

Chennai's pedestrian plaza promoting equity

Summary:

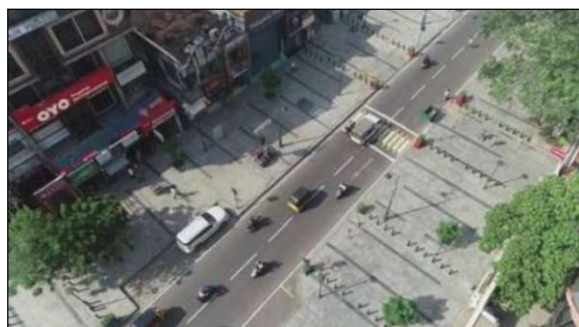
The Pondy Bazaar pedestrian plaza on Thyagaraya Road has successfully transformed one of Chennai's busiest and car-centric shopping streets into a pedestrian promenade by prioritising people over vehicles, and thus opening new ways for citizens to experience their streets. It was launched with much pomp and show on the 13th November 2019, by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. This project was conceived with the intent of enhancing the shopping experience that Pondy Bazaar offers, by reclaiming public space for shoppers.

Objectives:

This plaza has been designed as a space accessible for all, including women, children, senior citizens and people with disabilities, thus enabling equitable mobility and enhanced accessibility. This is the first such street promenade in the city.

Key Stakeholders:

- Chennai Smart City Limited
- Municipal Corporation of Greater Chennai
- Institute for Transportation and Development Policy
- Shop owners on Pondy Bazaar



Implementation strategy:

- This project has been implemented in conjunction with Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) under the 'Streets for People' initiative. The plan for a pedestrian plaza in T. Nagar was in the works much before the launch of the Smart Cities Mission. The Corporation of Chennai created a blueprint for a pedestrian-friendly walkway; however, the plans did not see the light of day until the project was included in the ambit of the Smart Cities Mission.
- This transformation of around 700m street stretch, created safe walkways on both sides, provided ample shaded seating arrangements, landscaping, colourful play elements and placemaking, at a cost of Rs. 40 Cr. Battery-operated shuttle carts also ferry passengers along the stretch.
- It has 7 play areas for children, clusters of seats under trees and planters have been set up. They have made provisions for underground utilities including electricals, telecommunications and metro water lines.
- The stretch now has seven play areas for children, clusters of seats under trees and planters have been set up. Provisions have been made underground for utilities including electrical, telecommunication and metro water lines (Citizen Matters, 2020).

Resource Utilization:

The pedestrian plaza project has been implemented in three reaches, totalling Rs. 40 crores.

Impact/ Outcomes:

- Wide footpaths and parking spaces have replaced the chaos caused by traffic at the shopping hub. Street vendors have been shifted into a building called the 'platform shop owners business complex', which was commissioned by the Greater Chennai Corporation, as per Madras High Court's 2013 order.

- Along with other similar initiatives taken up by the city under 'Streets for People' program, Chennai was awarded the Ashden Award 2020 in sustainable mobility (international) category. (ITDP, 2020) (Chennai smart city , 2019)

Challenges/ Lessons Learnt:

The plaza is an example of successful public participation. Getting most of the shopkeepers on board has been a great success story and also the biggest challenge.

Replicability & Sustainability:

With the success of the pedestrian plaza, the city now plans to scale up the work by redesigning and developing streets in other parts of Chennai, thus enhancing mobility, utility and liveability.

Fact Sheet:

Thematic area	Walkability, equity
First-year of the program	2019
Responsible Institution	Chennai Smart City Ltd
Target audience	Pedestrians, cyclists
Coverage	Pondy Bazaar, Chennai