

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MEGHALAYA STATE PLANNING BOARD HELD ON THE 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2024 IN THE CONFERENCE HALL OF THE MEGHALAYA SECRETARIAT, SHILLONG TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN SHILLONG CITY.

Members Present are as per Annexure - A

The meeting was chaired by Shri Metbah Lyngdoh, Chairman, Meghalaya State Planning Board, who welcomed all the members present. The Chairman informed the gathering that in the previous meeting held on 18th October, 2023 a decision was taken by the Board to invite various Departments to provide detailed presentations on the pressing issues faced by the State. It was decided by the Board, that various issues of concern, confronted by the state, will be taken up by the Board for discussion with concerned Departments. Subsequently, the first meeting is being convened with Home (Police) Department, Urban Affairs Department, Public Works Department and Transport Department to discuss and deliberate on the complexities and challenges, being confronted by capital city in particular, pertaining to the intractable issue of traffic congestion in Shillong City, with a view to better understand, the steps taken so far, by the concerned Departments and stakeholders and also to formulate an actionable blueprint for arriving at practicable solutions.

Thereafter, Shri. F. R. Kharkongor, IAS, Principal Secretary, State Planning Board provided a brief context on the objectives of the meeting. Subsequently, after due permission from the Chair, Shri C. V. D. Diengdoh, IAS, Secretary, Home (Police) Department was requested to outline measures taken by the state agencies. The Secretary, Home (Police) Department informed, that there is an ongoing PIL, in the High Court, Meghalaya on the issue of traffic congestion. It was apprised that the PIL covers various aspects of the issue of traffic congestion and that the Departments were to cohesively work on formulating a holistic view on the matter with a focus on short term and long-term solutions. It was informed that the Urban Affairs Department has been spearheading the overall planning with detailed inputs from the other Departments involved. The Secretary also informed that the Police Department has also prepared a consolidated report on the continuing series of replies/responses to the PIL and it was assured that a copy of the report will be shared with the State Planning Board.

Smti. I. Laloo, IAS, Secretary, Urban Affairs Department was then requested to make a detailed presentation on the steps taken so far. The Secretary provided a detailed presentation on initiatives taken so far by the Urban Affairs Department, subsequent to exhaustive consultations with the Police, Transport, & Public Works Departments, including District Administration, NIC and community stakeholders such as the Dorbar Shnongs etc. The major highlights which were presented are as under:

1. Shillong's Mobility Challenges

- Increase in number of Car Registration with a jump from 26 registrations per day in 2019 to 61 registrations per day in 2024 in East Khasi Hills District. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of private vehicles in Meghalaya is 17.48% which is far greater than the nationwide average of 9%.
- Another factor is the decreasing share of Public Transportation which has gone down from 5% in 2010 to 1.01% in 2024 while the optimum rate as per the Indian National Growth Congress is 30% in 2030.
- There is a slow network speed of less than 15 km/hr as against the IRC recommended rate of 25 Km/hr.
- Another major challenge is the reduced road capacity caused due to roadside parking during the day as well as night time. The findings as per the comprehensive mobility plan prepared by the Urban Department have shown that the Annual opportunity cost due to congestion is ₹ 550 Crores.

2. Traffic Congestion in City

The main issue of traffic congestion in Shillong city is on account of the bulk of movement occurring within the Municipal area, which is restricted to just 1.4 sq km and function as the CBD (Central

Business District). About 80% of all intra city trips are directed towards Shillong Municipal Area, as it houses the major commercial, educational institutions and the employment hubs. Urban Affairs Department have also identified the major choke points in the city.

3. Modes of Transportation in Shillong

The various studies carried out in the previous years indicate that the mode in share of Public Transport (Bus, Train, metro, Tram) is 1.01%, Non-Motorized Transport (Walking, Cycling, e-scooters) is 22.1%, Intermediate Public Transport (Taxis, auto-rickshaws) is 11.3%, Shared Mobility (Carpooling, biker sharing) is 0% and Private Vehicle (Cars, motorcycles) is 66%. The studies reveal that there is an over-dependency on private vehicles and taxis and consequently a reduced share and use of public transport due to various factors such as inefficiency, less-reliability, etc.

4. Shillong Urban Mobility Policy – Vision-2030

The Urban Mobility Policy and the Comprehensive Urban Mobility Plan lays down the larger vision for Shillong 2030, which is to transform Shillong into a 20-minute Neighbourhood with good access to all commercial and residential requirements within a 20-minute radius. The plan aims to increase the public transport share and the non-motorized transport share by 30% and correspondingly decrease the use of private vehicles. The other areas of focus are the creation of low emission zones and allocating more road space to pedestrian and cyclists by creating non-motorized transport zones, and pedestrianized stretches and optimizing and revamping of public transport system, with a view to discourage private vehicle ownership. Another key intervention is the enforcement of stricter regulations by way of introduction to new policies and measures. Efficient planning can be carried out only through coordination and consultation with various Departments and stakeholders such as educational institutions, dorbar shnongs, private transport agencies, etc.

5. Sustainable Transport and Efficient Mobility Society (STEMS)

STEMS is a society which is incorporated under Planning Department with representatives from Education, Transport, Public Works Department, Meghalaya Transport Corporation (MTC) and NIC. The objective of STEMS is to provide alternative mobility solutions to schools students.

A survey conducted in 2021 showed that most of the Educational institutions are centred in Laitumkhrah-Dhankheti with a population of 27,000 students. The survey revealed that 61% of these students undertake trip to schools in Private Vehicles. To address this issue, proper consultations were held with the school authorities and parents to introduce a common school bus system. The stakeholders expressed their support to the idea of shared school buses, but there is slow off take to the idea, as they expressed concern on issues related to safety, timeliness, real-time tracking and efficiency.

The facilities offered by STEMS include mandatory registrations, student verification, trained staffs including drivers and caretakers, safe and reliable travel for students and customizable pick-up locations. STEMS provide a subsidized school commute to student with a fee structure of ₹1200 (less than 5 kms), ₹ 1500 (less than 10 kms) and ₹1800 (more than 10 kms). To recover revenue, STEMS make the busses available for Tourism and hiring purposes.

There are 27 operational buses, 2 stand-by buses and 1 bus being used at ICP Dawki to ferry tourist. The registrations are being done online and so far, there more than 1500 students who have registered. with more than 20 Parking spaces. There are presently 801 active users from 18 registered schools. The impact assessment reveal that every STEMS bus removes 11 cars from the road.

An RFP has been floated to procure 30 more buses to cover more students in Laitumkhrah area, expands the routes and extent the services to other districts' headquarters such as Jowai.

6. Revamping Public Transport Services

There are a total number of 185 Shillong Public Transport Services Buses (SPTS) operated by MUDA and 118 of these are operational. The rest of the buses have been condemned as there are no longer fit for use. Additionally, there are a total number of 100 Supplementary Shillong Public Transport Services Bus (SSPTS) operated by Shillong Municipal Board (SMB).

These public transports are inconsistent and unreliable as their routes and schedules are unpredictable and they involve higher waiting time. A majority of the bus fleets are aging and require frequent maintenance. The other challenges posed by the public transport include limited bus stops and embarkation and disembarkation points, unqualified drivers, opposition from taxis' associations and lack of coordination and integration with other modes of transport service. Further, the present Net Cost Contract (NCC) model makes it difficult for the owners/drivers to run their services smoothly.

The Urban Affairs Department has introduced certain interventions such as installation of GPS devices in SPTS buses and have found that the buses are not plying in their designated routes, the average speed is just 6 km/h and the operational hours are low. This analysis has help identify the prominent areas with huge demand for public transport and these outcomes will be taken into consideration in preparation of the long term such as procurement of buses.

The Government will be implementing the Gross Cost Contract (GCC) model where a fixed amount per km will be paid to the operator to cover the operation and other expenses. This will unburden the operator from revenue generation risk and his main focus is to provide good services.

The other interventions include implementation of odd-even system for buses, redesign the routes, branding and marketing to encourage use of public transport and installation of bus schedules, embarkation and disembarkation signs.

7. Modernizing Taxi Services

There are 5139 taxis and more than 190 auto rickshaws plying in Shillong city. These are a popular mode of transport due to the hilly terrain, low wait time and last mile connectivity. However, they contribute to the congestion and parking problem, charge a high cost of commute and have the flexibility to interchange from shared mode to booking mode.

The goal of modernizing the taxi services is aimed at boosting the daily income of taxi drivers. The proposed plan of action includes frequent consultations between the DC office and the taxis' association, integration of technology such as e-booking, introducing schemes to incentivize taxi drivers to join the tech platform, introduction of standardized rate, identification of embarkation and disembarkation points and enforcing safety and emission standards.

8. Parking Management

The current scenario of haphazard parking leads to restriction in movement, safety issues, encumbrance to emergency services. Urban Affairs Department has initiated a number of projects such as the multi-level car parking facilities under Smart City Project and revamping of the existing parking lots at Anjalee, Mawlonghat and Khliehiew to provide off road parking. This will result in additional parking capacity of 1371 cars.

The Department has also proposed incentivization of the Dorbar shnongs/ private land owners for identification of community parking lots and encouraging building off street parking space for private vehicles. This Department has stressed on the need for strict enforcement to go hand in hand with these proposed initiatives.

9. Other Initiatives

- Sanction and implementation of new and ongoing road projects to provide alternative routes to decongest Shillong City.

- Route optimization
- Reimagining Streets where critical junctions are identified and are proposed to be transformed to improved multipurpose areas providing space for hawkers, parking sheds, taxi parking and drop off space.
- Acquiring land from private custodians and defense.

Shri Syed Md. A. Razi, IRTS, Commissioner & Secretary, Public Works Department was then requested to present the action plan of the Department to ease the traffic congestion in the city. The Commissioner & Secretary highlighted various ongoing road projects aimed at easing traffic congestion in and around Shillong, such as the Shillong Western Bypass. The road, spanning approximately 38.256 kilometers, is designed to connect Lad Umsaw in Ri Bhoi district with Lad Mawreng in East Khasi Hills district. He also informed that more than 90 % of the land acquisition has been completed and handed over to the NHIDCL, with work expected to commence in the first week of October 2024. The timeline for the completion of the road project is two years from the declaration of the commencement of the work.

In response to the query raised by the Principal Secretary, MSPB, regarding any plans to construct an alternative road to New Shillong to circumvent and avoid the busy Nongmynsong stretch which is responsible for traffic grid lock towards New Shillong, the Commissioner & Secretary informed that upcoming projects include the construction of a road from Lumshyiap Bellafonte to New Shillong Township at Umsawli via Mawpat, aimed at improving connectivity and transportation. The primary objective is to alleviate traffic congestion on the existing Shillong-Diengpasoh Road, which connects Shillong to New Shillong Township via the Nongmynsong and Itshyrwat junctions.

It was also informed that a proposed flyover project from Military Hospital to Barik Point is under consideration to improve traffic movement at this crucial junction.

The representatives from the enforcement department were then requested to offer their comments and views on the initiatives taken up by the various Departments. The Assistant Inspector General of Police (L&O) Shillong, appreciated the positive impact of STEMS which has brought a shift from use of private vehicles to public transport particularly among school going children. He commended the trained drivers, discipline staff and the presence of designated parking points. He, however, suggested the need to regularize the number of SPTS buses and their movement. It was also suggested to decentralized these buses from the Shillong city and make them available for use in rural areas.

The Asst, IGP also informed that there is an acute shortage of traffic police personnel available to manage the roads. It was reported that the police department faces a shortage, with only 150 constables and over 400 home guards responsible for traffic control across all (7) seven police stations in the State capital. However, the home guards are not sufficiently trained to manage traffic efficiently. Traffic regulation is primarily the responsibility of the police, and more constables are urgently needed. The Secretary, Home (Police) has requested that the Police Department submit a proposal concerning the necessity for increasing the strength of traffic police personnel, so that the Government may prioritize this matter.

The introduction of Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) under Smart City Project will also be a force multiplier whereby 400 CCTV cameras will be installed all over the city will help detect speed, licence plate, etc. The Shillong Traffic Police also face challenges due to the rash and indiscipline driving of two wheelers. Thus, inculcation of traffic and safety awareness to the public is the need of the hour.

The Secretary, Home (Police) Department informed that, as a consequence of the PIL, in the High Court, the **Shillong Decongestion Committee** was constituted, and is headed by the Chief Secretary. The concerned Departments would provide their inputs in an integrated manner and the Police Department

prepares the replies. He also informed the meeting that a Traffic and Safety Awareness Campaign will be held in the month of October to educate the public on road safety and traffic laws. Further, an app is being developed whereby citizens will be empowered to report traffic violations, thereby actively engaging and involving the community in traffic issues.

John F. Kharshiing, Co-Chairman MSPB suggested the segregation/de-synchronization of school and office hours to minimize traffic movement. He suggested setting up of high congestion charge fees zones during peak hours, creation of low emission zone, pedestrian friendly walkways, development of satellite towns and the use of smart traffic for public transport movement system. He also suggested the inclusion of Education Department in these discussions, as this will spread public awareness amongst parents and students and it was also suggested that PWD is also to explore a plan for promotion of cycling. A meeting of the SPB with the Shillong Decongestion Committee was also suggested.

Shri Hopeful Bamon spoke on the need for relocation of hawkers and streets vendors, without which it would be impossible to have an effective traffic management. He requested the Departments to explore ways and means to tackle this problem.

Members of the State Planning Board, Shri. Ollan Singh Suin & Shri. Matthew Beyondstar Kurbah both sought clarifications & detailed responses from PWD on the feasibility, location and alternative road/ access alternatives proposed by the PWD.

The Secretary, Urban Affairs Department informed that the decision to have staggered timings for schools and offices was taken after the intervention of the District Administration and Traffic Police. This has helped reduce traffic congestion to a certain extent. The Secretary also informed that the Department is working on the Parking Policy where the issues of emission standard and low emission zones will be incorporated. Further, the Department will be procuring 50 e-buses under "PM – eBus Sewa" scheme. With regard to the issue of hawkers and street vendors, steps have been taken to discuss with them and zones have been identified. The Secretary stressed on the need of behavioral change amongst the public for all initiatives to be successful.

The Chairman informed the meeting, that the Board will prepare concrete and comprehensive solutions pertaining to the problem of traffic congestion, which will then be duly recommended to the Government. These recommendations will be in line and consistent with the inputs/strategies shared by the various Departments and will also seek to strengthen the objectives and efforts initiated by the concerned Departments.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks from the Chair.







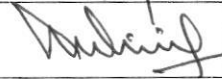










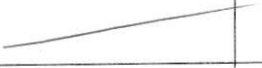
(Shri Methbah Lyngdoh)

Chairman

Meghalya State Planning Board

ANNEXURE-A

**OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE MEGHALAYA STATE PLANNING BOARD
PRESENT IN THE MEETING ON THE MATTERS OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN
SHILLONG CITY HELD ON THE 23TH SEPTEMBER, 2024 AT 3:00 PM IN THE
CONFERENCE HALL, MEGHALAYA MAIN SECRETARIAT BUILDING.**

Sl. No	Name & Designation	Signature	Contact No.
1.	Shri Metbah Lyngdoh, MLA, Chairman of the Meghalaya State Planning Board		9862005060
2.	Ollan Singh Seern -		9863093572
3.	Matthaw Beyonslan Kurubel, Co-Chairman		8787480967
4.	Hopeful Bamon		9436115264.
5.	JOHN F KHARSHIING, Co-Chairman MSPB		9436102663
6.	Silman K. Sangma, Vice-Chairman, MSPB		9366001425
7.	ATG P N. K. Syiem IPS ATG R		
8.	Vivek Syiem (AIG L20)		8794742910.
9.	Mac Joel Mornger MPS		9774853136
10.	F.R. Khalkonger IAS Kinfeng, SPB		
11.	S.M.K. Nani, CES, MD		
12.	CYRIL DIONGDOH Secy Home		9436957771
13.	Don Iampan W or		9436303196
14.	Kajoy Subblelt Jt. Director Urban		9436112687
15.	Jawanda Laha		8416871926
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			

Memo No.PB.5/2023/11-A

Dated Shillong, the 14th October, 2024.

Copy to:-

1. The Private Secretary to the Chairman, Meghalaya State Planning Board for kind information of the Chairman.
2. The Principal Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya and Member Secretary, Meghalaya State Planning Board for kind information.
3. The Commissioner & Secretary / Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Home (Police) / Urban Affairs / Public Works Department for kind information.
4. The Director, Urban Affairs, Shillong for kind information.
5. The Superintendent of Police, Traffic, Shillong for kind information.
6. Shri _____, Co-Chairman, State Planning Board for kind information.
7. Shri _____, Deputy Chairman, State Planning Board for kind information.
8. Shri _____, Vice Chairman, State Planning Board for kind information.
9. The Under Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Planning (A) Department for kind information.
10. The Assistant Superintendent, Meghalaya State Planning Board for kind information.

By order etc.,



Special Officer & Ex-Officio Under Secretary
Meghalaya State Planning Board