBs, Public Works Departments, metro rail corporations, Indian Railways and traffic police. Fragmented responsibilities can leave gaps in planning, implementation, maintenance and enforcement, highlighting the need for clear institutional accountability and coordinated delivery.

3. KEY DELIBERATION POINTS AND FOCUS POINTS FOR NUC – 2026

3.1 Four-Zone Walkability Model

To translate the Right to Walk into practical interventions, cities should prioritise pedestrian investments according to local activity patterns and user needs. The proposed Four-Zone Walkability Model provides a framework for directing interventions towards school catchments, transport nodes, commercial areas and neighbourhood networks.

1. **Safe School Zones:** Cities should identify priority school catchments and introduce traffic-calming measures, raised crossings, designated pick-up and drop-off areas, and restrictions on parking during school arrival and dispersal periods. Student-led initiatives, such as Delhi's Vasant Kunj *250 Metres of Happiness* and Chennai's school-access safety interventions, can inform participatory approaches to identifying hazards and designing safer routes.
2. **Safe Transport Node Zones:** Metro stations, bus terminals and suburban railway stations should have continuous, unobstructed pedestrian connections to surrounding neighbourhoods. Station-access plans should coordinate pedestrian circulation with feeder buses, intermediate public transport (IPT), pick-up and drop-off facilities, and safe crossings. Hyderabad's Raheja Mindspace Skywalk and Biodiversity Cross Roads improvements, alongside MMRDA's multi-modal integration initiatives, offer examples for deliberation on improving last-mile connectivity.
3. **Shopping and Commercial Street Zones:** High-footfall commercial areas should prioritise pedestrian movement while accommodating retail activity and street vending. Wider footpaths, pedestrian plazas, lighting, shaded seating and designated vending spaces within appropriately planned Multi-Utility Zones (MUZs) can improve the usability of public spaces. Chennai's Pondy Bazaar pedestrian plaza and improvements along Khader Nawaz Khan Road provide relevant references for balancing pedestrian access with commercial activity.
4. **Neighbourhood Footpath Networks:** Cities should develop connected walking routes linking residential areas with workplaces, schools, healthcare facilities, parks and public transport. Implementation should follow applicable standards, including IRC:103-2022, with attention to unobstructed walking width, accessible ramps, tactile paving, safe crossings, shade and protection against unauthorised vehicle access. Priority should be given to continuity and usability, particularly for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and caregivers.

3.2 Indicative Deliberation Points and Way Forward

The NUC 2026 session should identify actionable measures across four interconnected areas: integrating pedestrian mobility with urban development, creating inclusive public spaces, securing sustainable financing, and strengthening implementation and monitoring.

Cities should explore a *walk-first* approach to Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), informed by the World Bank's 3V framework—Node Value, Place Value and Market Potential. Station-area plans should prioritise direct pedestrian and cycling access, coordinate feeder services and IPT facilities, and manage private-vehicle access according to local demand and available street space. The session should also examine opportunities to connect parks, waterbodies, utility easements and designated green belts through continuous walking and cycling routes. Initiatives such as Pimpri-Chinchwad's Harit Setu Masterplan and proposed green connectors in Delhi can inform context-sensitive approaches. Mass-transit DPRs should incorporate Station Access Plans and appropriate multi-modal integration (MMI) provisions and budgets to address first- and last-mile connectivity from the project-planning stage.

Cities should explore designated vending spaces within MUZs in accordance with the *Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014* and applicable local regulations, while maintaining unobstructed pedestrian routes. Street design and relevant municipal regulations should encourage adequate lighting, visibility and active frontages to improve safety without disregarding privacy and security. Participatory mechanisms, including the Public Space Assessment Framework (PSAF), student-led street audits and Adolescent Parliaments, can support community identification of walking hazards and inform the prioritisation and design of interventions.

The session should examine how municipal budgets, Urban Transport Funds (UTFs), municipal bonds and land value capture (LVC) can be combined with eligible national funding and credit-enhancement programmes to finance pedestrian infrastructure. ULBs should explore opportunities under the Urban Challenge Fund in accordance with applicable scheme guidelines, preparing viable proposals that integrate walking improvements with complete streets and public-space renewal. The discussion should also consider the feasibility of allocating a suitable share of legally permissible transport-related revenues and value-capture receipts to pedestrian infrastructure. Project budgeting should account for lifecycle costs, utility coordination and routine maintenance, with performance-linked expenditure tied to network continuity, accessibility, safety and infrastructure condition.

Cities should establish clear responsibility for coordinating pedestrian improvements across agencies, particularly around transport nodes and other locations where jurisdictions overlap. Especially, existing Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs) should leverage specific tools such as Intelligent Traffic Management Systems (ITMS), Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), facial recognition systems, and crowd monitoring technologies. To enable proactive enforcement, real-time safety monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making. ULBs should consider an annual City Walkability Index or equivalent framework covering footpath coverage, continuity,

accessibility, safety and maintenance. Field audits and feedback from diverse user groups should complement administrative data, while structured city-exchange programmes can facilitate the adoption of proven approaches suited to local conditions.

The deliberations conclude with a prioritised set of implementation actions, including the identification of suitable interventions under the Four-Zone Walkability Model, integration of pedestrian access into transport planning, financing and maintenance arrangements, and adoption of measurable performance indicators. These actions should help cities move beyond isolated improvements towards connected and reliably maintained pedestrian networks.

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