

12 December 2015

To
The Hon'ble Chief Minister
Maharashtra

Subject: High Capacity Mass Transit Route for Pune Municipal Corporation

Dear Sir,

On 9 November 2015, the Standing Committee approved development TDR for acquiring land for High Capacity Mass Transit Route ("HCMTR" for short) in the face of opposition from the BJP members-Annexe 1. HCMTR alignment in the draft DP still awaits approval from the State Government. Even suggestions/objections have not yet been called. So this hurry on the part of some of the members of the Standing Committee to approve TDR for a project, which is not sanctioned, is suspect. Now there is a report in MidDay dated 2 December 2015-Annexe 2 to the effect that the HCMTR is to be allowed for personalised vehicles.

We are enclosing extracts from draft Development Plans (including the latest from the 3-member Committee)-Annexe 2, which clearly show that the HCMTR is meant only for public transport. Considering the pathetic traffic conditions in the city, which are worsening day by day, such a route dedicated to public transport, is very much a necessity today.

There is a strong under-current amongst these councillors, PMC staff and the builder lobby to get approval for HCMTR, which is meant for public transport only and then allow personalised transport to use it. Parts of the areas along the HCMTR alignment have already been merged in reservations in Sector III, TPS-I fully developed in C2 Zone. Changes to Town Planning Schemes need approval from the State Government specifically for each variation. Additionally, PMC has shifted the planned 80 feet wide HCMTR on existing 90 feet DP road (Senapati Bapat Marg) under Old DC Rule 14.4.1.G. The area under HCMTR in final plot nos. 403 and 403A has been used for the International Convention Centre of MCCIA and merged in C2 zone. These actions have virtually killed the essence of HCMTR as originally planned because large parts of HCMTR will now have to be elevated for which PMC has no funds. These changes are obviously at the behest of the ruling party in the PMC.

The PMC has kept the same alignment of HCMTR in the new draft DP, which is not at all realistic in the changed scenario. On the other hand, PMC is very keen to construct parts of the HCMTR, especially in areas that are eco-sensitive and convert adjoining areas into C2 Zone in anticipation of construction by developers adjoining these road alignments / stretches.

With this background, PMC's plan appears to be to start work in the above-preferred stretches of HCMTR. PMC is bound to put it's hands up mid-way to state that reservations, objections from defence authorities and TPS do not permit acquisition of land and also that the cost is too high for the entire HCMTR to come up because large stretches are elevated.

Thus, eventually only those stretches of HCMTR that suit the convenience of the builder and affiliated lobbies will have wide roads, which would be used for personalized transport and not used by dedicated public transport as planned.

PMC does not have a DPR for the HCMTR nor is there a plan to make an Environment Assessment Impact, Socio-Economic Assessment and Financial Feasibility Reports. These reports are essential because there has been a sea-change in the areas along the old HCMTR alignment during the last over 30 years since its planning began. Proper planning will prevent piecemeal acquisition of land and ensure successful completion of the project as a whole. Else, this project will meet the same fate as the BRTS has and this project too has the indications of another scam in the making.

There is a precedent for carrying out such surveys and preparing reports for eco-sensitive roads in the PMC when then Commissioner had formed a joint committee of PMC officials and NGOs in August 2007 to assess the feasibility of a road.

We request a reply to this letter directly from your office and / or Urban Development Department.

Yours sincerely,

Maj. Gen. S. C. N. Jatar (Retd)
Nagrik Chetna Manch

Vijay Kumbhar
Surajya Sangharsh Samiti

Vivek Velankar
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Prashant Inamdar
Pedestrians FIRST

Copy to:

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Ms. Vandana Chavan, MP

Mayor, Pune

Deputy Mayor

Chair, Standing Committee PMC

Commissioner, Pune Municipal Corporation

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister

Secretary, Urban Development Department