



POLICY BRIEF by

EQUIMOB

Inclusive-Cities through Equitable access to Urban Mobility Infrastructures for India and Bangladesh



INTRODUCTION

This policy brief is addressed to the notification KST/CO/CPRO/0745/2021-22 inviting public feedback and suggestions regarding services of state road transport corporations. We present research-based insights derived from an ongoing (since 2019) rigorous fieldwork among older adults in Bengaluru using qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, field observations, visual surveys and stakeholder consultations.

BMTC - networking older adults to the city

Age-friendly cities is a global initiative gaining traction with more older adults migrating and living in cities. Bengaluru, long known by the sobriquet of ‘pensioner’s paradise’ is faced with the challenge to make its public bus transport accessible across ages, particularly for older adults. The 6,000 odd bus network of BMTC is an integral mode connecting older adults from low-income households to vital urban services such as hospitals, banks, post offices and so on. In this context, BMTC carries the responsibility to be age-friendly. In this brief, we share evidence-based insights for inclusive mobility.

RESULTS

Affordability

- There are older commuters who often support their families economically and encounter challenges with respect to low income, ageism in the job market and a lack of social security.
- The current fare for a senior citizen bus pass and the fare in general is unaffordable for low-income older workers in informal labour such as flower vendors, domestic housekeeping workers and security agencies.

Acceptability

- Transport personnel can often be rude to older commuters without using the age-appropriate terms that show respect.
- Lack of hygiene at the bus stops and inside the bus as well discouraged the use of buses

Availability

- The quality of infrastructure at the nearest bus stop impacts their transport experience. Often shelters are unavailable (figure 1) where the bus stops. Older commuters sit on the ground or wait on the road, which poses additional risks of accidents.
- Bus shelter with poor lighting and seating arrangement makes waiting for bus laborious.
- Estimated arrival time of buses is unavailable at bus stops. Older low-income commuters are not tech-savvy to use apps. With no real-time bus arrival information, older commuters wait longer in bus stops with no waiting infrastructure.

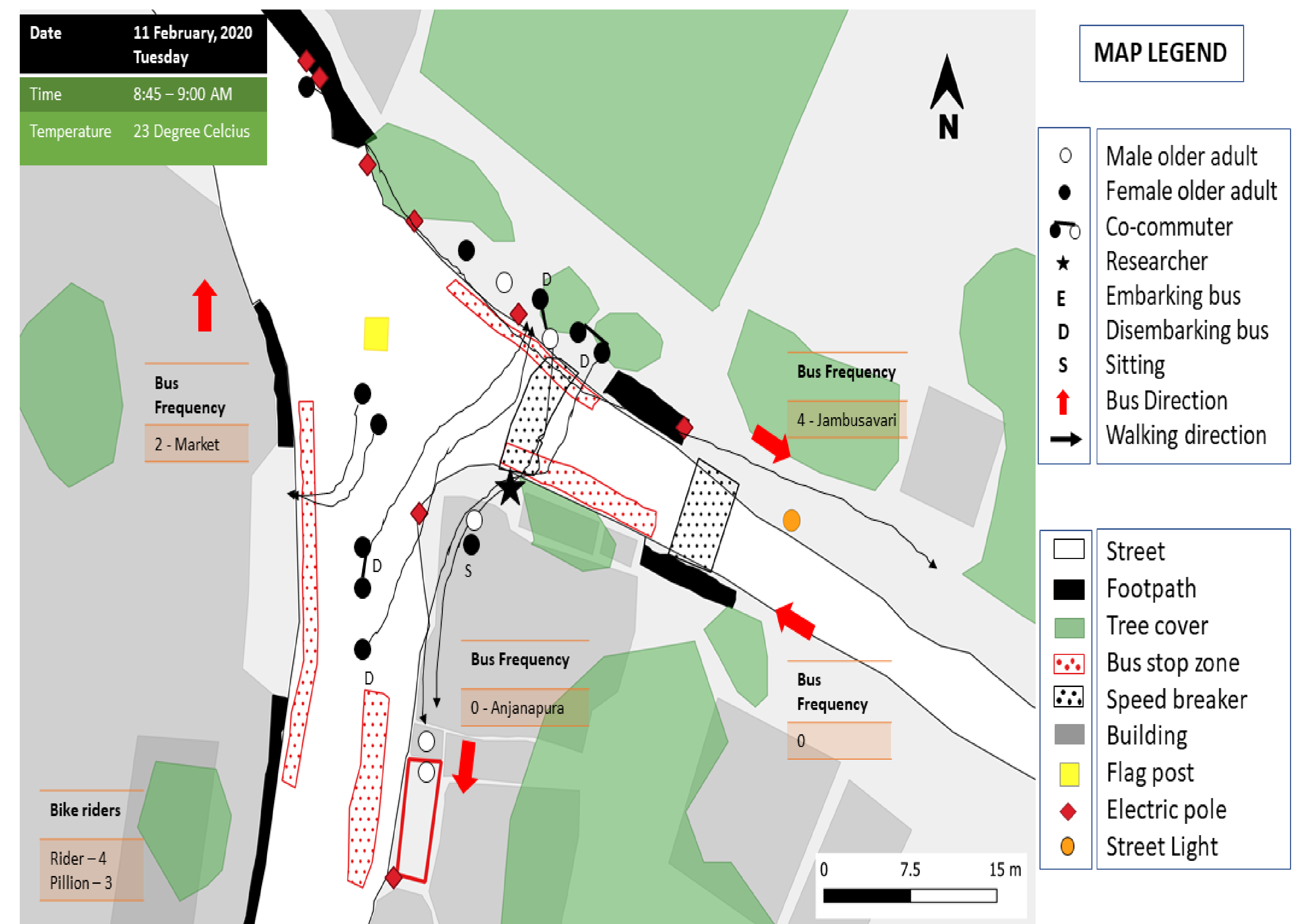


Figure 1: Older adults predominantly preferred bus but only 1/4 stops had bus shelters (visual survey)

Accessibility

- Buses without low-floor posed a physical challenge for older commuters, especially women. Given the increasing physical ailments such as knee pain and buses not stopping in allotted space forces them to climb steep steps. This design barrier often results in a fall or increasing the risk of fall.
- The access to bus stops was also difficult owing to poorly maintained pedestrian paths
- The number of seats reserved for 'senior citizens' are few and many are forced to travel standing.
- Availing the senior citizen bus pass involved approaching the local political patronage or multiple visits to different bus hubs in either Majestic or Shanti Nagar and numerous confusing steps for paperwork.



Figure 2: Missing shelter: Older adults struggling to find shelter while waiting for bus

IMPLICATIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

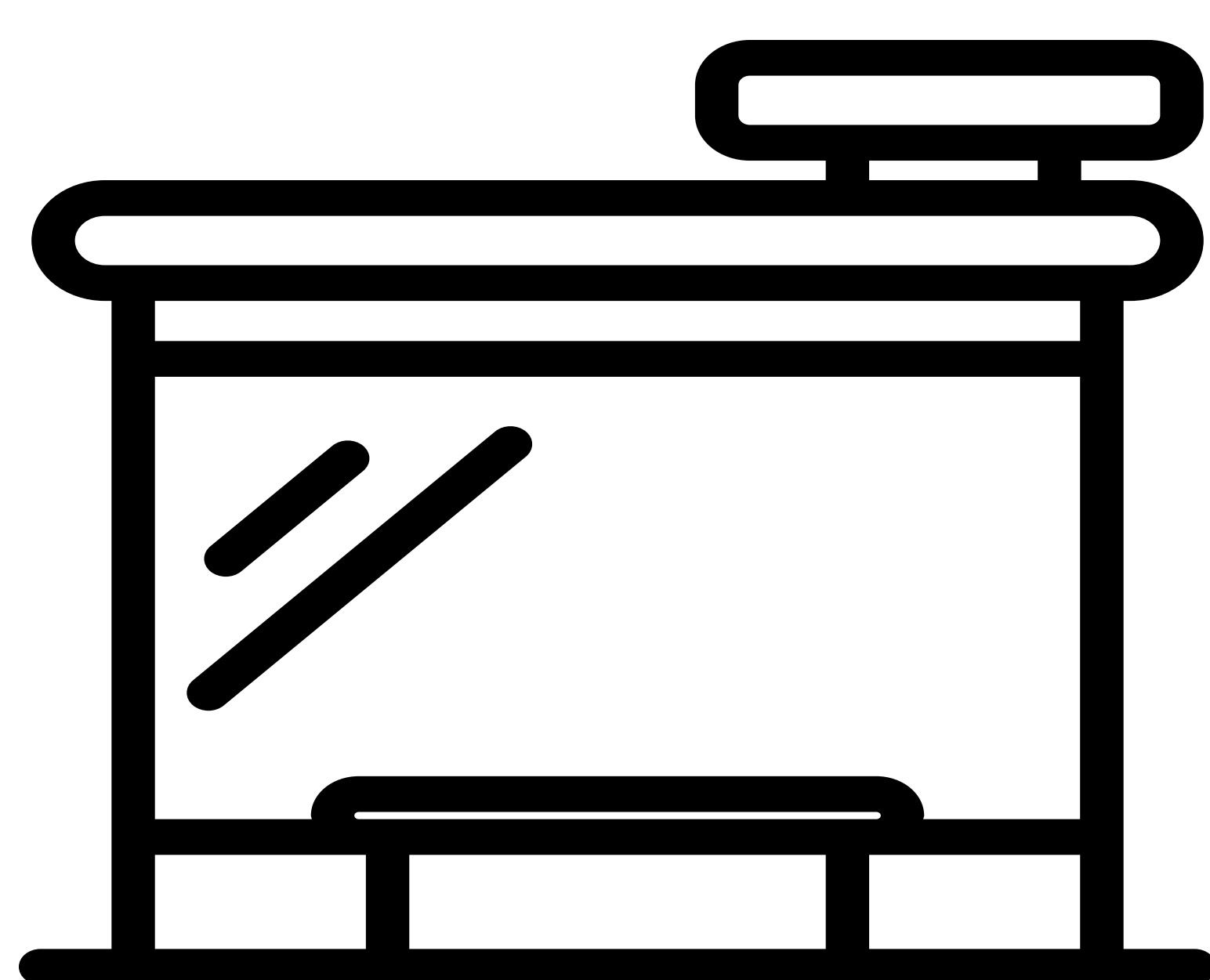


Reduction in fare of bus pass for older adults will improve their access to work, healthcare and psychosocial wellbeing.



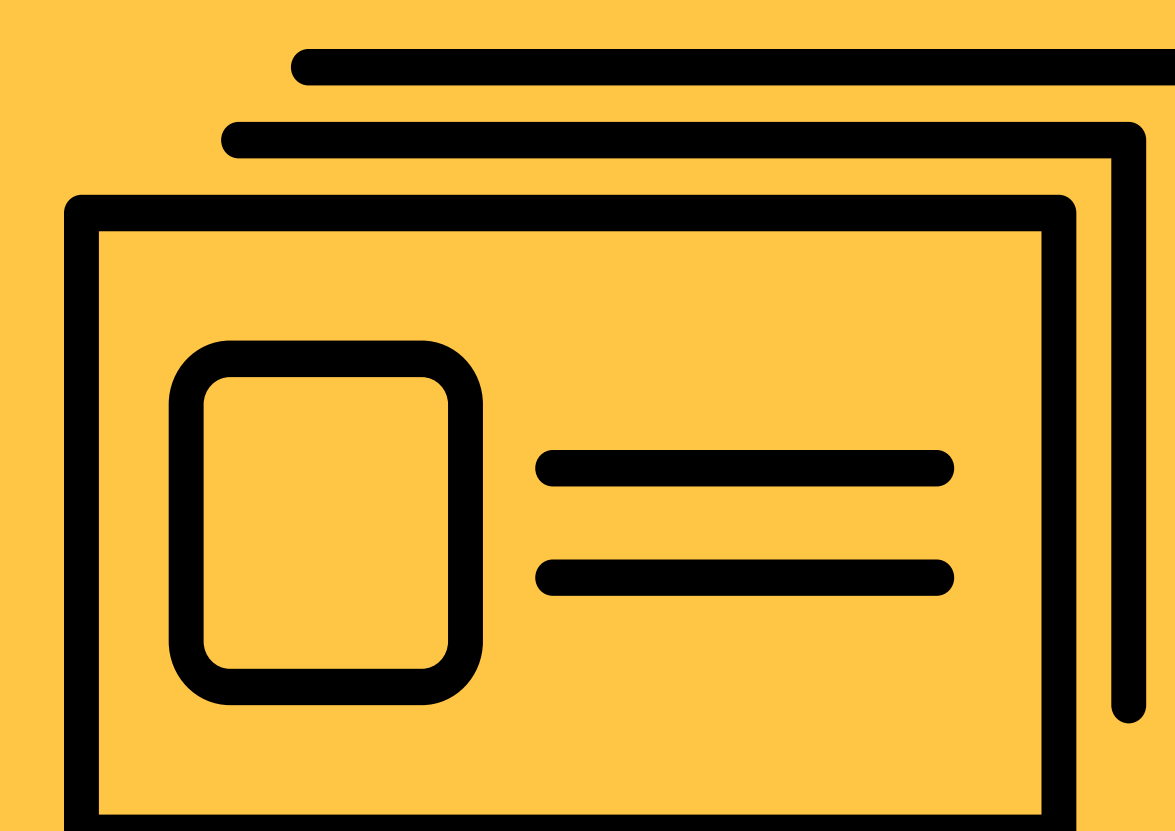
Sensitise drivers to **stop bus at the kerb** - making it easier for older adults to board the bus

Sensitise personnel to be **considerate** towards older persons - wait until they board/alight, to stop the buses at designated bus stop



Installation of **comfortable bus shelters**, sitting space and lighting inside the shelter will improve waiting experience

Providing a **digital display board** with real-time information of estimated arrival of buses will help them plan their trips with minimal waiting.



Ward level monthly camps to issue and renew 'senior citizen' bus pass will help increase bus usage among low-income older adults

Introduction of **low-floor non-A/C buses** for easy access to older commuters

Rationalising routes considering trip patterns of older commuters will help better access to healthcare and wellbeing

EQUIMOB project is driven by an interdisciplinary team consisting of geographers, sociologists, demographers, land use and transport planners, development economists, architects and public health practitioners. The project is part of the Joint SDG research programme 2018 of NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development. It is funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Utrecht University.

To know more about **EQUIMOB** project:

