

Terrible pedestrian infrastructure in Kathmandu

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A study undertaken by Clean Air Network Nepal and Clean Energy Nepal has revealed that pedestrian facility in Kathmandu is in a worse condition and is not user-friendly to physically disabled people.

Special points of interest:

- Pedestrian facilities in Kathmandu is found to be worse and unfriendly to physically disabled people
- Nepal need to promote electric based transport system to cut dependency on imported fossil fuel and to reduce emission of GHGs and local air pollutants

The field survey was conducted in commercial, public transport, educational and residential areas covering a total of 48 road stretches with a combined length of 59 kilometers. Based from the survey results, the walkability index of Kathmandu City is 559. When compared with other cities, Bangkok is 121. An index that comprises a single ranking number is regarded to be a more walkable city. Residential areas in Baneshwor Height, Kuleshwor, Khusibu and Lainchaur to Lazimpat have the highest walkability scores in the following variables; availability of walking paths with maintenance and cleanliness, availability of crossings per stretch, grade crossing safety,

motorists obeying traffic laws and security from crime. The commercial area in Ason road has the lowest walkability scores in almost all variables: availability of walking paths, availability of crossings per stretch, grade crossing safety, motorists obeying traffic laws, amenities, disability infrastructures and security from crime. It was registered that significant modal conflict in walking path mainly comes from vendors occupying the footpaths that make walking inconvenient. The public transport areas in Ratna Park and Kalanki have the highest number of pedestrian users and obtained the highest score in walking path modal conflict.

As a first step towards encouraging and helping cities improve their pedestrian infrastructure, the Asian Development Bank through the Clean Air Initiatives for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia) and its partner network, Clean Energy Nepal (CEN) has conducted the walkability survey in Kathmandu City to collect data about the city's pedestrian environment.



Major roads in Kathmandu lack good footpath forcing pedestrians to come down to road to cause modal conflict

The overarching goal of the project is to improve pedestrian's safety and mobility and promote walking as a sustainable transport. Prior to the survey, CEN conducted the walkability training in Kathmandu City last January 13 on fifteen youth volunteers known as Walkability Ambassadors. The training included a methodology in assessing the pedestrian environment based on safety and

security, convenience, policy support, study area selection, city boundary, street selection, and time of day considerations.

The Walkability Ambassadors were divided and deployed to five areas; commercial, public transport, residential, educational and stakeholders group. About 305 pedestrian interviews were conducted to analyze travel behavior (time that pedestrians spend for each travel mode), pedestrian preference in terms of infrastructures, degrees of exposure to air pollution and socioeconomic profiles. Field survey forms were collected to examine road stretches around the city that includes availability of walking paths, motorist behavior, amenities, obstructions, and security from crime, among others.

When we asked pedestrians to rate the existing pedestrian facilities in the city, 46 percent said that the situation of existing infrastructures in the city is in its worst condition. There was no observed consistency in design in terms of width, height, and continuity of footpaths or road-crossings. A number of footpaths are just a meter wide, forcing the pedestrians to use the main roads. Other amenities such as lamp post and greenery occupy the footpaths and existing guard rails are in poor state. Pedestrian signboards and crossing marks are fading that gives longer waiting time for people to cross the other side of the road.

94 % of surveyed road stretches are lacking facilities for persons with disabilities

About 94 percent of all the surveyed road stretches has no existing facilities for persons with disabilities. In terms of improvements in pedestrian facilities, this is the utmost priority perceived by majority of the respondents, followed by improved street lighting and wider, level and clean sidewalks.

Almost 80 percent of the stakeholders and government respondents said that there are no clear laws on jaywalking, traffic calming and roadside advertisements. The

Metropolitan Traffic Police claims that traffic enforcement is regularly being implemented. However, their data reveals that the total accident for the year 2065 to 2066 (Nepali Calendars) accounts for 2765 in which the total fatality is 137; the total number of seriously injured is 720 and minor injuries reported is 2448. Based from the results derived from stakeholder and government surveys, the main barriers in improving the pedestrian facilities include lack of awareness on the importance of pedestrians safety, polices and investment for pedestrian friendly infrastructures and guidelines, linkages of all authorities working on pedestrian issues, poor urbanization plan and weak agency implementation.

The strength of a city's pedestrian network affects the overall pedestrian experience. In most countries advocating sustainable modes of urban transport, the methods of planning are redesigned so that these are integral part of the sustainable transport planning. Priorities are shifting towards less environmentally damaging modes and improved vehicle technology and optimizing the use of existing capacity.



As a way forward, CEN wants to disseminate the results of the walkability survey in Kathmandu City and work on an integrated approach towards sustainable urban transport in the city. Beginning third week of March, various activities are scheduled as follows: Youth sharing sessions with students, Cycling Marathon, Training on UNEP Toolkit for Vehicle Emission Testing and discussion with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Physical Planning and Works and other concerned officials regarding planned initiatives in encouraging people to travel on foot. Improving the pedestrian facilities has many societal benefits. More often than not, the environmental, social and economic development of the city is entirely dependent on safeguarding the key