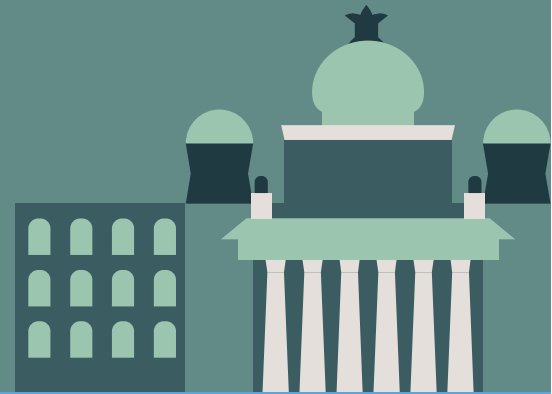


INDIA

# Bangalore



A case study prepared with support from [HealthBridge](#)



**Intervention area:** Physical activity/road safety

**City focus:** The use of Cycle Days and community engagement to increase walking and cycling in the city

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In 2006 India's Ministry of Urban Development introduced its National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP), which stressed the importance of generating public awareness and cooperation for the building of sustainable transport. The policy supported individual states in promoting environmentally friendly urban transport and prioritized the use of bicycles by "reviving interests amongst people who perceive riding bicycles as unsafe on city roads".<sup>i</sup>

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Bangalore's experience demonstrates the challenges of reversing a decline in cycling. In 1981 the percentage share of cyclists in Bangalore was around 16% of all road users. However, by 2011 this had declined to 3%.<sup>ii, iii</sup> Citizens expressed interest in cycling, but were concerned about road safety: in 2008, 56% of road fatalities were among pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>iv</sup>

Using the NUTP as a starting point, in 2013 Bangalore began running its "Cycle Day" initiative. Initially, road traffic was blocked one Sunday per month for half a day from streets in neighbourhoods across Bangalore, creating a safe space for cycling and walking. Campaigns through social media and local organizations encouraged people to use these "reclaimed streets" for cycling and walking to local destinations. The aim was to encourage residents of all ages to use active transport to move around the city. It was also hoped that the street closures would temporarily reduce pollution in the immediate area by lowering vehicle emissions.

As the popularity of these events grew, so did their frequency and the range of activities. In July 2014 the events became weekly, and are now held in multiple locations alongside a host of other activities. Free bikes are provided and group cycle events of short distances (3–5km) are organized. Other community events also take place in the streets during their closure to traffic, such as exercise classes and games for children.

As the first collaborative approach to an active transport policy in India, Bangalore’s “Cycle Day” initiative was deeply rooted in community action rather than a top-down policy. The initiative is led by the Bangalore Coalition for Open Streets – a partnership of local government and a number of nongovernmental organizations, with roles allocated based on partners’ strengths and abilities. Stakeholders believed that community engagement was the key ingredient to bring about social changes in physical activity, and hoped that citizen demand – after their experiences of walking and cycling in the city – would encourage other political and administrative bodies to increase investment in infrastructure such as good footpaths and cycle lanes.

The city’s Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) set the strategic direction at the initiative’s outset and served as a conduit for liaison with government departments on permissions needed for the event, as well as with the Bangalore Police to re-route traffic and maintain event safety. The DULT also convened press conferences to raise awareness. At specific events, various other departments also engaged in “Cycle Days”, including the local Department of Tourism, the State Pollution Control Board, and the Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment.<sup>i</sup> Civil society organizations supported implementation through raising awareness, promoting uptake and fostering community engagement, including identifying cycling enthusiasts to act as local community champions.

Partnership and community engagement are defining characteristics of the initiative. Communities have been actively engaged in each “Cycle Day”, creating a sense of ownership that is credited with the initiative’s sustainability. Local elected representatives and decision-makers have been involved in the community campaigns, creating feedback loops to inform urban policies around cycling infrastructure and traffic management. The initiative also addresses the issue of road safety by engaging with vehicle drivers to highlight their responsibilities in making the streets safe.

The initiative is continuing to scale organically within Bangalore, and DULT is helping other cities in the state of Karnataka to build similar momentum using local resources and citizen engagement. It is not a traditional policy model, but the collaboration between communities and local authorities is helping policy-makers introduce new laws to simultaneously improve road safety and physical activity.

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<sup>i</sup> National Urban Transport Policy. Bengaluru: Government of Karnataka; 2014 (<http://urbantransport.kar.gov.in/National%20Urban%20TransportPolicy.pdf>, accessed 23 September 2019).

<sup>ii</sup> Directorate of Urban Land Transport, Public Bicycle Sharing System – Bengaluru. Karnataka: Government of Karnataka; 2017 ([http://urbantransport.kar.gov.in/PBS%20Bengaluru\\_Site%20Report.pdf](http://urbantransport.kar.gov.in/PBS%20Bengaluru_Site%20Report.pdf), accessed 23 September 2019).

<sup>iii</sup> Urban Mass Transit Company Limited, Bangalore Mobility Indicators 2010–11 – draft final report. Bangalore: Directorate of Urban Land Transport and Urban Mass Transit Company Limited; 2011.

<sup>iv</sup> Gururaj G. Road traffic deaths, injuries and disabilities in India: current scenario. National Medical Journal of India. 2008; 21(1):14–20.