Contents

Preface 3
Acknowledgement 4
The Survey 4
Basic Survey Results 5
Limitations 10
Conclusion and Recommendations 10
We Suggest 12

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Know Your Cyclist:
A Pilot Cyclist Profile Survey by Parinar

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A Pilot Cyclist Profile Survey by Parisar

Preface

The benefits of a cycle, both for the cyclist and for the city are well known. The Comprehensive Mobility Plan of Pune\(^1\) sets the ambitious target of increasing the share of non-motorized trips (walking and cycling trips) to 50%, up from the current value of 33%.

The National Urban Transport Policy\(^2\) of the Ministry of Urban Development, which guides its flagship Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, gives a special place to non-motorized transport in the overall framework. It encourages the more equitable allocation of road space especially to modes such as cycling which are seen to be at greater risk. While the construction of segregated paths and cycle tracks is recommended it also hastens to add that often these are underutilized by cyclists (and pedestrians) and that it is “essential that such facilities be constructed after an open debate on the designs with experts and the community that is expected to use them” (emphasis ours)

Pune was once known as a city of cyclists. While there has been a declining trend in the usage of the cycle, amazingly about 10%\(^3\) of all trips are still done by cycle.

Who are these people using a cycle? What are the problems faced by them? What does the city need to do to improve their safety and comfort so as to ensure not only that they continue cycling but even more adopt the mode? The answers to these questions will be an important input to any strategy that the city adopts to help achieve its target. In an attempt to find answers to such questions, Parisar decided to undertake a pilot survey to get some insights into the profile of a typical cyclist.

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1 http://punecorporation.org/pmcwebn/Mobility%20Plan.aspx
2 http://urbanindia.nic.in/moud/programme/ut/TransportPolicy.pdf
3 The Comprehensive Mobility Plan cites modal share of cycles as 11.1% while the Metro Report by DMRC cites it as 9%
Acknowledgement

We have benefitted from our association with I-CE (Interface for Cycling Expertise)\(^4\), which has helped broaden our perspective on the role of non-motorized transport in city planning.

We would like to thank Dr. Rajendra Ravi of IDS (Institute for Democracy and Sustainability) Delhi, for providing the survey questionnaire which was then suitably modified and translated for use in Pune.

The survey was coordinated by Mr. Rahul Dalvi, an M.Phil student of the University of Pune, Dept. of Sociology under the guidance of Prof Shruti Tambe. Without their fieldwork expertise this survey would not have been possible.

The Survey

The survey was carried out by 4 surveyors over a period of 4 days from 24\(^{th}\) to 27\(^{th}\) May 2009. A total of 104 cyclists were surveyed at 14 different locations in order to get as diverse a group as possible.

Survey location and no. of cyclists surveyed

\(^4\) http://www.cycling.nl
The survey focused only on working class people and not school children (who are the other large section of cycle users in the city).

Note: In the results charts the numbers may not add up to 104, since some respondents did not provide answers to some of the questions.

**Basic Survey Results**

Some highlights of the survey are

1. Basic demographic profile
   a. The survey included 102 men and 2 women
   b. As expected we saw cyclists of all ages, with 8 senior citizens.

   ![Age profile chart]

   c. The caste profile was also diverse

   ![Caste profile chart]
d. 17% were illiterate. The overall education profile was as follows

![Education profile chart]


e. There is a rich diversity of professions amongst cyclists. They include government employees, small and medium traders, daily wage workers, factory workers, travelling salespersons, shop owners etc. We recorded 47 different professions amongst the 104 surveyed!

f. Half of those surveyed had a monthly household income of less than Rs. 5000 with the other half ranging upwards of Rs 5000 to as high as Rs 40,000.

2. Cycling profile

a. Even though the number of cyclists is on the wane, it was heartening to see some people who have been cycling for 50 years! One can only imagine the change in traffic that these old timers must have seen over the decades!

![Cycling duration (years) chart]
If the city takes bold steps to improve the condition for cyclists we hope to see the current cyclists continue in the decades to come.

b. 94 cyclists owned their bicycle; the others either borrowed or rented.

3. Cycling facilities
   a. Parking
      • We found that most people did not have to pay for parking their cycles at their workplace (only 2 reported that they had to).

b. Bicycle Theft
   • 40 of those surveyed reported that they had their bicycle stolen at least once, 17 of which had more than one bicycle stolen. This suggests a potentially serious hurdle to making cycling popular.
   • 6 of them lodged an FIR and in one case the stolen bicycle was found and returned!

c. Accidents
   • 16 cyclists were victims of accidents, 3 of them serious
   • Motorcycles were the cause of most of them- 10 and also caused 2 of the 3 serious accidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rikshaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious injury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 3
- 1
- 8
- 1
- 2
- 1
• We found that most of those who sustained an injury sought some treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Minor injury</th>
<th>Serious injury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...went to a doctor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted to a hospital</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home treatment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Only 1 cyclist lodged an FIR but did not receive any response

4. Cyclists’ opinion about advantages of cycling
We found the following responses to what cyclists perceived the advantages of cycling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of cycling</th>
<th>Cyclists who agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saves Money</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Maintenance</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No waiting</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to ride on the roads</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Physical Exercise</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves Time</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to negotiate narrow Lanes</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Avoid Crowds</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Pollution</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves Petrol</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that cyclists are finding it hard to ride on the roads and cannot avoid congestion. Obviously the creation of better cycle lanes/tracks/facilities would help in this regard.
5. Problems faced by cyclists

One of the objectives of this survey were to ask cyclists what problems they faced, rather than assume what they might be.

![Bar Chart: Problems faced by cyclists]

It is interesting to note that bad roads, so often the complaint of other vehicle users, seem to be a minor issue for cyclists. It is also worth noting that the biggest fears of cyclists are indeed related to safety, either at intersections or while riding on roads.

6. Like to continue cycling

In spite of these problems 92 out of the 104 cyclists surveyed said that they would like to continue cycling in the future! This is indeed a heartening sign and we hope the city reciprocates by providing the necessary facilities to make it enjoyable and safe to ride a cycle in the city.
7. What do cyclists want?
Once again we decided that the survey should reveal this rather than policy makers, who possibly never ride a cycle!

What should be done to improve cycling conditions

Limitations
We found some anomalies in the answers especially relating to expenses incurred by cyclists. 30 cyclists claimed to spend more than Rs 2000 on a bicycle annually, however given that a new basic model bicycle costs ~ Rs 2500, we find this unlikely.

People were also unable to judge accurately the total distance they travel on bicycle for work and the time it takes them.

These data have therefore been omitted from this report.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The pilot survey has revealed important insights into the problems faced by cyclists and their attitude towards cycling. While the situation on the streets is far from ideal, it is heartening to note that many cyclists wish to continue and recognize the importance of cycling with regards to issues such as pollution and congestion.
The city needs to focus on key issues such as bicycle thefts, which are a major financial blow to any cyclist, especially so for people from low income categories.

While the incidence of accidents may seem low (3 serious injuries) it is important to keep in mind that already in the year 2009, 13 cyclists have been killed out of the 38 that were involved in a mishap. That cyclists feel threatened is also brought out by their views of the problems faced by cyclists. Therefore, the city should also take up measures to improve safety and comfort of cyclists. Studies have also established that the idea of “safety in numbers” works well for cyclists, i.e. the more cyclists there are, the safer cyclists as a class are.

In many cities around the world cycling groups organize a “critical mass” cycle rally. These are intended to make other commuters mindful of the cyclist. They also reinforce the idea of “safety in numbers”. It is often seen that cycle tracks are encroached upon by other vehicles, especially two wheelers. Having greater cycle traffic on these tracks will also act as self-enforcement. Thus, active efforts for cycling promotion by the city will not only help improve the modal share of cycling in the city but also help improve the safety of all cyclists.

This survey did not directly address the issue of self-esteem/status of cyclists. However, chances are that the average cyclist, particularly from a lower socio-economic stratum does not feel he is an equal citizen on the road. Therefore, the city would also be well advised to focus on improving the self-esteem of cyclists since they do not only do themselves, but also the rest of the world a favour by cycling. We recommend that any future survey include this issue.

This survey was intended as a pilot study and one which leads to a more comprehensive study that will help reveal even more information about cyclists. Only such a study can help the Pune Municipal Corporation to devise strategies and evolve programs that will help attain the ambitious target of 50% non-motorized trips by 2031.

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5 Data from the “Accident Reporting System” maintained by the Pune Police (http://ars.indictrans.com)
We suggest

1. The NMT Cell of the PMC should commission a study of a statistically significant sample of the cycling population. This should comprise of separate surveys, one for school students and the other for the working class section of cyclists, since they have a distinct profile.

2. Another survey that focuses on potential cyclists (including those that did use a cycle at some point but have ceased to do so since) should also be subsequently undertaken.

3. The outcomes of these surveys should lead to a set of programmes and projects, with appropriate budgetary allocations that will serve to promote cycling in the city in a time bound and targeted manner.

Major Categories of Cyclists Interviewed

- Bakery salesman
- Cobbler
- Cook
- Courier
- Data entry operator
- Driver
- Electrician
- Factory worker
- Flower seller
- Fruit seller
- Furniture seller
- Gas delivery man
- Knife sharpener
- Machine operator
- Mason
- Medical salesman
- Milkman
- Old newspaper seller
- Painter
- Peon
- Policeman
- Postman
- Roving gardener
- Salesman
- Spraying insecticide
- Tailor
- Typing teacher
- Vegetable seller
- Waiter
- Washer man
- Watchman
- Welder