

## NEED FOR EFFICIENT ROADSIDE AMENITIES

Roadside amenities are provided primarily to meet the needs of long distance travellers and are aimed at reducing fatigue related accidents, at the same time enriching the experiences related to travel on the roads. As drivers traversing long distances have to spend more time on the roads and in congested traffic conditions while passing through built up areas, driving related stresses has become a public health issue.

Stopping and resting at regular intervals, while driving, helps reduce fatigue of the drivers and by providing facilities for the road users to stop clear of traffic, collisions with vehicles parked on the shoulders are also minimized. Roadside amenities may also contribute to regional economic development, as providing information to travellers about the region they are passing through and the location of attractive spots along the road will attract them, which will add to the business of that region besides providing direct employment to locals. Such spots will also help to alter the behavioural psychology of the drivers.

Broadly, roadside amenities may be divided into the following categories:

- Commercial service centres:
- Rest areas with amenities to enable drivers of light and heavy vehicles to rest and refresh;
- Stopping places such as at points of interest along the road, where stops will be short.

- Roadside vending sites.

Service centres are meant to provide essential services for the safety, comfort and convenience of all road users. They should be adjacent to or in close proximity to the road. Service centres are required to be designed to be attractive to all road users, with convenient and easy access from the through carriageway. They should have distinctly separate areas for trucks and other vehicles. Facilities for truck drivers, including fuelling facilities, dining etc. must be separate from those for other motorists. Service centres, however, should not provide facilities which would have the effect of generating significant additional traffic and which may not be able to meet the needs of motorists for service, safety, comfort or convenience. A traffic growth in the next 10 years should be projected to plan and provide such centres, where new highways or upgradation works are being undertaken.

Rest areas are normally provided to allow drivers to rest and overcome fatigue. A rest area for motorists should be an attractive park-like area separated from, but within general sight of, the carriageway. It should have a parking area for cars as well as heavy vehicles. Ideally, such areas should have natural shade and be sufficiently removed from the through traffic to provide a restful and peaceful environment. Rest areas could also be made to provide opportunities to promote local tourism facilities. Tourist information boards may be placed at adequate places to provide information pertaining to local business,

accommodation and points of interest that may prove to be useful in both enhancing the driving experience and assisting the development of regional economies. Maintenance and servicing of rest areas are, however, essential to ensure their use by motorists.

To encourage the use of roadside rest areas, a uniform standard of access configuration has to be adopted for the entire set of such areas along a particular route. Where the cost of providing the required level of access is high, consideration should be given to duplicating the rest area on both sides of the road. However, if a rest area is duplicated, deceleration and acceleration lanes would still be required. The entrance to the two rest areas must be within obvious sight of each other, so that drivers do not try to turn right because they are not aware of the rest area on their own side of the road. It is preferable that the left side rest area appears first to the approaching driver.

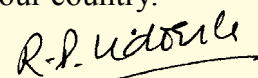
Stopping places should be adequately available along the roads, to enable the drivers to undertake short stops for a variety of reasons, such as checking loads, attending to a breakdown or enjoying a scenic view etc. They serve the purpose of providing a relatively safe location for immediate stopping needs at a safe distance from through traffic. Specific stopping places are required on sections of road which do not provide adequate shoulder width to allow vehicles to stop clear of the carriageway. Stopping places for each direction should be located in approximately the same place, but separated to avoid having stopped vehicles on both sides of the road at the same time.

Roadside vending involves selling of articles, either directly or from a stall or standing vehicle by the side of a road. However, selling of goods and services in this way is potentially dangerous, as moving vehicles may suddenly swerve or

stop, creating unsafe situations with moving traffic. For safer operations, vending stalls could be established on private land adjacent to the road, which would substantially attract the road users to satisfy their needs and thus break their journey. For safe and smooth operations of the vehicles, it is essential that all roadside amenities should have legible and distinctly visible signages and markings. The signages are required to be integrated and consistent all along a particular route, so that a driver takes decision at proper time and at appropriate stage about where to stop.

Literature survey has revealed that in the developed countries, besides these regular amenities, provisions are also made for Towing Service in case of vehicle becoming inoperable, Battery Boosting and Flat Tire Changing Services, Fuel Delivery Service on the spot for the vehicles running out of fuel and also First Aid Services. These categories of roadside assistance services, though limited, are significant to help minimize any unforeseen vehicle operation inconvenience during the course of a journey.

There is an urgent need for extensive development of roadside amenities on our roads carrying high-density traffic, especially on corridors of tourist interest. With the increase in upgradation of National and State Highways network in the country, long distance travel on the roads is bound to increase tremendously. Consequently, there would be demand for more and better quality wayside amenities. The various stakeholders are required to understand the importance of providing such amenities and private entrepreneurs must come forward to finance and manage the roadside amenities along the roads in our country.



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