

Urban News from States

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Parking spaces in cities have emerged as a major policy problem, especially in Metropolitan cities. Increasing population in urban areas and growing economic well being has put pressure on the parking infrastructure in most of the cities as people prefer owning personal vehicle rather than depending on the public transport, if they can afford. However, growth in vehicular population has meant that more space is needed for parking these vehicles. Studies have indicated that millions of barrels of oil are consumed everyday in the search for parking spaces. Parking is a stressful experience for drivers and consumes a lot of time as well. Governments world over have focused more on providing and managing parking spaces in commercial areas though parking in residential areas is equally problematic.

To solve this problem, the government works at two levels – first to create infrastructure for parking and secondly to impose prohibitive costs or encourage people to reduce the use of their vehicles. Primarily, parking is responsibility of the urban local governments (ULBs). Some of the cities across India have take initiatives to have policies or rules. Few of them are mentioned below:

1. Delhi

The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi formulated 'Delhi Maintenance and Management of Parking Places Rules, 2019'. These rules apply to all public parking spaces within the National Capital Territory of Delhi, owned or managed by all public authorities. The rules also apply to parking places for the use of general public such as cinema halls, hospitals, malls, airports, etc. Delhi Development Authority, Delhi Cantonment Board and the four ULBs have been given the responsibility for making arrangements of parking in their respective jurisdiction. They are expected to prepare and implement local area specific/ integrated parking plans as envisaged in the Master Plan for Delhi 2021.

Under the rules, the parking fees have to be determined by a Committee chaired by the Transport Commissioner. The policy is aimed at encouraging short duration parking, while extended time parking for long hours sees a rise in parking fees. The base

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fee as well is to be revised every year. On-street parking is priced twice the amount compared with off-street parking and the fee has a dynamic system where rates are higher during peak hours.

The civic agencies have been encouraged to utilise latest technology for setting up parking spaces, all street parking meters, Radio Frequency Identification Tags, automated boom barriers, computerised parking slips with timers, app based parking charging and monitoring system etc.

Currently two parking apps- Park+ and Parking Rhino- are being used in some of the parking places. These apps aim at making parking lots more transparent, efficient and accessible to the average urban consumer. There is provision of making cashless payments at the parking through credit cards, debit cards, and applications like Paytm, Amazon pay, PhonePe, Google Pay etc. Electric vehicle charging points are also being installed in some of the places.

2. Pune

Pune brought out its Public Parking Policy in 2016. The city was seeing a massive surge in the numbers of personal motor vehicles due to rising income levels. The government expected the total number of vehicles in the city to double in next 8 years, if no action was taken. The Traffic Management and Parking Policy gave high priority to parking control initiatives which encourages a shift from the use of personal mode of travel to public transport, walking or cycling. It also aims at accommodating new traffic management concepts and respond to traffic problems and appropriate use of land with promotion of environment-friendly measures.

The policy also notes that the creation of parking infrastructure requires not only funds and technology but also cooperation of the users. To effect this, it seeks involvement of market associations, resident associations and interest groups who are keen to make their city a good place to live in. It also contemplates concepts like car free day, congestion taxes, vehicle free zones, etc.

Pune also has parking apps like Parking Rhino, Park+ and Parkopedia, which provide real time solutions to the commuters looking for parking spots across major sports of the city. These apps facilitate cashless payments as well. The ULB has taken measures to control parking at private spaces like malls, cinema halls and offices etc. and install electric vehicle charging points in parking.

3. Bengaluru

As per Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, the civic agency has the obligatory function to not only lay new roads but also construct, maintain, alter and improve all public streets. The Act also gives the Municipal Corporation the power to provide halting places or parking spaces while charging or levying fees for the same. The parking enforcement in Bengaluru is done by traffic police as per the provisions of the Karnataka Police Act of 1963. An initial parking policy was prepared for Bengaluru by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport and the policy was adopted by the Corporation in March 2012. The policy aimed at progressively reducing the demand for parking and facilitate organised parking for all types of vehicles through automated metered parking system.

However, since its adoption there have been several changes in the demand for parking. So, there was need to review the existing parking policy and accordingly it came up with Parking Policy 2.0 in December, 2020. The policy aims at moving from chaotic parking to well organised parking through inclusive planning of parking supply to support local business opportunities and facilitate people to access social infrastructure and recreational facilities. It also aims at moving from free parking to paid parking. The policy encourages exploring privately financed and market driven off-street parking regime in addition to public funded, government created, off-street parking regime. It also proposes to move from passive and weak enforcement of parking regulations to active management of parking demand. A distinct feature of the policy is to support and increase the patronage of public transport by cross subsidising transit and non-motorised transport infrastructure through parking revenue.

Along with Parking Rhino and Park+, Karnataka government has also provided Namma Bengaluru Smart Parking app which enables users to pay for parking from their mobile. Consumers can use their mobiles to book a parking as well cashless payment which is integral part of all these apps.

4. Mumbai

The city does not have a parking policy, despite the fact that there is serious crunch of parking space. Most of the people park their vehicles along footpaths and roadside, causing huge obstruction to pedestrians and other motorists. However, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) brought out rules for illegal

parking in 2019. Under this, vehicles parked in the no parking zones attract heavy penalty. The civic body has identified 23 public parking lots across the city. Any vehicle found parked within 500 metres of public parking lots is slapped with a heavy fine.

At the same time, the apps like Mumbai Parking, Park+ and Parking Rhino are available which like everywhere else enable cashless payments.

5. Chennai

The greater Chennai Corporation has initiated steps for implementation of parking management system in Chennai city. The rules have been drafted but not finalised. In the meantime, the city is experiencing unorganised haphazard parking on the streets and invasion of pedestrian footpaths by parked cars. Most on-street parking is free and even when charged parking rules and fees are administered on an ad-hoc basis leading to a lack of clarity for users, inconsistent enforcement and significant revenue leakage. The city experiences localised shortage despite the overall availability of parking space.

While the policy is being framed, the city government is implementing an on-street parking project under which road margins have been earmarked for parking vehicles on pay and use basis along with the construction of one multi level parking facility. Similarly parking apps like Greater Chennai Corporation Smart Parking App, Parking Rhino and Park+ are available to find a parking spot. They also facilitate cashless payments.

From the above it is obvious that parking has not attracted adequate attention of the policy makers. Despite rapid growth in cities and increasing number of vehicles due to rising income levels, the governments both state and city, seem to be not sufficiently aware of the problem. It is time that adequate measures are taken through proper policy pronouncements. In fact, parking management ought to be integral part of the mobility plan of any city.