



To,
Shri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka,
204, 2nd floor, Vidhana Soudha,
Ambedkar Vedi, Bangalore,
Karnataka- 560001

Respected sir,

(Subject - Recommendations to make Uchita Prayana Scheme more effective, efficient and inclusive.)

At the outset, Greenpeace India extends our congratulations on announcing the Uchita Prayana Scheme. As promised by the manifesto prior to the elections and later by your newly formed government, the implementation of the Uchita Prayana is a great step for the state, its public transport and for the women of Karnataka, among others. Free public transport for women comes with several positive externalities that will reflect firmly on most walks of life from better female labour force participation in the economy to a safe and inclusive ecosystem for all. Free transport for women has been a tried and tested solution in states like Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Delhi, wherein the monthly income, mobility and social opportunity for learning and networks of the beneficiaries significantly rose after the implementation. Therefore, this measure is forward looking and a great first step.

As we take inspiration from similar state policies, we also have to ensure that we take lessons from their challenges and shortcomings. The recent incidents from Delhi where certain DTC bus drivers willfully refused to board women passengers are shocking. This points fingers at the lack of proper implementation and any grievance redressal mechanisms in place. Moreover in many places in the state, it has been reported that informal waste pickers have been rejected from some buses due to abhorrent notions of purity and caste. So, in order to make Uchita Prayana more effective and thereby set a model for other states, it is important to address such possible loopholes from the onset itself. Greenpeace India, in this context, puts forward a few recommendations to make the scheme of Uchita Prayana more effective, robust and inclusive.

1. Make the free buses for women more accessible, safe and effective

- In order to make public spaces and transport more accessible for everyone, there should be free bus provision for the transgender community, along with women.
- There should be reserved seats on buses for not just women and elderly, but also other sexual minorities. Safety helplines should be displayed visibly on buses and bus shelters.
- Push to employ more women bus conductors, drivers and other staff, along with ensuring a supportive work environment.
- Women only buses should be commissioned at all hours to secure safe and tension free travel experience for women commuters.
- All bus stops must be installed with amenities like toilets, proper lighting, public announcement, information display system etc so that it is safe and reliable for the bus users, especially women and sexual minorities.
- Strengthen a 24/7 grievance redressal mechanism for bus commuters.
- Put in place an easy bus ticketing system that is free of cost, upon boarding the bus that is not based on any prerequisite registration or id cards. This guarantees that all women in Karnataka are benefitted, including migrants and non residents.

2. Increase the number of BMTC buses to 14,000

- Increase the availability and accessibility of the citizens towards the public transport system. The number of BMTC buses should be immediately increased to 10,000 by the end of 2023 itself and to 14,000 in 5 years' time. 90% of the newly procured buses must be solar powered and electrical, low floor models to ensure low emissions and inclusivity.
- At least 5000 new mini buses must be commissioned especially along byroads and secondary roads in Bengaluru alone. The mini buses will improve first and last mile connectivity for all.
- Government should increase the financial allocation to other transport corporations in the state to expand the public bus fleet size.

3. Establish 11 bus lanes in Bengaluru

- Dedicated bus lanes must be established in the 11 road corridors in Bengaluru in order to decongest the city, provide timely and reliable bus commute, and bring down air pollution.



- Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRTS) should be set up in other regions of Karnataka to make the public bus transport network of the state more robust.

While there is momentum with the government to address women's safety and needs in public transportation, investments in urban transportation are largely gender blind and have a poor awareness of the connections between transportation and gender. Without incorporating women's safety, comfort, convenience, and affordability in urban transit, sustainable urban development will remain unattainable. Building a city for women is essentially building a city for all. We hope that your government will take these recommendations into serious consideration and set the cornerstone for building a feminist and equitable city for all.

Regards and thanks,
Greenpeace India.