Active Mobility in India

Posted at: 10/04/2025

Active Mobility in India: Status, Significance, and Challenges

Context

India's rapidly urbanising landscape has led to **rising traffic congestion, air pollution, sedentary lifestyles**, and an alarming increase in **pedestrian and cyclist fatalities**. In response, there has been a renewed focus on **active mobility**—a sustainable, health-oriented, and inclusive mode of urban transport.

What is Active Mobility?

- **Active mobility** refers to **human-powered modes of transport** used for daily travel, rather than recreation.

- This includes **walking, cycling, skateboarding**, and other **non-motorised forms** of movement.

- These modes are increasingly recognised globally as **sustainable, cost-effective**, and beneficial for **urban health and equity**.

Current Trends and Data

- In **2020**, **Karnataka** reported the **highest number of pedestrian deaths in India**, accounting for **13%** of total pedestrian fatalities.

- In **2024**, there was a **notable improvement**: **Bengaluru reported 233 pedestrian fatalities**, a decline due to targeted interventions.

- Across Indian cities, active mobility remains **underutilised** due to inadequate infrastructure and low policy prioritisation.

Initiatives by Indian States

- **Karnataka**:

  - Introduced the **Active Mobility Bill, 2022** — the **first of its kind in India**.

  - Aims to **legally safeguard the rights of pedestrians and cyclists**, promote inclusive access to public spaces, and integrate active mobility in urban planning.

- **Delhi**:

  - As part of the **Delhi EV Policy**, the city is expanding **cycling tracks and pedestrian zones** to reduce car dependency.

- **Pune**:

  - Has implemented a **Comprehensive Bicycle Plan** with over **300 km of dedicated cycling lanes**.

- **Chennai**:

  - Is redesigning urban roads under the **Smart Cities Mission (SCM)** to enhance pedestrian safety and walkability.

- **Kochi**:

  - Launched a **Public Bicycle Sharing (PBS)** system to improve **last-mile connectivity**.

Global Best Practices

- **The Netherlands**:

  - Leads globally with **over 35,000 km of cycling lanes**, supported by strong urban design and policy frameworks.

- **European Union (EU)**:

  - The **Mobility and Transport Department** promotes walking and cycling to foster **low-emission, citizen-centric cities**.

- **Germany – Berlin Mobility Act**:

  - Mandates **wider sidewalks**, **cycling infrastructure**, and **reduced urban speed limits** to protect non-motorised users.

- **Vision Zero Network**:

  - A global initiative aiming to **eliminate traffic-related deaths and injuries**, with a strong focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Benefits of Active Mobility

- **Environmental Benefits**:

  - Walking and cycling produce **negligible emissions**, reducing India's **12% share of carbon emissions from road transport**.

  - Help improve **air quality**, lower noise pollution, and contribute to **energy security**.

- **Economic Benefits**:

  - Reduced expenditure on **fuel, personal transport, and public healthcare**.

  - Pedestrianised zones and cycling paths boost **local business revenue** by increasing **footfall**.

- **Health Benefits**:

  - Regular active commuting lowers the risk of **obesity, diabetes, heart disease**, and improves **mental well-being**.

  - Encourages **physical activity** across all age groups, especially in dense urban areas.

Challenges in Promoting Active Mobility

- **Infrastructure Deficits**:

    - Poor or non-existent **sidewalks, cycling lanes**, and crossings discourage safe walking or cycling.

- **Social Barriers**:

    - In many areas, **private vehicles are linked with status and prestige**, undermining efforts to promote non-motorised transport.

- **Climatic and Geographical Constraints**:

    - **Extreme weather**, **long distances**, and **poor connectivity** reduce the practicality of walking and cycling.

- **Road Safety Concerns**:

    - **High traffic volumes**, **weak enforcement of traffic laws**, and **lack of dedicated safe zones** pose severe risks to non-motorised road users.

Way Forward

- **Policy Support**:

    - Central and state governments must enact **legal frameworks** and integrate active mobility in **urban planning and transport policies**.

- **Infrastructure Investment**:

    - Build **inclusive transport networks** with **wide footpaths, cycle tracks, resting areas**, and **safe street crossings**.

- **Awareness Campaigns**:

- Promote the **economic, environmental, and health benefits** of walking and cycling through **mass outreach** and **school-level programmes**.

- **Integration with Public Transport**:

  - Enhance **last-mile connectivity** by integrating active mobility with **metro, bus, and rail networks**.

General Studies Paper II:

- Governance and Policy Initiatives for Public Health and Urban Development

- Citizen-centric and inclusive governance

General Studies Paper III:

- Infrastructure (Urban Mobility)

- Environmental sustainability and pollution control

- Science and Technology in service of society

- Disaster management and road safety