

Transport Infrastructure Development: A Boon or a Curse? Development at the cost of environment.

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Abstract:

Road transport is vital to the well functioning of economic activities and is mandatory for ensuring social well-being of populations. It ensures every day's mobility of people and is crucial to the distribution of goods and other services. Roads are the means through which the economy flows. It links wagers to work, producers to markets, students to schools, and the sick to the hospitals. But road construction has high environmental costs. Agreed that roads, link regions and improve connectivity, but the breakneck speed of construction of highways is causing damage to the flora and fauna. It is helping in devastating the environment.

Keywords: Road construction, development, environment, degradation.

Content

India has second largest network of roads in the world after United States. Major projects are being implemented under the “Bharatmala”, a government initiative. Worldwide 25 million kilometers of roads are proposed to be constructed by 2050 – a 60 percent increase in road length from 2010 and nine tenth of this new construction is expected in developing countries such as India. BMC approved felling of nearly 3000 trees for the metro car shed project in Mumbai’s Aarey forest- the most controversial project in the duration of last three chief ministers of Maharashtra. Aarey forest is considered to be the City’s Lungs. It is home to thousands of tribals and Adivasi people and 9 leopards. The problems listed by the protestors here are;

Destruction of city’s green cover, damage to the rich biodiversity that exists in forest, impact on the flood plains of nearby Mithi river and displacement of hundreds of Adivasi families with limiting their use of grazing and farming land. Other shocking data of felling of trees for road construction can be seen in other parts of the country. According to a RTI request in December 2020, over 1.89 lakh trees were felled for 297 kilometers Bundelkhand Expressway project. The destroyed shrubbery and soil is not counted here. About 2 lakh trees were estimated to be cut for Char Dham project in Uttrakhand. A total of 8400 trees to be cut in Gurugram district for widening the Gurugram Rewari highway. Another example of felling of an alarming number of trees for construction recently is The Delhi Mumbai expressway. It is expected to be the largest road infrastructure project in India till date- one more example of government of India to give preference to economic development at the cost of environment. About 9435 trees to be cut for Dwarka expressway. Normally a tree might take 10 – 20 years for growing in a sunny area and 30 – 40 years to grow in the cold, depending on the tree. Some take hundreds of years to fully mature. How ruthlessly we cut them for our personal gains. Trees are the soul of environment. Along with felling of trees serious harm has been caused to environment by using unscientific means to cut hills for road construction. Excessive use of explosives raises the number of landslide prone sites and highway danger zones. The water resources are also in danger. The use of road salt results in the concentration of sodium and chloride ions in soil, ground water and surface water. Due to the heavy construction of roads the density of vehicles on roads in increasing and hence the pollutants and particulate matter is also increasing resulting the air pollution. Noise pollution is also one of the major after effects of road construction.

Protection of Environment during Construction

Construction of any kind produces a large amount of waste material with lots of dust. Sprinkling of water can be a solution for it. Optimizing the use of supplies and materials and choosing products and methods that reduce waste materials for all the projects. Look for products and materials specifically designed to be more environment friendly. Considering products that reduce the environmental impact of specific parts of such operations. It’s important to protect the water, plant life, purity of air and animal species in the area of the concerned projects. Roads of highest quality should be constructed with efficient timeline and the least environmental impact. For one chopped tree, plant three.