# EVENT REPORT

## Consultation on Shared Mobility and Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) in Karnataka

Conference organised by
**Centre for Public Policy Research | Kochi**

In Collaboration with
**Center for Social and Policy Research, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)**

06 August, 2026
Bengaluru

Report prepared by
**Centre for Public Policy Research | Kochi**

# 01 Background


This consultation on ***"Shared Mobility and Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) in Karnataka"*** was convened under CPPR's ongoing research study, "Reforms to Promote Shared Mobility for Economic Empowerment and Growth in Rural India," which examines regulatory constraints on shared mobility and Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) across Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. The Karnataka component combines a rule-by-rule legal analysis of the Karnataka Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 and the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 with field-based case studies in Melukote Constituency (Mandya District)

The session brought together researchers, civil society organisations, transport operators and unions, and academic experts to review CPPR's findings and policy recommendations, and to gather feedback ahead of presenting the study to government stakeholders.

# 02 Summary of Discussions

Dr. Subramanian welcomed participants to the conference, noting CSPR's work on similar themes and framing the consultation as an opportunity to open a longer-term collaboration between the two institutions.

Dr. D Dhanuraj, Chairman, CPPR introduced CPPR's 16-year engagement with shared mobility and IPT research, tracing its origins to a 2009-10 study of Chennai's auto-rickshaw sector (covering over 1,200 drivers and 500,000 commuters) that informed recommendations to the Chennai Municipal Corporation. He outlined why State Transport Undertakings (STUs) in India struggle to serve rural areas profitably under their public-good mandate, and framed the deregulation of rural shared mobility as India's “next 1991 moment”, with the potential to unlock significant local employment if permit restrictions are eased.

Mr. Nikhil Ali, Senior Research Associate, CPPR, presented the study findings. The presentation explained the stage carriage/contract carriage divide under the Motor Vehicles Act, a classification dating to 1939, and demonstrated how neither permit category legally accommodates shared, multi-passenger, flexible-stop mobility. Specific provisions of the Karnataka Motor Vehicles Rules were cited as barriers: the prohibition on stopping to pick up passengers en route (Rule 13(j)), stand-only parking requirements (Rules 16(a) and 16(e)), the mandatory shortest-route obligation (Rule 16(g)), the prohibition on mid-journey termination (Rule 16(i)), and single-fare meter requirements (Rules 16(k), 16(m), 108, 129).

## Evidence Presented

- **Bengaluru**: IPT-type vehicles carry 13% of trips using just 3% of the vehicle fleet. A B.PAC survey found 51% of first-mile and 68% of last-mile trips to public transport rely on shared mobility; 24% of non-users cited poor connectivity as their reason for avoiding public transport. Public transport modal share has declined from 48% (2020) and is projected to fall further, against a municipal target of 70% by 2031.
- **Melukote** (rural case study): 1,658 villages statewide lie more than 2 km from the nearest bus stop. A formal auto trip costs upwards of ₹150, compared to roughly ₹20 for an informal shared ride — illustrating that affordability schemes like Shakti do not resolve the first/last-mile cost problem.
- **Hubballi-Dharwad**: An average ₹21 bus fare rises to ₹62 in total trip cost once last-mile connectivity is factored in. Modelling suggests better feeder integration could raise bus usage from 1.46 to 2.22 trips per person per day — roughly a 50% increase — with 36.9% of personal-vehicle users indicating willingness to shift to bus given better connectivity.

## Policy options presented

- **Option 1**: Modify existing contract carriage permits through special conditions (an RTA-level action, fast to implement).
- **Option 2**: Introduce a dedicated shared-mobility permit category within the Karnataka Motor Vehicles Rules (a structural, longer-term reform).
- **Option 3**: Notify a Shared Mobility Scheme under Section 67 of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 (a medium-term, flexible route).

The presentation also flagged the Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY) as the only central scheme currently funding rural mobility, noting its allocation is disproportionately small (roughly 1:3,000) compared to rural road-building expenditure under PMGSY.

# 03 Inputs From Roundtable

The discussion that followed raised a range of operational, political, and methodological considerations. Key themes are summarised below.

### 4.1 Vehicle design and manufacturing incentives

Participants from CSTEP and CPPR noted that vehicle manufacturers have no incentive to design mini or micro-buses (9–13 seats) because no permit category currently exists for them — a regulatory gap rather than a market or technology gap. It was noted that a major manufacturer indicated readiness to prototype a compliant vehicle within 6–8 months if permitted to do so.

### 4.2 Field experience of formalisation attempts

WRI India shared its LEAP pilot experience: 30 women e-rickshaw drivers were trained for last-mile connectivity around metro stations, but the initiative faced permit refusals (on the same stage/contract carriage grounds) and on-ground resistance from existing operators at some stations, requiring police support. The pilot ran for six months with measurable impact but could not be scaled.

Namma Sarathi Trust representatives described training 16–18 women auto drivers, largely operating informally pending clearer permit pathways, and raised specific asks: insurance coverage, EV charging infrastructure, women's toilets at stands, and a review of the one-year service requirement that currently blocks newly trained women drivers from obtaining badges.

The discussion noted that women drivers trained through the initiative faced difficulties in obtaining the necessary permits and badges, creating barriers to their continued participation in the sector. The intervention highlighted that shared-mobility policy should not be designed only around vehicle categories and permits, but should also account for livelihoods, gender inclusion, and the institutional barriers faced by women drivers. It was also suggested that shared autos could have particular relevance in parts of Bengaluru, including areas around the Outer Ring Road, where they could strengthen last-mile connectivity.

### 4.3 The political economy of reform

A recurring point, raised most directly by the Bengaluru Mobility Federation, was that policymakers avoid this reform primarily due to anticipated resistance from transport unions, rather than a lack of evidence or political will in principle. Participants agreed this needs to be addressed explicitly in CPPR's policy materials rather than left implicit.

> The number one hurdle to implementing this, or any policy change for that matter, that people haven't wanted to address in this forum is [that] the policy decision-makers don't want to go against the transport unions.
> Rajagopal, Bengaluru Mobility Federation

The discussion identified a wider set of interests that any policy proposal needs to account for: existing auto operators, transport unions, bus operators, metro agencies, government departments, vehicle manufacturers, new mobility companies, drivers, and passengers. Participants suggested that policy should identify areas of unserved and underserved demand where shared mobility can complement rather than directly replace existing transport services, to reduce competition concerns and improve political feasibility.

## 4.4 Comparative models from other states

Participants referenced Puducherry/Karaikal's fixed-route shared IPT permits (capped at ₹20 per ride), Delhi's regulated e-rickshaw zones (restricted to non-arterial roads), and Vijayawada's near-universal shared-auto culture (linked to a 1990s free-permit policy) as reference points for calibrating Karnataka's approach.

The discussion examined Kochi's dedicated shared-auto permit experience in more detail, noting that introducing a permit category alone did not guarantee a viable shared-mobility ecosystem. Specific issues raised included resistance to the entry of new operators, fixed fares, designated metro stations, restrictions on return trips, vehicle ownership conditions, and electric-vehicle requirements. Some operators who initially entered the shared-auto model reportedly reverted to conventional individual-hire operations because the shared model was not economically sustainable under the imposed conditions, leading to the broader conclusion that policy design must account for operator economics, not permit creation alone.

## 4.5 Operator economics and incentives

A dedicated line of discussion addressed why an existing auto operator would choose shared mobility if individual-hire trips can generate higher revenue. Participants noted that individual-hire services give operators the flexibility to choose passengers, negotiate fares, respond to peak demand, and accept higher-value trips, while a regulated shared service typically involves fixed fares, multiple passengers, added operational complexity, route restrictions, and greater regulatory obligations. The discussion recommended that any policy proposal include a detailed business-economics assessment covering revenue per trip, passenger numbers, operating costs, vehicle financing, maintenance, fuel/electricity costs, insurance, driver earnings, and profitability under different fare models.

## 4.6 Data gaps and methodology

Multiple participants stressed that current data — including the 2020 Comprehensive Mobility Plan and the B.PAC survey (approximately 9–10 years old) — is dated and should be refreshed before being used in policy submissions. It was also noted that a consistent, precise definition of "IPT" is needed, since existing planning documents define it inconsistently across cities and time periods.

## 4.7 Rural coping mechanisms

Participants noted that rural residents have already developed informal, creative solutions to transport gaps — including hitching rides on farm vehicles, and drivers picking up passengers on empty return trips after dropping off goods or workers. It was suggested that any proposed shared-mobility model should be framed and evaluated against this existing baseline, rather than assuming a blank slate.

## 4.8 Regulatory design

Participants argued that the objective should not simply be to create another permit category, but to establish a consistent, administratively workable framework across four dimensions: Regulation, Administration, Finance, and Insurance. Within this, the framework should clearly establish who issues permits, who regulates operators, what vehicles are eligible, how fares are determined, how routes are managed, who bears responsibility in the event of accidents, how insurance is structured, and how existing operators can transition into the new framework.

# 04 Key Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged directly from participant feedback and will inform revisions to CPPR's Karnataka policy materials ahead of submission to government stakeholders.

### 4.1 Consolidate the regulatory options into a single recommended pathway

Presenting three parallel options: modification of existing permit conditions, a new shared-mobility permit category, and a Section 67 scheme; creates ambiguity for policymakers. The study should identify one clear path forward, name transport union resistance as the primary implementation barrier rather than leaving it implicit, and frame the proposal around underserved and unserved routes to minimise the perception of competition with existing bus and auto services.

### 4.2 Address vehicles, payments, and EV incentives as policy core components

The study should include dedicated sections on the gap between existing and required vehicle categories (in particular, the absence of 9–13 seat permit categories), the shift from cash to digital and QR-based payments, and the applicability of existing state and central EV incentives to shared-mobility operators.

### 4.3 Treat rural and urban shared mobility as distinctly, requiring separate design

Seating-capacity and vehicle regulations should not be applied uniformly across both contexts. Any proposed rural model should be benchmarked against existing informal practices, including return-trip pooling and shared travel on agricultural vehicles, rather than assuming these areas currently have no functioning alternatives. The data underpinning the study is approximately a decade old and should be refreshed prior to submission.

### 4.4 Design formalisation around livelihoods and inclusion, not permits alone

The discussion was explicit that shared-mobility policy cannot be designed solely around vehicle categories and permit structures. It must also account for driver livelihoods and the specific institutional barriers faced by women drivers, including badge eligibility requirements that currently prevent newly trained women drivers from continuing to operate.

### 4.5 Engage the full stakeholder ecosystem before government presentation

Transport departments, State Transport Undertakings, metro agencies, transport unions, individual operators, women driver organisations, vehicle manufacturers, and civil society organisations should be involved in shaping the proposal at this stage, rather than consulted only after its finalisation. This reduces the risk of the reform being perceived as a threat to existing operators rather than a complement to the existing transport system.

CPPR will revise its Karnataka policy materials to incorporate this feedback ahead of formal presentation to state and central government stakeholders. The organisation will continue its crowdsourced neighbourhood mobility-mapping initiative with student volunteers, addressing the current absence of shared-mobility data within government systems. CPPR and the Center for Social and Policy Research, Christ University, will explore a longer-term collaboration, including potential student involvement in this mapping exercise. Participants agreed to remain engaged through CPPR's national shared mobility platform and subsequent consultations.

# 05 Participants

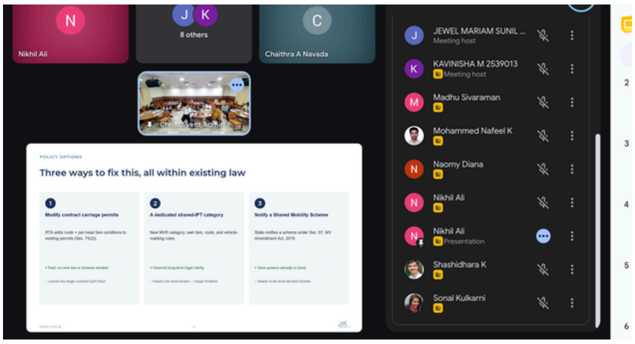
D Dhanuraj, CPPR
S Subramaniyam, CSPR
C Sampath, Namma Sarathi Trust and Adarsha Auto Driver's Union
Vinisha A, Namma Sarathi Trust
Parameshwari R, Namma Sarathi Trust
Gayathri A, Namma Sarathi Trust
Achuthan T D, ASAR
Vivek Gavimath, Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy
Kavya Muthukrishnan, Council on Energy, Environment and Water
Sowmya M, WRI India
Ashish V R, Purpose
Rajagopal, Bengaluru Mobility Federation
Aloke Mukherjee, WRI India
Nikhil Ali, CPPR
Jewel Mariam Sunil, CSPR

*Online attendees*
Sonal Kulkarni, UrbanMorph
Madhu Sivaraman, Janaagraha
Shashidhara K, HSR Citizen's Forum
Chaithra A Navada, CPPR
Naomy Diana, CPPR
Anu Maria Francis, CPPR
Mohammed Nafeel K, CPPR
Anjali Prabhu, CPPR

# 06 Agenda

| Time | Agenda |
|---|---|
| 11.00 AM – 11.15 AM | Welcome and Introduction to the Stakeholder Consultation<br>Dr D Dhanuraj, Chairman, CPPR |
| 11.15 AM – 11.35 AM | Presentation of Study Findings and Policy Recommendations by Nikhil Ali, Senior Research Associate, CPPR |
| 11.35 PM – 12:45 PM | Roundtable Discussion Moderated by Dr D Dhanuraj, Chairman, CPPR |
| 12.45 PM – 1:00 PM | Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks by Dr Subramanian S, Director, Centre for Social and Policy Research |
| 1:00 PM | Lunch |

# 07 Photogallery




# 08 Team

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|---|---|
| **Project Advisors** | **Dr D Dhanuraj,** Chairman, CPPR,<br>**Lakshmi Ramamurthy,** Trustee, CPPR |
| **Research team** | **Nikhil Ali,** Senior Research Associate (Urban)<br>**Chaitra A Navada,** Research Associate (Urban) |
| **Program Team** | **Binumol V B,** Program Lead<br>**Anu Maria Francis,** Assistant Manager (Research and Project Management)<br>**Kalyani S K,** Senior Associate, Communications & Media |
| **Event support** | **Kavinisha M, Hari Prasath, Adreet,** Christ University, Bengaluru |
| **Representatives from CSPR** | **S Subramaniyam, Jewel Mariam Sunil** |

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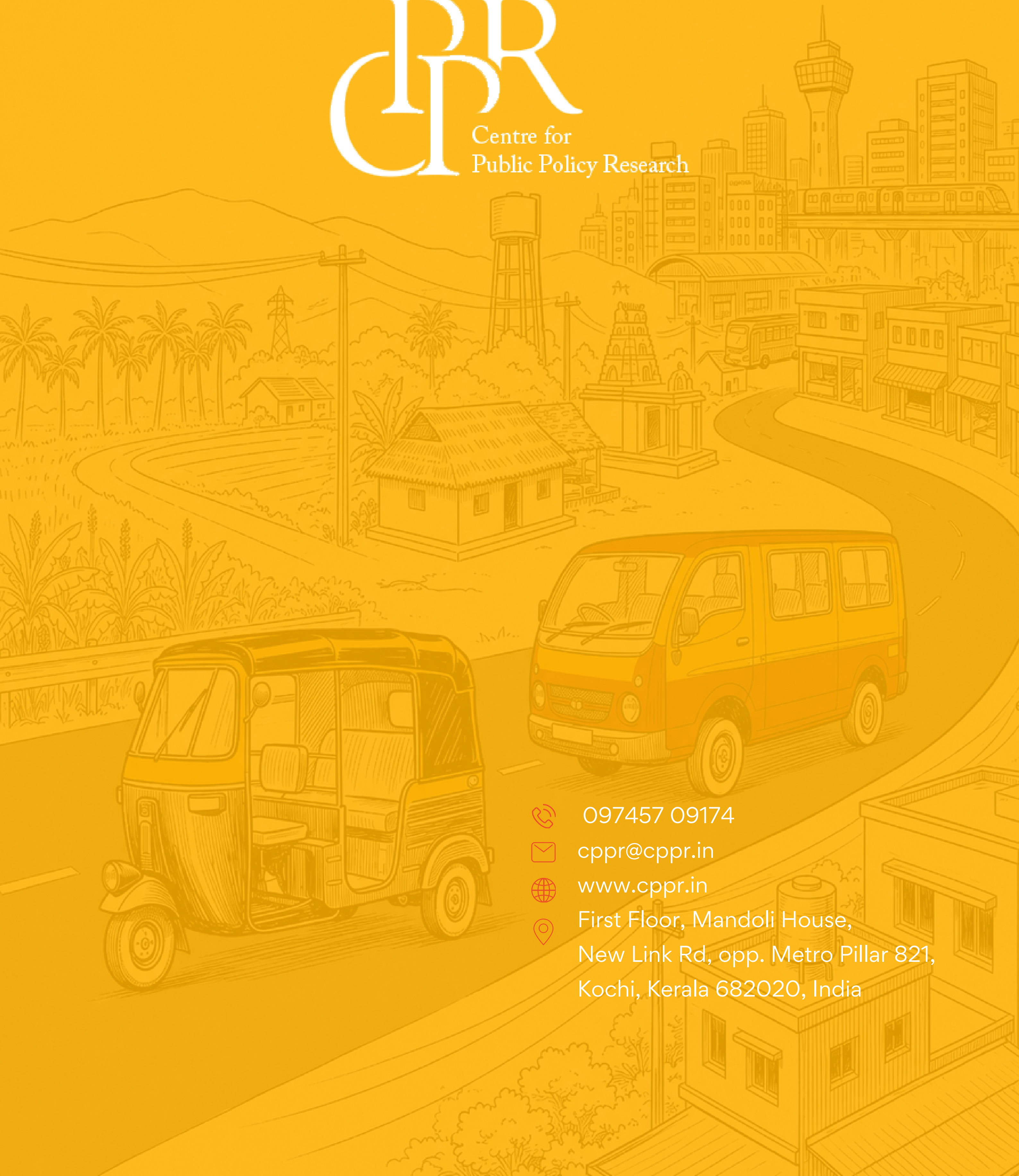

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