

Project Report

Aapki Sadak

Here is a unique initiative to improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods. It is about making neighbourhood streets pedestrian friendly and enjoyable, and about making access to the Metro and other public transport convenient. It is about reclaiming the enjoyment of the spaces around our homes which is being overrun by motor vehicles. We need to breathe clean air again.

A group of four firms – architects, urban designers, streetscape specialists and mobility experts - have got together to work with the residents of neighbourhoods in Malviya Nagar, Khirkee Extension and Sheikh Sarai to develop a consensus plan for the improvement of their streets and environment friendly connectivity to public transport. The project, which has been christened Aapki Sadak, is supported by Shakti Foundation.

Ashok Lall, the eminent architect who is leading the project, believes that this could be a model for citizens becoming participants in the greening of the city's mobility and transportation. Each locality would progressively improve its own streets and make sure that it has convenient, pleasant and safe access to public transport. This needs detailed understanding of local conditions, existing street patterns and activities that impinge on streets and the present modes of mobility that people use. And then through consultation and community outreach workshops with residents, the design of streets and traffic management plans specific to each location is worked out by experts.

Sandeep Gandhi and Sujata Hingorani, who have together designed many street improvements at the time of the Commonwealth Games, explain that community consultation in this project has helped them find the most direct and appropriate design solutions. Ten community consultation workshops have been held so far. The consensus on priorities is emerging.

The community workshop team – Manas Murthy, Sushma Shetty and Aastha Chauhan – have encouraged children, housewives and senior citizens to express their woes and give suggestions. They are being heard and cared for.

Residents are saying that footpaths are an absolute must so that they can walk to the market and to the Metro, and that adjustments for car parking arrangements and some fences will be necessary to make place for footpaths. They need pedal rickshaws or e-rickshaws for local movement when distances are not walk-able. They are simply aghast that no walk-able or cycle-able routes have been built to connect them to the Metro and the BRT corridor.

The experts have prepared the design proposals which are now being taken to the various authorities on behalf of the residents. UTTIPEC, which is the arm of Delhi Development Authority to promote pedestrian inclusion and public transport in the development of the city, is facilitating coordination amongst the various agencies.

Mr. Kakkar, resident of N Block, Malviya Nagar and convenor of the Resident's Associations says that that technically sound solutions and designs give real support and for the many issues that have been discussed with authorities from time to time.

The citizens of Malviya Nagar are optimistic that this time things will change for the better.

Ashok Lall