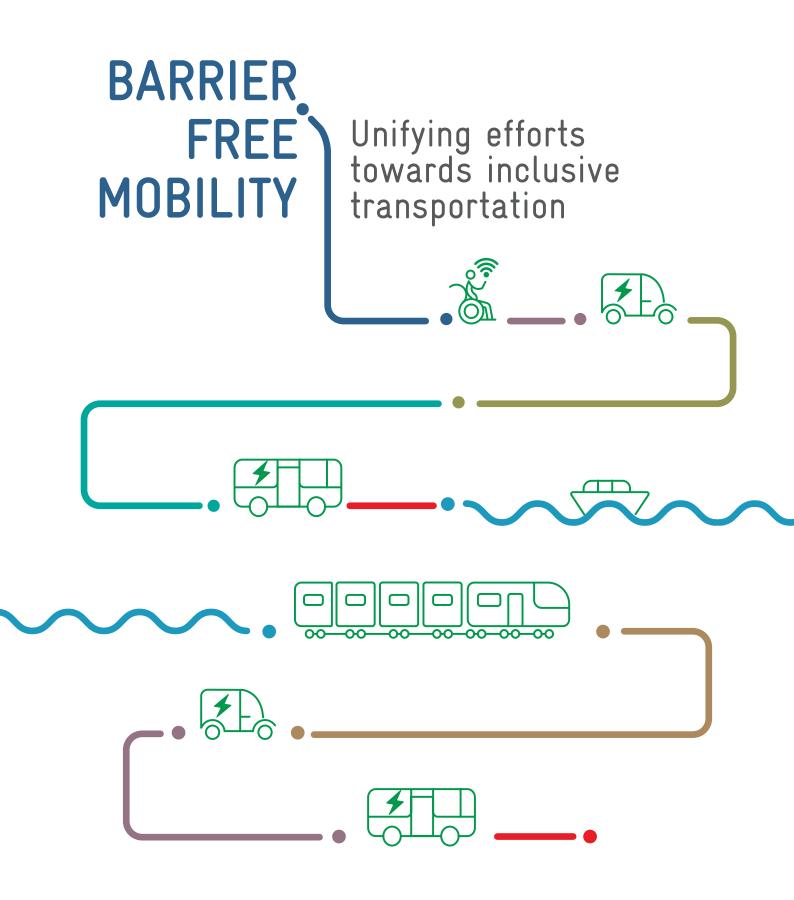


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Barrier Free Mobility

Unifying efforts towards inclusive transportation



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Our heartfelt thanks also go to the delegates from various organisations who attended the sessions.

Executive Summary

Equitable access to transportation is the fundamental right of all communities and demographics in India. Yet the 26.8 million* population of differently abled individuals in the country face everyday challenges of navigating through the city independently. Public transport, pedestrian infrastructure, and paratransit services in Indian cities consistently fail to offer seamless access without barriers, thereby restricting opportunities for employment and impeding the social inclusion of differently abled individuals. There is a pressing need to prioritise universal design principles in urban transport planning to create safe cities that cater to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups, facilitating their full participation in social life.

To address the mobility requirements of individuals with diverse abilities, it is crucial to acknowledge the limited availability of disaggregated data required for informed decision-making and the imperative to explore various data sources and consolidate them. Additionally, while numerous organisations and government departments are dedicated to inclusive development for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), there are gaps in the current policy landscape that fail to address the needs of different disabilities comprehensively. Therefore, there is a necessity to unite the resources and knowledge base of various organisations to initiate policy discussions aimed at promoting inclusive mobility.

Recognising the significance of data-driven decision-making and the importance of multi-institutional collaborations for achieving equitable access to urban transport, GIZ India hosted a panel forum on "Barrier Free Mobility: Unifying Efforts towards Inclusive Transportation." The primary objective of the panel discussions was to collectively brainstorm ways to consolidate accessibility-related data, including real-time data available from various private sector and e-commerce companies, onto a single platform. This data can be utilised to map out barrier-free transport routes and infrastructure within cities and highlight accessibility issues requiring attention. Moreover, the workshop intended to deliberate on opportunities to establish a Universal Accessibility Alliance, comprising various government agencies, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), private sector companies, etc., to enhance inclusive mobility.

* Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) in India - A Statistical Profile : 2021 by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation National Statistical Office Social Statistics Division Retrieved from https://www.nhfdc.nic.in/upload/nhfdc/Persons_Disabilities_31mar21.pdf

Proceedings of the Panel forum

Recognising the critical role of data-driven strategies and the value of multiinstitutional partnerships in ensuring equitable urban transport, GIZ India organised a panel forum titled "Barrier-Free Mobility: Unifying Efforts towards Inclusive Transportation." This forum aimed to bring together diverse stakeholders to explore methods for aggregating accessibility-related data, including realtime information from the private sector and e-commerce companies, onto a unified platform. This consolidated data can be used to map out accessible transport routes and infrastructure within cities and to pinpoint areas needing improvement. Additionally, the workshop discussed the potential establishment of a Universal Accessibility Alliance, which would include government agencies, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), private sector entities, and others, to advance inclusive mobility. The discussion started with a brief presentation about the project 'Sustainable Urban Mobility - Air Quality, Climate Action, and Accessibility (SUM-ACA)' and how it envisages the strategic interventions in 8 Indian cities in four states for promoting accessibility and work towards creating an inclusive society that promotes and safeguards the rights of persons with disabilities (PwDs). A total of two discussions were organised with the first session focusing on leveraging technology and the digital landscape for data-driven insights for inclusive mobility and the second session focusing on seamless mobility: exploring opportunities for establishing a universal accessibility alliance for barrier-free urban mobility.

In session 1, the panel discussed the pivotal role of e-commerce platforms and IT companies in gathering disability-specific data to enhance the mobility of persons with disabilities (PwDs). The discussion revolved around the extent to which private companies are informed about the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 and the Accessibility India Campaign. Panellists shared strategic interventions undertaken by private companies and e-commerce platforms to collect data related to accessibility and mobility. The session explored innovative practices that digital platforms can deploy to consolidate geospatial data and mobility patterns of PwDs.

In session 2, participants engaged in an extensive brainstorming session on the potential for creating a Universal Accessibility Alliance aimed at enhancing urban transportation mobility and achieving the goals of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session identified existing gaps in mainstreaming accessibility within national urban development and transport policies. The discussion highlighted the importance of involving diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and private sector entities.

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Below is a list of **speakers and moderators** who participated in the panel forum:

- Mr Manjunath Sekhar, Head, Sustainable Urban Mobility, GIZ India
- Mr Shirish Mahendru, Technical Advisor, SUM-ACA, GIZ India
- Mr Hitesh Vaidya, Urban Practitioner, South Asian Region
- Mr Vineet Singhal, Director, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE), Government of India
- Mr Rahul Aggarwal, Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi
- Ms Shivani Gupta, Senior Inclusive Design Manager, Global Disability Innovation Hub, India
- Mr Dinesh Chand Sharma, Director, Policy and Standards, The Seconded European Standardization Expert for India (SESEI) Project, Seconded European Standardisation Expert in India, owned by European Standards Organisations
- Mr Parul Sharma, Disability Inclusion Expert and Ex Consultant United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UN-Habitat
- Ms Aishwarya Aggarwal,

Lead, Centre for Inclusive Mobility, OMI Foundation

- Mr Dipendra Manocha, Director, Developing Countries Program, DAISY Consortium
- Ms Karishma Chhabra, Consultant and Mentor (Ex. Lead - Strategic Initiatives and Accessibility, Microsoft India)
- Mr Chand Kaushil, Head (ICT – Innovations and Solutions), The United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology
- Mr Ravindra Singh, CEO, National Skill Council for Persons with Disabilities
- Ms Li Stephanie Choo, Social Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia
- Mr Nipun Malhotra, Chair, Sub-committee on Empowering Persons with Disabilities of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
- Mr P.N. Subramaniam, Coach and Mentor, WTi Cabs

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SESSION 1

Leveraging Technology and the Digital Landscape for Data-Driven Insights for Inclusive Mobility



Session 1 centred on the role of e-commerce platforms and IT companies in collecting disabilityspecific disaggregated data on the mobility of persons with disabilities. It articulated ascertaining the extent of awareness among private companies about the Rights of Persons with Disability (RPWD) Act 2016 and the Accessibility India Campaign. The conversation explored the strategic interventions undertaken by private companies and e-commerce platforms to gather accessibility and mobilityrelated data. A key emphasis was placed on the need to standardise data collection and analysis formats for disability-related information across the private sector and e-commerce companies. Innovative practices that digital platforms can deploy to consolidate geospatial data and mobility patterns of PwDs to inform policy formulation and implementation were also deliberated.

The discussion also highlighted how various data collection efforts face different challenges, yet there are common issues to consider when planning, designing, and implementing inclusive data collection. The session provided recommendations on data analysis which should provide answers to questions that have the potential to positively impact the lives of persons with disabilities. Therefore, it has been recommended that such analysis and relevant policy interventions should take place in consultation with the disability community, government departments, and data users to ensure that all the relevant outputs are available and described.

Major findings of the session

This session focused on discussion on different tools and methodologies that can be applied to collect and disaggregate data by disability and the various resources available for data collection. The experts in this session represented government and multilateral agencies, the private sector, civil society, DPOs, and service providers. The main issues highlighted during the discussion are outlined below:

Data collection and data security

Acquiring and effectively integrating data on Persons with Disabilities remains a significant challenge for the Indian government. Moreover, ensuring data security is a critical issue, sparking ongoing debates. Ensuring security is not only a



Participants sharing their views during Session 1

back-end technical issue. There is also a need to inform and engage with the communities that will receive these benefits to ensure that communities agree to release data in exchange for the offered technological benefit. Attention to digital rights extends to the application of data, ensuring that data is not used in any way that discriminates against or marginalises individuals or populations.

Challenges of data integration

The government and non-government sectors collaborate extensively on various initiatives and schemes aimed at societal welfare. However, the lack of standardised data presents a significant challenge to these integration efforts. There is a pressing need to collect and structure data uniformly to enhance its usability.

Access to data and emergency preparedness

The use of ICT and data is crucial for strengthening the policy ecosystem for improved mobility options. In a situation of natural disaster where emergency response is required, access to data could facilitate more efficient and effective rescue operations, potentially mitigating risks and



ensuring the safety of vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities.

Role of big tech and IT companies in data collection

Major tech and IT firms such as Microsoft, Google, and IBM, along with startups like Zomato and MakeMyTrip, possess valuable data concerning the accessibility of PwDs. Partnering with such private sector entities could grant access to extensive data on public space accessibility and other disability-specific information. This data could be instrumental in shaping schemes and policies aimed at universal accessibility and fostering inclusive mobility options for PwDs in urban areas.

Role of digital literacy and technology in improving accessibility

Enhancing digital literacy among PwDs through literacy programmes aimed at smartphone usage is crucial. This initiative has the potential to bring about significant positive changes, potentially saving lives by enabling disabled individuals to access assistance and information more easily. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies can play a pivotal role in developing applications tailored for PwDs, enhancing their usability and market effectiveness. Integrating AI, ML, and data analytics can greatly aid in designing beneficial schemes and services for PwDs, benefiting both the government and the community.

Digital Mobility Subsidy

The Digital Mobility Subsidy, a technological solution conceptualised by the OMI Foundation, offers an innovative approach to address these issues associated with travel subsidies. This solution leverages existing digital infrastructure, including the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), Aadhaar card, and Unique Disability ID (UDID) card. By linking NCMC with Aadhaar and UDID cards, it becomes possible to capture disability-related data, enabling the targeted provision of travel subsidies. Additionally, the card can record origin and destination data when tapped during entry and exit, facilitating the collection of travel patterns specific to PwDs. This approach enhances the collection of disability-disaggregated travel data, which can significantly improve the accessibility of public transport. Implementing this concept necessitates integrating NCMC, Aadhaar, and UDID systems onto a unified platform to automate the identification of PwDs and streamline the collection of their travel patterns.

Unified Platform for Data

Data regarding PwDs exists across disparate platforms, yet the challenge lies in effectively harnessing this data. This emphasises the crucial need for coordination and collaboration among different sectors to unlock the potential

of available data for informed decision-making and effective solutions. Creating impactful solutions necessitates the collective effort of all stakeholders, as decisions cannot be made in isolation. Given the increasing digitisation in various facets of life, it is imperative to adopt forward-looking strategies aimed at centralising this data through the establishment of a systematic database. The establishment of a dedicated entity or institution to spearhead this initiative, transitioning it from concept to implementation, would facilitate the creation of such a centralised platform.

Geospatial mapping of accessibility through crowdsourced App

Technology has significantly empowered PwDs, playing a crucial role in advancing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act. Geospatial data plays a pivotal role in understanding the mobility patterns of PwDs and marginalised communities within urban areas, particularly in public spaces and buildings. Leveraging technology to gather and analyse geospatial data is essential for fostering inclusive urban environments. The Government of India has introduced the Sugamya Bharat App to provide information and collect feedback and complaints from PwDs. By harnessing crowdsourced data, especially focusing on disability-specific information, the app can be expanded to create geospatial maps of accessibility across public spaces and transportation infrastructure. The app needs to integrate AI and ML technologies alongside the Internet of Things (IoT) to establish an integrated approach to geospatial and mobility planning.

Furthermore, ensuring the sustainability of the app is crucial, necessitating partnerships with private sector entities such as Microsoft, IBM, and Google, who can contribute their extensive big data resources for geospatial mapping. By leveraging these technologies, we can improve the delivery of urban services while promoting inclusivity and accessibility for all individuals, including those with disabilities. This data-driven approach allows us to tailor services and interventions to meet specific needs, thereby advancing more equitable and efficient urban development.

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SESSION 2

Towards Seamless Mobility: Exploring Opportunities for Establishing Universal Accessibility Alliance for Barrier-Free Urban Mobility This session was focused on brainstorming opportunities for establishing a Universal Accessibility Alliance to improve the mobility of urban transportation modes and realise the goals of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It emphasised collecting views and suggestions from the participants and discussing opportunities for ensuring the smooth functioning and sustainability of the proposed universal accessibility alliance, covering the following aspects:

- Existing gaps in mainstreaming accessibility as a key principle in National Urban Development/ Transport Policies.
- Brainstorming on the composition and sustainability of the proposed Universal Accessibility Alliance.
- Discussion on Accessibility and Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 and a way forward to consolidate disability-specific disaggregated data



Participants brainstorming and sharing their experiences during Session 2

Major findings of the session

The session had a mix of sector experts who shared their views on promoting the key principle of inclusion, which must be considered at all stages of the policy cycle and decision-making. The experts represented DPOs, international organisations, private sector companies, the government and multilateral agencies. The key issues that were highlighted during the discussion in the context of the establishment of the Universal Accessibility Alliance are listed below:

Government's role in Universal Accessibility and the need for Universal Accessibility Alliance

The DEPwD requires collaboration with various stakeholders working for the empowerment of PwDs such as, GIZ, corporations, NGOs, and private industry. Various organisations and institutions can contribute to this coalition, enhancing policy-making efforts to ensure equitable access to transportation. Central ministries must intensify their efforts by issuing comprehensive guidelines for accessibility, aiming to establish a benchmark for improvement.

Significance of skill development and training organisations in Universal Accessibility Alliance

Considering the substantial number of PwDs in India, it is crucial to highlight the magnitude

of the issue of barrier-free mobility. Looking towards 2030 and the next two decades, an estimated 65% of the population is expected to adopt technology. As demographic shifts occur and mobility challenges increase, collaborations with bilateral and multilateral agencies to improve mobility for PwDs become increasingly important.

The National Skill Council, which is actively involved in training and integrating PwDs into the mainstream workforce, plays a pivotal role in fostering digital literacy and facilitating the use of technology to enhance mobility for PwDs within urban areas. Additionally, the council can help bridge the gap between the skill sets demanded by the private sector and the skills possessed by PwDs.

Bridging the gap between innovation and implementation

Ensuring smooth transportation for first and last-mile connectivity is required for promoting barrier-free mobility for PwDs. There is a need to develop targeted transportation strategies, with stakeholders collaborating towards seamless integration. An alliance involving government departments, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs), and industries is crucial to bridging the gap between innovation and implementation, especially in leveraging technology to tackle urban mobility challenges faced by PwDs. Institutions like the Global Disability India Hub can provide vital institutional and technical support to facilitate the functioning of such alliances.

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Integration of Private Sector Companies

While corporate representatives and industry leaders frequently discuss innovations, there often exists a gap intranslating these discussions into tangible on-the-ground implementation, particularly at the executive level. There is also a growing call for organisations to assume greater responsibilities, urging both the corporate and government sectors to adopt broader perspectives.

The key to realising these ideas lies in engaging more private partners, despite the challenges they may encounter in various aspects. Such efforts should be integrated across all activities rather than being perceived solely as a CSR initiative, among many others. These initiatives are crucial as they directly address real-world needs. Collaboration between the private and government sectors is essential; without it, employment opportunities for (PwDs) may stagnate. The government's involvement establishing in reporting mechanisms and assisting in structuring private sector activities could significantly enhance their execution. There is a pressing need to shift the narrative towards taking concrete actions and implementing regulations aligned with societal needs to effectively address these real problems.

The Significance of the Alliance for Large Scale Implementation

Given the substantial population of Persons with Disabilities, the impact of initiatives remains localised and lacks the potential for widespread implementation without a unified platform and alliance. The Universal Accessibility Alliance would prove invaluable, leveraging insights from diverse organisations and institutions, including universities. While fostering a shift in mindset poses challenges, there is a critical need to redefine perceptions of disability, starting at the school level and extending further.

The involvement of the private sector in introducing innovative technological solutions is crucial. It underscores the importance of mainstreaming the "Leave No One Behind" principle, not merely as a matter of corporate social responsibility (CSR) but as an integral part of city administration and organisational practices.

The discussions concluded by having an understanding among the participants to work together to create a barrier-free environment for PwDs with a focus on ICT, built-in infrastructure, and transportation systems. Finally, the GIZ team emphasised the need to promote urban mobility aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and assured the participants to work together on accessibility initiatives in the urban mobility sector in Indian cities. This session concluded the discussions and identified actions needed for the next steps.

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Key Takeaways from the Panel Forum



Based on the discussions held during the panel forum for promoting disability-inclusive urban development and barrier-free mobility, key recommendations and takeaways are as outlined below:

- Engage Partners and Stakeholders: Contemporary city technologies must adopt a multi-stakeholder engagement process to ensure sustainable financing of these innovations and citizens' full participation in any projects. Partnerships with the private sector will help cocreate cost-effective and viable solutions that leverage companies' expertise in designing for inclusivity.
- Foster the Entrepreneur Ecosystem: Many of the applications and solutions that will benefit PwDs and other marginalised communities will arise from social entrepreneurs and innovators of all ages. Beyond enhancing the accessibility of city infrastructure and services, a key role for city government is to enable this social innovation to flourish and direct entrepreneurship to benefit these communities. Publicly funded incubators and open data portals are some of the many ways city governments can foster citizen solutions.
- Commit to disability-inclusive urban development and SDG implementation- These could include ensuring universal accessibility in built environments, housing, public buildings, recreational spaces, and basic urban services, such as sanitation, water, health, education, transportation, emergency and disaster response, resilience-building, and ensuring access to service, information, and communications.
- Enable the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the decisionmaking processes to participate in policy making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This would be crucial data to design, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of disability-related policies and programmes.
- Promote Adoption of Technology: City officials must work to bridge the digital divide that often prevents people who are ageing or living with disabilities from accessing the full benefits of technology. Without addressing these issues, cities risk perpetuating disparities that keep these communities from accessing smart technologies.
- Develop a multi-stakeholder approach by establishing a Universal Accessibility Alliance at the national level in India to leverage the expertise and insights of varied stakeholders to facilitate barrier-free and disability-inclusive urban

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development. It will also act as an inclusive forum for the facilitation of a strong data and evidence-driven integrated planning approach with the involvement of multi-stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of various provisions of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. This will also draw participation from representatives of Central and State Governments, DPOs, bilateral/ multilateral agencies, urban practitioners, and service providers.

- To improvise and re-develop the existing Crowdsourcing Mobile Application (Sugamya Bharat App developed by MSJE) for sensitising and enhancing accessibility in the built environment, transportation sector, and ICT ecosystem in India. The vision and direction for this crowdsourcing app based on public participation is to improve accessibility in Indian cities to enable PwDs and the public to bring to notice accessibility-related issues that require redressal.
- As cities build smart infrastructure, serious thinking about the citizen experience with all the various touch points with the city and the community must take place. Urban Development initiatives should focus on how persons with disabilities and ageing citizens will interact with websites, mobile apps, self-service kiosks, smart meters, and other emerging devices.
- There is a need to inform and engage with the communities that will receive these benefits to ensure that communities agree to release data in exchange for the offered technological benefit. Attention to digital rights extends to the application of data, ensuring that data is not used in any way (even unintentionally) that discriminates or marginalises individuals or populations.
- Focus on **capacity building and training initiatives** should be tailored to the job function to promote barrier-free mobility by facilitating programmes that include:
 - barriers faced by disabled people, including

attitude, environment, and organisation

- principles of access audits
- suggestions for removing barriers faced by disabled people
- information on the range of impairments, including those that are invisible
- the skills needed for assisting disabled travellers
- communication and interpersonal skills for interacting positively with PwDs
- Innovative and accessible ICT and IoT technologies need to be promoted to empower PwDs as these technologies hold the potential to deliver on the uncompromising vision for contemporary cities by connecting citizens, governments, and the private sector in a united effort to improve our communities.
- To advance this vision of barrier-free cities, it is crucial to support adoption, designing for inclusion and privacy by engaging partners and stakeholders, and fostering the entrepreneur ecosystem. The Universal Accessibility Alliance can facilitate this key principle in future initiatives to develop barrier-free Indian cities.
- More than technology and connectivity, a renewed sense of barriers faced by PwDs, community, and civic participation will ensure that our cities are both technological marvels while remaining accommodating, enjoyable, and deeply human-centric.
- Design for Inclusion: Universal design criteria will ensure technologies are usable by all citizens. Enhanced digital security and privacy protections will be a fundamental requirement as these new technologies will play a vital role in the lives of citizens

 and may be directly responsible for the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable communities. With proper planning, system designs for city infrastructure can ideally detect security concerns and have alerting and remediation capabilities for the broader public.

Green Urban Mobility Partnership

India and Germany have been working for more than 60 years together on environment-friendly urban development projects. To further deepen this cooperation, in November 2019, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the Government of India and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on the Green Urban Mobility Partnership (GUMP). Both countries agreed to collaborate more closely to transform urban transport systems through more efficient, people-centric and low carbon mobility solutions. BMZ is funding a wide range of sustainable urban mobility infrastructure improvement measures such as city bus transport systems, trams, water transport, cable cars, non-motorised transport, and multimodal integration. In addition, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) is providing technical cooperation to enhance the capacities of national, state and local institutions and decisionmakers for designing sustainable, inclusive and smart solutions for easy and affordable mobility. The implementation of this agreement is accompanied by a policy dialogue between the Indian and German sides to achieve effective international contributions to fighting climate change jointly.

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Sustainable Urban Mobility – Air Quality, Climate Action and Accessibility

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