



Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

## National Pedestrians' Conference, 2022 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March The Ramada, Egmore

### Press Release

#### Chennai For Immediate Release

For a nation that walks as much as we do, India has dismaying road safety ratings for its pedestrians. Just the year 2020 saw 23,483 pedestrian deaths (Union Minister of Road, Transport and Highways, Mr. Nitin Gadkari's report to the Rajya Sabha).

Anyone that's tried walking Chennai's roads will acknowledge that *Namma Chennai* is no exception to this worrying trend. From dodging traffic (even when walking on footpaths!) negotiating encroached pavements to crossing roads (often four lanes at once of fast traffic!) - it's a hard road for pedestrians. More accurately, it's a deadly road for pedestrians. And there is ample data to support this: the OMR stretch alone saw as many as 34 pedestrian deaths a year. 90% of these deaths were from pedestrians trying to cross the road (Greater Chennai Traffic Police, 2019).

'What we fail to see about pedestrians is their contribution to reducing congestion and pollution. Instead, we see them as second class citizens - maybe as people who cannot afford private transport. Actually, just promoting safe walking can do so much to making the city liveable', said Sumana Narayanan, Senior Researcher, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG).

The National Pedestrian Conference (organised by SUM NET India) aims to create a national pedestrian policy that will afford pedestrians safe and enjoyable walking infrastructure. Towards this, the conference brought together various pedestrian groups - domestic and informal workers, senior citizens and children, and people with disabilities, - social groups, urban designers, activists, transport planners, government officials, media and individuals to gather insights that will go towards developing the policy.

Ms. Santha Sheela Nair, IAS (ret'd) who gave the keynote address especially stressed on the health benefits of walking. 'We see street vendors as competing with pedestrians for pavement space. Actually, the contribution of street vendors to the local economy is considerable. And they are the 'eyes on the street' - a protection to pedestrians and other road users. To accommodate all this, we should make carriageways narrower and pavements wider. When Nordic countries build road infrastructure to encourage walking, why are we doing the opposite?' she asked.

This is true of our current dispensation where policy, planning and implementation all ignore the needs of pedestrians. This style of urban planning will only result in rising congestion, rising pollution and increasing pedestrian fatalities.

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### **About CAG**

Citizen consumer & civic Action Group (CAG) is a thirty six year old nonprofit and non-political organization working on citizen rights and good governance. It has worked primarily to protect the interests of consumers and citizens of Chennai even as its efforts have had state level and even national level impacts.

**About Sustainable Urban Mobility Network (SUM Net)** is a coalition of grassroots organizations, voluntary organizations and civil society networks that seeks to improve the quality of life for all through democratic ways to ensure urban transport systems are just, safe, environment-friendly and economically-viable. They work at both an advisory level to support local communities in shaping their transportation policies and policy dialogue level to push for urban mobility systems to be more sustainable and socially just. [www.sumnet.in](http://www.sumnet.in)