

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON LOW-EMISSION ZONES IN CITIES: SUMMARY

A National Workshop on Low-emission Zones in Cities was organised by the International Council on Clean Transportation in collaboration with NITI Aayog on February 19, 2024, in New Delhi. The workshop was attended by over 150 participants and brought together stakeholders in the sector, taking the conversation forward on the implementation of LEZs in Indian cities. It was organised in association with the Raahgiri Foundation and Sustainable Mobility Network.

Speakers included members from the government, private sector, civil society, academia and practitioners. During the day-long workshop, best practices for LEZ implementation in Indian cities were discussed, and a roadmap for future actions was formulated.

Here are details as per the sessions in which they participated.

PLENARY

1. Shri Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa delivered the Keynote Address
2. Shri Sudhendu J. Sinha, Adviser, NITI Aayog, delivered the Special Address
3. Shri Amit Bhatt, India Managing Director, ICCT gave the welcome address

LOW EMISSION ZONES - UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT

1. Shri Kranti Sambhav, Editor, OVERDRIVE - Network18 Media
2. Ms Sonal Jain, Urban and Regional Development Advisor, GIZ
3. Shri Vivek Vaidyanathan, Principal, Artha Global
4. Smt Aswathy Dilip, South-Asia Director, Institute for Transportation & Development Policy

Moderator: Shri Amit Bhatt, India Managing Director, ICCT

Background Presentation by Shri Moorthy Nair, Associate Researcher, ICCT

IMPLEMENTING LOW EMISSION ZONES IN INDIA

1. Shri Hitesh Vaidya, Former Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs
2. Shri S K Lohia, Senior Advisor (Rail & Urban Mobility), World Bank
3. Shri S S Bajaj IFS, Chairman, Naya Raipur Development Authority
4. Smt Sarika Panda, Co-founder, Raahgiri Day; and Associate Director, Nagarro

Moderator: Smt Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, Research & Advocacy, Centre for Science & Environment

Background Presentation by Shri Vaibhav Kush, Researcher, ICCT

TECHNOLOGY AND DATA FOR LOW EMISSION ZONES

1. Smt Namita Gupta, Founder, AirVeda
2. Shri Subrata Mitra, Senior Vice President, Ather Energy
3. Shri Siddharth Sinha, Geo and Climate Policy Lead, Google India
4. Shri Abhijeet Sinha, Project Director - National Highways for Electric Vehicles

Moderator: Shri Ashok Deo, Senior Researcher, ICCT

Background Presentation by Shri Moorthy Nair, Associate Researcher, ICCT

ENABLING LOW EMISSION ZONES IN INDIA

1. Shri Arindam Roy, Climate Science Advisor, Clean Air Fund
2. Shri Sudeept Maiti, Independent Consultant
3. Shri Nitin Panigrahi, DGM (Projects), Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation, Government of NCT of Delhi
4. Smt Nidhi Madan, Associate Director-Climate Policy, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation

Moderator: Shri Amit Bhatt, India Managing Director, ICCT

Background Presentation by Shri Vaibhav Kush, Researcher, ICCT

Closing Remarks & Vote of Thanks by Shri Vaibhav Kush, Researcher, ICCT

These discussions were eagerly awaited and shed light on various aspects of Low-Emission Zones in Indian cities. These conversations aspire to take the argument of setting up more and more such zones in various Indian cities forward.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

The workshop began with a plenary session, followed by four technical panels to understand what low-emission zones in India's context mean, their benefits, impacts and implementation.

The plenary session started with Amit Bhatt, India Managing Director, ICCT, welcoming the gathered and setting a context for the day, followed by a special address by Sudhendu Sinha, Adviser, NITI Aayog, who briefly touched upon how Low-emission zones have evolved globally, emphasized the need to be cognizant of practical issues as we implement similar initiatives in India and not become ignorant of what happens outside the LEZs.

The plenary session was followed by the four technical sessions covering discussions on what low-emission zones are, especially in the Indian context, their benefits and needs, the legal pathways available to implement them, the role of technology and data in the planning and implementation of LEZs, and the possible avenues to initiate these interventions.

The deliberations throughout the day brought forward three key considerations that were echoed by several speakers and would be critical in advancing the conversation on low-emission zones in India.

First was around the use of technology. Starting from the keynote address by Shri Amitabh Kant and across all panel discussions, speakers emphasised the need to exploit the power of technology. The technology available today can easily help gather transportation and emission insights in real-time, which should feed into decisions being made in the LEZ conversation. Technology is also critical in enforcing and monitoring LEZ interventions.

The second consideration echoed by the speakers was that a multi-sectoral, integrated and collaborative approach is the only way forward for enabling LEZs in India. Shri Amitabh Kant, in his keynote address, said that “...everything is solvable if all stakeholders can be brought together on the same table to work towards a common goal.” Pollution, being an airshed issue, is not limited to a city’s boundaries. It must be considered at the regional level, thus enabling LEZs to become a holistic solution for multiple urban issues.

Keeping citizens at the heart of all decision-making was the third consideration echoed throughout the workshop. Low-emission zones, as a concept, was born out of an issue that affects the populace. However, as Indian cities adopt LEZs, we must be mindful that the interventions enforced in these zones should not create more problems for the citizens. For example, low-emission zones should not become low-economic activity zones, thus urging decision-makers to consider all aspects before recommending interventions in a LEZ.

KEY QUOTES:

“We need to envision a concentric model of transport - people should be able to walk to bus stops, bus routes should feed into Metro, Metro should feed into regional rails, regional rails should feed into airports and national railways. This is key towards solving for not only emissions but also congestion.” —Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa and former CEO, NITI Aayog

“We need to be aware of not just what happens inside, but also what happens outside low-emission zones.” —Sudhendu J. Sinha, Adviser, NITI Aayog

“Firms are considering India as the Tech Garage of the world, where actual Indian problems are being tackled, and solutions are being optimised for other countries. More congestion leads to increased emissions. Google is trying to utilise traffic data along with traffic light switching data, and trying to optimise the vehicle flow to reduce congestion.” —Siddharth Sinha, Geo and Climate Policy Lead, Google India

“We need local forces and locally driven initiatives to effectively understand and implement the technology solutions for AQI monitoring.” —Namita Gupta, founder, AirVeda

“LEZs should be the new Special Economic Zones (SEZs), where technology and regulation come together to enable economic growth while holistically addressing environmental concerns.” —Abhijeet Sinha, Project Director - National Highways for Electric Vehicles

“Street vendors are the main stakeholders of schemes like BRTs. They act as eyes on the street, making streets safer. They contribute to 50% of the GDP. Street vendors are a huge and essential part of our cities, they are not “encroachers”. We need to design our cities while keeping in mind WHO exactly we are designing them for.” —Sarika Panda Bhatt, Co-founder Raahgiri Foundation, Director, Nagarro

RESOURCES:

1. [Press release](#)
2. [Detailed agenda](#)
3. [Event page](#)

Please reach out to Vaibhav Kush (v.kush@theicct.org) in case of any questions