



Roundtable Discussion Report

Topic: Enabling ecosystem to translate mobility research into useful solutions for sustainable and livable Indian cities



Moderator: Mr. Sathyanarayanan Sankaran, Bicycle Mayor of Bengaluru, Urbanmorph
Rapporteur – Mr. Aitichya Chandra and Mr. Furqan Bhat, IST Lab.

Distinguished dignitaries and attendees:

SI	Name	Organization
1	Mr. Sathya Sankaran	Urbanmorph
2	Mr. Subbaiah TS	Urbanmorph
3	Ms. Lena Robra	Swissnex
4	Prof. Meghna Verma	RIM

5	Prof. Satyavati Komaragiri	IISc Bangalore
6	Mr. Srinivas Alavilli	WRI
7	Dr. Jai Asundi	CSTEP
8	Ms. Revathy Ashok	BPAC
9	Ms. Meera K	Oorvani
10	Ms. Vinuta Gopal	ASAR
11	Mr. Rasheed	Kappan Media
12	Mr. Ravi Tennety	BeST
13	Prof. Vijay Gopal Kovvali	IISc Bangalore
14	Ms. Shruti Parmar	KPMG
15	Mr. Sharath Saiprasad Rao	BPAC
16	Mr. Ashwin Kak	CIRE
17	Mr. Harsha Lingam	Global Business Roads
18	Mr. Chetan Sodaye	WRI
19	Ms. Priyanka Krishnan	BPAC
20	Mr. Rajesh K Singh	KRIDE
21	Mr. Rajiv P	Rainmatter
22	Mr. Manjunath Chande Shekhar	GIZ
23	Ms. Nidhya N Joghee	BeST
24	Prof. Ashish Verma	IST Lab, IISc Bangalore

Bangalore, July 3, 2024 - The 15th Anniversary celebration of IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab (IST Lab), which was held on 3rd July 2024, witnessed a thought-provoking panel discussion on "Enabling ecosystem to translate mobility research into useful solutions for sustainable and livable Indian cities". Distinguished guests convened to shed light on the pressing challenges and promising opportunities faced by Indian cities in their pursuit of sustainable and livable development. The panel discussion was expertly moderated by Mr. Sathyanarayanan Sankaran, popularly known as the bicycle mayor of Bangalore. The following were the agenda points for the panel discussion: -

1. How valuable is mobility research on Indian context to develop useful and actionable solutions?
2. What is lacking in current ecosystem to leverage complementary strengths of stakeholders for delivery of sustainable mobility solutions?
3. What are your suggestions to strengthen this ecosystem?
4. What are the action points you see to create and activate this ecosystem and see results on ground in next 2-3 years?

Key Highlights

1. **Democratizing Science:** Public understanding of science, particularly among younger demographics, is critical. We need to bridge the knowledge gap by making scientific information readily accessible and fostering scientific literacy.
2. **Engaging Science Communication:** Effective communication strategies are crucial. Utilizing clear language, social media, and engaging narratives can connect research to diverse audiences, fostering public interest and support.
3. **Bridging the Research-Action Divide:** Narrowing the gap between research and real-world solutions demands a multi-pronged approach. This includes increased pilot

projects, active industry collaboration, user participation throughout the research process, and robust engagement with policymakers.

4. **Strengthening Collaborative Ecosystems:** Building a collaborative ecosystem around research is key. Partnering with stakeholders, incubators, and establishing a dedicated research solutions group can accelerate the translation of research findings into actionable solutions.
5. **IST Lab- City's Research Powerhouse:** IST Lab should be acting as a repository for data-driven research in the city. This initiative should potentially contribute to the development of a "shadow BMLTA" group, to address urban mobility challenges of India.



Opening the Discussion: Applicability and Societal Impact

- Mr. Sathya initiated the conversation by highlighting the importance of understanding IST Lab's research relevance to civil society and urban development.
- Ms. Meera (Oorvani) emphasized the practical value of research exemplified by Ms. Hemanthini's work on Quality of Life (QoL). She stressed the need for QoL measurement and application to enhance urban living. She further emphasised the importance of developing a QoL index that can help us to analyse where we stand as a city and where we would want to be 2 or 3 years down the line.
- Mr. Sathya further explored the applicability of IST Lab's research for existing practitioners.

- Mr. Manjunath advocated for strengthening research foundations by improving baseline assumptions and addressing low-priority topics.
- Mr. Srinivas highlighted the need for public education on sustainable mobility, where research can play a crucial role. He stressed that the biggest benefactor of the research institute's work has to be the city. He highlighted this fact by citing the example of how citizens knew that the proposed steel bridge in Bangalore was bad for the city but it was Prof. Ashish Verma who came up with a theoretical and scientific backing for this.
- Dr. Jai emphasized the importance of policy-driven research aligned with urban development goals. He also advocated for increased granularity within existing and future research to enhance societal applications.
- Dr. Vijay acknowledged the challenge of decision-maker resistance to new ideas but underscored IST Lab's research potential in influencing their perspectives. He further emphasized the need for research tailored to the Indian context and industry involvement in practical implementation. He also highlighted how research institutions have certain limitations when it comes to scalability, mostly due to the lack of funding. Mr. RK Singh echoed this sentiment, suggesting industry readiness to adopt research under the right conditions.
- On this note, Mr. Ashwin highlighted how some of the work that IST Lab is doing is capable of producing good revenue in the commercial market. He gave an example of how Mr. Furqan's work on optimal planning of electric vehicle charging stations can be of great use to the real estate industry in the city.



Enabling Research Translation: Visibility, Scalability, and Funding

- Mr. Sathya steered the discussion towards exploring how the private sector and industries can facilitate the translation of research into implementable solutions.
- Ms. Shruti highlighted the need for more pilot projects to increase research visibility.
- Mr. Chetan addressed the problem of research scalability due to challenges in scaling research metrics, plans, implementation, and policies.

- Mr. Subbaiah highlighted the critical need for synergy between industry, private sectors, and investors to fund scalability efforts.
- Ms. Lena emphasized the importance of user participation during research planning and framework development, fostering shared community commitment and value.
- Mr. Rajiv proposed identifying research motivators and increasing researcher accountability to study results.



Addressing Gaps and Challenges: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

The discussion then shifted to identifying key gaps and challenges hindering the translation of research into solutions.

- Mr. Subbaiah raised the issue of stakeholder and community involvement.
- Mr. Sharath underscored the need for continuous engagement with regional, state, and national planning commissions to expedite research translation.
- Prof. Meghna proposed avenues for gender-inclusive research and addressing the disconnect between commuters and policy actions.
- Ms. Sharath stressed the importance of enabling civil society conversations around research and developing active interest groups to bridge the research-to-people gap.
- Ms. Revathy advocated for research translating into more context-specific applications, prioritizing actionable research outputs over theoretical ones. Highlighting effective communication,
- Mr. Rasheed emphasized the need to communicate research to communities and encourage research literacy among citizens. He also suggested simplified communication and leveraging social media to reach younger audiences.
- Mr. Rajiv stressed the criticality of aligning research objectives with existing or future political visions, ideologies, and activism for gaining traction.
- Ms. Meera suggested framing research as "cool" and employing impactful communication strategies. Mr. Rasheed proposed highlighting potential adverse future scenarios if research recommendations are not implemented.

IST Lab Projects with High Potential:

The discussion also examined specific IST Lab projects that hold immediate relevance and potential for adoption within the city's current needs. These included:

- Kumbh Mela crowd management research
- Local and urban QoL research
- Interaction of transport systems with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Pedestrianization projects like Church Street



Opportunities and Action Items

The final discussion segment focused on identifying opportunities and action items for successful research translation.

- Ms. Meera highlighted the importance of framing research to increase community resistance to unsustainable practices.
- Mr. Ashwin suggested exploring intra-urban and inter-urban research themes and emphasized the role of IISc and IST Lab in spearheading communication platforms for such research.
- Further suggestions included involving influential stakeholders, decision-makers, and politicians in the communication process. Additionally, translating existing research outputs to other cities with the help of development sector agencies, for potential implementation, was proposed. Including user perspectives during implementation and emphasizing research results during crisis scenarios were also discussed.
- Several panellists acknowledged the potential of partnerships with incubators to bridge the research-to-action gap.
- A significant suggestion by Mr. Srinivas was the creation of a "shadow BMLTA" group specifically dedicated to research-oriented solutions. Finally, there was a consensus on

positioning IST Lab and IISc as the city's research bank and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders for feasible research implementation.

