

HIGH SPEED ROAD CORRIDORS

Efficient transportation is indispensable for economic growth and prosperity, especially when the national and regional economies become globally interconnected. In the post-independence era, role of road transport in the transportation sector has grown tremendously. As per available statistics it is understood that 85 percent of passenger transportation and 65 percent of freight transportation is being catered by roads. In the last two decades the haulage of goods and long distance passengers' trips on the roads has increased many folds. This is mainly due to advantages of road transport and improved quality of highways and advanced technologies of automobiles used in transporting passengers and goods. With more goods being transported and more people traveling by road for work and leisure, the pressure on the transportation system is increasing day by day thereby necessitating greater level of mobility and enhanced levels of road service and safety. There is a need to move goods and people speedily, safely and conveniently across the nation. Speed is an essential element of modern lives i.e. it is directly related to civilization. So, country advances from developing to developed stage, so, we cannot neglect the requirement of High Speed Road Corridors.

The recent speed studies conducted by CRRI, IITs and NITs on selected stretches of National Highways indicate that the speed on National Highways has significantly increased. High speed corridor warrant least interference due to any cross traffic or ingress and egress manoeuvre. Establishing and adopting suitable design and safety policies and standards and strictly adhering to them are absolutely essential for the successful development and implementation of High Speed Road Corridors.

To cater the increasing transport demand the High Speed Road Corridors are need of the day. These corridors will reduce the travel time and enhance the economy of the country. High Speed Road Corridors will also contribute significantly to reducing congestion on arterial and sub arterial roads. Throughout the world, bottlenecks in the transport systems are becoming worse while environmental concerns are mounting. There is always a conflict between development and environment, therefore a tradeoff is necessary to balance the two, so that development is suitable and sustainable. The planning and design of these corridors should be taken up with utmost care so that safety of the user is kept foremost in mind. Incorporation of safety features during the planning and design phases can usually be undertaken at lower cost when roads are being built thus making the forgiving road environment. Construction of High Speed Road Corridors poses some special consideration to be dealt with. Firstly, High Speed Road Corridors facility should be designed for actual existing environmental, geological and traffic condition and secondly they should be constructed in such manner that not much maintenance is required frequently. Even so, some repairs and maintenance is required, the repairs must be simple, cost effective, durable and quick to execute without long duration lane closures.

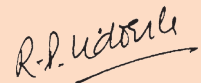
High Speed Road Corridors are intended to improve the economics and social welfare of peoples. However, the mobility has inverse relationship with connectivity. Moreover, these corridors also have some negative impacts on local communities and natural environment. Peoples and properties may be in direct path of road projects are affected in a major ways. Peoples may also be indirectly affected

by road corridors projects, through the disruption of livelihood, loss of accustomed travel paths and community linkages, air pollution due to plying vehicle and maintenance activities. But the construction of new roads or upgradation of existing roads is always associated with various adverse environmental and social impacts. Any new roadways alignment cuts across hills and field inevitably a number of trees get destroyed. General practice is to plant twice the number of trees felled, elsewhere. Due to more awareness of the environmental issue on fairly large section of peoples, all projects these days include the service of senior environmental experts at the detailed engineering stage and environmentalists are included in consultant and contractor team during supervision stage. While the concern for environment is applicable to all roads projects but High Speed Road Corridors being need wider special attention.

Road Safety aspects are an integral part that needs to be considered for all types of facilities, including High Speed Road Corridors. This is particularly important in the Indian Scenario, where a significant length of highways is reconstructed and widened. The safety consideration for high speed corridors is quite different from the normal highways as the speeds are high on these highways even a slight mistake on the part of driver could lead to loss of life and property. Speed is arguably a factor in every accident. Lower speeds reduce both the likelihood of the accident

happening and severity, if it does occur. An international review of speed and accidents conclude that, on an average, one km increase in speed would results in a 5% increases in fatal accidents. As High Speed Road Corridors are being developed, it is essential to keep in mind likelihood of significance of fatalities, accidents and Run-of-the-Road (ROR) crashes, etc. The safety measures to be adopted for the High Speed Road Corridors to prevent the occurrence of the accidents by compiling provisions of proper road signs, road marking, variable massages signs, safety fences and barriers, highway safety patrol, etc. In addition to over speeding of vehicles, overloading of commercial vehicles is big challenge. There is an urgent need to control overloading by stringent enforcement practice and increasing awareness amongst commercial vehicle owners, drivers, etc.

With a view to provide faster and safer travel as well as faster movement of goods in the country, it is desirable that planning, design and construction of High Speed Road Corridors are taken up in an integrated manner considering all the aspects like mobility connectivity, safety, environment and social aspects.



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