



URBAN PARKING POLICY

How difficult is it to curb the free-for-all approach to parking? Urban theorists are increasingly looking at its effects on our liveability index.

If you've ever driven a car in any metro city, you probably know the drill. The city's free on-street parking gives a small, temporary benefit to a few lucky drivers, but it creates big problems for everyone else. Drivers hunting for an open spot will circle the block, wasting fuel, congesting traffic and polluting the air. At 32 mts/car that are required ideally to park a vehicle, this is probably the most pinching and expensive use of real estate in urban India. Compounded by a lack of policy and space in our cities, it surely has made urban living and commuting chaotic and nightmarish. About 85-90% of public parking

happens in narrow lanes, roadsides, street spots, corners, footpaths, by-lanes and anywhere else you can think of. Majority of this happens free of cost or at very low costs, in a way subsidising the use of private vehicles and chaos.

One approach is to charge for on-street parking; but how much? And how do you make it politically acceptable in a city where parking is controlled by street mafia. Traffic regulations are just on paper. There are no systems for traffic management. Policing for traffic is inadequate and drivers are used to paying nothing. Since 97% of on-street parking is free, the indirect parking

subsidy — what the city gives to drivers in the form of free parking — is astronomical. For example, if only 25% of Delhi’s on-street spaces were metered and the average revenue per space was only Rs 20 a day, the total revenue, assuming just 25% of the vehicle population of 90 lakh vehicles park on roads, the revenue would amount to roughly Rs 1,650 crore in a year. There are other indirect costs as well. It is generally found that drivers cruise almost a kilometre, on average, before finding an open space. In a year, this cruising created about 800,000,000 vehicle km of travel, 80,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions and Rs 560 crore in fuel costs. We are just talking about Delhi. India has 15 major metros towns and cities and you can well imagine the benefits and the savings!

All this money can be used in building an organised automated car parking infrastructure in our metros.

New automated car parking systems can offer large parking facilities using height, depth and width intelligently to provide customised needs for public car parking. Some of these facilities are working effectively in large modern cities like Tokyo and New York. Private builders in India are also adapting this technology to resolve their parking woes. Not only are private developers looking at automated garages, city planners and architects are discussing new ideas to manage automobiles, even when stationary. Urban theorists and policy makers are increasingly looking at the effects of parking on traffic, development, pollution and energy efficiency. Smart parking could save energy. For the developer, automated garages offer cost advantages in construction and operation. By omitting ramps and walkways, about twice as many cars can be tucked into the space. Labour and infrastructure costs are lower and getting cars in and out is faster.

There is a dire need to have a proper policy framework for management of our cities, especially developing a parking policy and management. We must curb the free-for-all, anywhere and everywhere approach and reduce the area given for parking. We must encourage designated parking areas, a parking duration policy, pricing of parking to generate revenues for better facilities and discourage long hours, ownership of multiple vehicles, and encourage car pools to work. The government should have a clear-cut policy guideline on public automated parking systems as it involves a large capital outlay. Cities should have an area wise parking plan with a thorough understanding of the supply and demand, peak and non-peak traffic situations. Policy makers and private professional parking operators can come together and play a great role in easing this problem with successful business models encouraging organised parking and commute. With modern-day technologies,



stacking up and using vertical heights to park and retrieve vehicles is convenient and possible. Health of a city, liveability, how a city feels, looks, how its residents move, how the traffic flows, how much time do they spend commuting, how much pollution is generated is solely decided by how a state manages its traffic, and therefore parking. Liveability index is the new benchmark for modern cities. ■



*This article is contributed by
Ajay Raina, CEO, Tetra Automotive
Solutions Private Limited.*

*His company is dedicated towards
providing customised automated
parking solutions in all segments.*