

Pink Tickets to Saheli Smart Cards: Gendered Mobility and Debates on Fare-Free Travel

By

Procheta Mukherjee *

Several cities and regions across the world have adapted the policy of abolishing fares in public transport, popularly referred to as the Fare-Free Public Transport (FFPT).¹ FFPT was first implemented in 1962 in suburbs of Los Angeles and continued throughout 1970's, 1980's and 1990's and currently continues to exist for specific groups, such as Los Angeles Community College students. FFPT scheme was implemented in Europe between 1970s and 1990s, beginning in Coloniers, in the suburbs of Toulouse, France in 1971, soon followed by Rome. While European cities like Tallin, Estonia has recently embraced free public transport scheme. In cities like Hasselt in Belgium and Templin in Germany, free public transport for all was introduced as early as 1997.² Amongst the recent additions to the landscape of FFPT are Brazil and China.³ It is often the local context of a particular space (for instance: country, city, region), its socio-political dynamics (the type of government in power and their ideological positioning) plays a pivotal role in shaping FFPT policies. In some countries in the Global North the increasing utility of FFPT policies have often been promoted as an alternative for shifting individual modal pattern from car use to public transportation as a sustainable strategy to counter pollution. Across much of the western world, it is increasingly believed that urban traffic levels and private car's market share are not sustainable. Economically it leads to soaring congestion costs and inefficiencies in terms of external costs of transport. On an environmental level, problem of traffic are also associated with greenhouse gas emissions and local pollution. Socially, heavy traffic and car dependence can reduce people's mobility and overall quality of life⁴. Although FFPT receives criticisms from transport engineers and economists on the grounds of utility, efficiency and economic growth; it currently exists in more than 300 localities worldwide.⁵ FFPT is a form of transportation policy that focuses on reduction of ticketing prices of public transportation to 'Zero'.⁶ FFPT is also associated with government sanctioned subsidised transport

*Procheta Mukherjee, Doctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, South Asian University, Delhi, India. Email: mprocheta@gmail.com
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policy. However, there also exists similar free travel services that are arranged by private agencies for their employees/officials.⁷ FFPT is conditioned by factors like where the fare programmes occur, who obtains free rides, as well as when and how long fares are suspended.⁸ Its practical implementation varies depending upon the “social, temporal, spatial and modal context”.⁹ Geographically confined FFPTs can offer fare-free access to public transport either throughout the entire country (Luxemburg, Malta); in relatively large cities (Kansas City, Tallinn); or very small localities. Temporally bounded FFPTs remain available for particular hours (e.g., off-peak hours), particular days (e.g., every first day of the month, or limited to weekends). Based on the nature of the FFPT, it may embrace all passengers or cater to only specific passenger groups such as local residents, taxpayers, the unemployed or welfare recipients, people with disabilities, elderly and children, students or a combination of such criteria. Furthermore, FFPTs are implemented either in complex public transport networks that relies on multiple modes or simple transport systems where only a few routes operate. And finally, fares are lifted as a temporary measure or as a long-term policy.¹⁰

In India, FFPT transport schemes have a gendered dimension like Delhi’s Pink Pass/Ticket Scheme, Karnataka’s Shakti Scheme and Tamil Nadu’s Zero Ticket Scheme. In Delhi, the pink ticket scheme was one of the first gender specific transport subsidy scheme introduced in India. The rationales given to introduce such scheme were two folds: safety for women travelling in buses and promotion of female labour force participation.¹¹ When it comes to mobility outside home, men and women’s mobility patterns reveal a high level of gender inequality especially in developing countries. Indian women, on average, spend a mere twenty-four minutes daily on travel for various purposes including employment, unpaid domestic services for household members, learning and socialising, self-care, leisure etc., compared to men’s fifty-nine minutes.¹² Studies focusing on travelling pattern of women, especially in South and Southeast Asian countries points out that women faces numerous barriers in terms of mobility, transportation, infrastructure and built environment, when travelling in formal and informal public transport modes.¹³ India is known for having one of the highest gender inequality (ranking 102 in the Gender Inequality Index in 2023) in the world.¹⁴ Lack of autonomy among women to go outside home and access the public space due to norms of seclusion plays an important role in shaping women’s mobility patterns and “something as basic as visiting a grocery store, or a friend’s or relative’s place, or to travel short distances by bus or train, requires her to take permission, often from a male member of the household. Thus, leading to a greater number of immobility amongst women than men.”¹⁵ Additionally, factors such as age, marital status, employment status can influence a woman’s mobility patterns. According to Maciejewska, urban and transport policies have remained gender blind and gender biased throughout most of the twentieth century.¹⁶ Recently there is a shift in urban planning with greater awareness of gender differentiated needs in urban and transport policy design.¹⁷

This paper traces the evolution of FFPT scheme in Delhi since 2019 as a way to promote women's mobility throughout the city and how policy revisions of the scheme, that became classificatory and exclusionary in nature and in contradiction to the transportation and mobility justice framework that takes into account the unequal nature of mobility as well as its impact on people, have affected the urban poor and migrant women disproportionately through an ethnographic study of bus route DTC523 that connects the working class neighbourhood and labour colonies (Bhatti Mines) to one of the centres of South Delhi (Dhaura Kuan) to understand the role of public bus as an essential transportation means for mobility and access to public place, safety and security needs during journey and experience of bus journeys as gendered bodies in public transportation system.¹⁸ The pink tickets are perceived as safety infrastructures by women commuters more than CCTVs.

FFPT in Delhi: History of the Pink Pass Scheme

In 2019, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi completely subsidised fares for women travelling on public buses in Delhi NCR¹⁹ and thus began the pin ticket/pink pass scheme.²⁰ The scheme was officially launched by Aam Admi Party and was functional from October 29, 2019. "It was the same day as Bhai Dooj, a Hindu festival focusing on brother sister relations. And in his message before launch, the then Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, had addressed women's importance in diverse roles, including as sisters, and that the scheme was a gift from a 'brother' rather than an initiative for women citizens."²¹ Under the scheme, women travelling in these buses were issued paper pink tickets free of cost, and the government owned bus corporations were later reimbursed ₹10 per ticket proportionate to the pink tickets issued.²² In a span of six years, on another Bhai Dooj, smart cards were introduced as pink passes will be phased out due to charges of corruption. FFPT was introduced to increase female labour force participation by introducing significant changes in public safety including public transport.

Delhi became the first state to offer free public transport for women across all age groups and social classes, as a step towards gender and environmental justice.²³ In the following several states including Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra adapted similar measures in their respective cities to increase the female bus ridership. There are significant differences in terms of the scheme operations in various state. Maharashtra offers partial subsidy while Delhi and Karnataka completely subsidise bus rides for women.²⁴ Tamil Nadu limits the scheme to women who are permanent residents of the state and the subsidy is available for travel up to 30kms in state owned buses.²⁵ In Delhi, since its implementation, approximately 100 million pink tickets were issued between October 2019–January 2023 substantially increasing women's bus ridership from 25 per cent in 2020–21 to 33 per cent in 2022–23.²⁶ The scheme despite attracting new users especially women from economically marginalised groups, who often chose to walk to their destination instead of availing any public transport to save money and helped women to

access better employment opportunities, earn better wages, and travel longer distances yet women continued to face discrimination and sexism while using public buses in Delhi.²⁷ Problems like buses not halting for women, subject to derogatory comments and discrimination from bus drivers, conductors, and male bus users, often denoting women as freebies have worked as a counter force to keep women away from public buses in Delhi. In Punjab and Tamil Nadu, the impact FFPT on women's labour outcomes indicated that "alleviating commuting costs alone does not uniformly boost women's labour participation as gender roles and societal norms continue to shape outcomes."²⁸ The scheme helped women reduce overall expenditure spent on travel. The pink slip programme had contrasting effect on travel time and time spent on household chores between employed and unemployed women. Skill level and marital status were significant factors influencing time allocation. "Skilled employed women leverage commuting time savings to increase labour hours, while unmarried unemployed women intensify their job searches...In contrast, low skill workers redirect commuting time towards household chores and reduce their labour hours."²⁹ Thus, it was argued that the potential redistributive merit of the pink slip scheme, did not necessarily help improve the labour market outcomes of all women.³⁰

Equality in gender mobility by implementing subsidised bus fare rates alone cannot address structural barriers which are deeply rooted in patriarchy and traditional gender norms.³¹ While cost is just one component, it would require addressing spatial, social and safety related challenges that shapes gendered mobilities in order to achieve women's equal access to urban transportation and enhancing women's participation in the public life.³² The biggest problem women face across India is the lack of autonomy and mobility.³³ The idea that women do not belong to the public is deeply entrenched within our societal norms and values.³⁴ A major reason behind low ridership of women as compared to men in buses has to do with traditional social norms of work and leisure, where women's mobility is seen as non-essential and an additional burden on household, especially when women are non-earning members. Under this context, providing fare free bus travel to women is a promising policy instrument to further their access to public transport.³⁵

Since its implementation, Delhi's pledge to make public transport free for women has faced difference in opinion. The supporters of the scheme celebrated this decision as revolutionary and a way forward towards advancing women's standing in society. However, those who stood on the opposite end of the spectrum, called this step a political gimmick of vote bank politics before the 2020 polls.³⁶ "The term freebie often carries a negative connotation, implying a wasteful use of public resources to win political favour. However, when applied to essential public goods such as transport, such schemes can have far-reaching and universal benefits."³⁷ The debate over freebies in public transport policy is often centred around their perceived role as vote bank and as tools for political appeasement rather than as an instrument that can potentially bring substantive social change. Delhi's fare free travel scheme for

women, however, offers a compelling counterpoint. The assessment of the potential of fare free bus services for women should not be only based on or seen as something that eases financial barriers on women's mobility, instead, its real impact lies in empowering women through better access to the city.³⁸ Visibility of women in public transport, in this context, public buses, can be one such ground to understand the impact of such measure. In case of Delhi, studies have clearly shown that women ridership in public buses increased post the launch of pink tickets. Free ride initiative for women in Delhi was introduced as a universal scheme with no restrictions based on occupation, income or residence.³⁹ The recently introduced smart cards will restrict far free travel to those who can provide a residence proof. On March 26, 2025, Chief Minister of Delhi, Rekha Gupta announced the introduction of these smart cards. In 2024, when the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) took over they criticised this move accusing that the pink passes (which is mandatory for women travellers on buses) "were a source of corruption" and this new smart card would be made available to women travellers who can provide valid proof of Delhi residence, register on the official DTC bus portal, select a bank to issue the card and fulfil Know Your Customer (KYC) verification form at the selected branch. What is important is that the bank will verify the documents instead of the state and issue the smart card to the applicant's address. Unlike the paper pink ticket scheme which did not require an individual to share documentation around their address, the current scheme requires women to provide identification documents. Initiatives like Saheli Smart Card Scheme is an extension of newly introduced digital infrastructures. This gender infrastructure disguised as a women's empowerment scheme in reality end up excluding migrant women workers without identity documents from right to free travel in Delhi. The Saheli Smart Card Scheme reveals the complementary nature of the gendered aspects of citizenship and the right to fare free travel.

Contextualising Route 523: Women Migrants of Delhi

In her maiden budget speech in the Delhi Assembly, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta called the pink ticket/pink pass scheme "pink corruption" and the government will "launch a vigorous verification campaign so benefits only reach genuine Delhiites. And people who are not residents of Delhi, especially Rohingya and Bangladeshis, will not be able to avail of the schemes."⁴⁰ This probe us to question, who are these genuine Delhiites vs Non-Delhiites (whom the CM refers in her speech as Rohingya and Bangladeshis)? Historically Delhi has been a city of migrants and refugees. Since Delhi became the administrative capital of the newly formed Indian Union, the city faced massive transfer of population following India's Partition, when Delhi, whose population was about 9,00,000 at the time, received 4,70,000 refugees from western Punjab and Sindh, while 3,20,000 Muslims left the capital and migrated to Pakistan.⁴¹ "Within a short span of time after Partition and Independence, Delhi had become a city of refugees."⁴² Even today Delhi attracts migrant population from various neighbouring states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar,

Orissa and West Bengal⁴³ who migrate to the city in search of livelihood and job opportunities. The process of urbanisation and economic development in cities have been a major reason that accentuated migration labour movement from rural India to urban and Delhi is one of the key destination states of migration along with Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana and Karnataka places.⁴⁴ “Despite the harsh living conditions and deplorable working conditions, migration continues to persist in Delhi, as the place of origin is even more appalling where even survival is not secured.”⁴⁵

Women migrants constitute an integral part of the India’s internal migrant workforce.⁴⁶ Delhi’s migrant women workers join care work, domestic work, construction work, as well as several other jobs in unorganised sectors. The migrant populations live in unrecognised settlements or resettlement colonies which are more often than not located in the cities’ peripheries. Therefore, seeking work requires them to travel longer distances to the central areas of the cities which is also the hub for economic activities. This however cannot take place without the support of adequate transportation facilities. In Delhi, like many other cities across India, buses form the backbone of the state’s transport infrastructure with more than two-third of the city’s population depending on it.⁴⁷ Affordability forms as a key reason that makes buses a popular choice of transit for thousands of people, especially those from economically marginalised groups. In 2021 in Delhi more than 2 million passengers took buses while another 900,000 used metros everyday.⁴⁸ Urban transport mainly comes under the responsibility of the state government. In Delhi, the main agencies involved in managing the transport sector includes: State Transport Authority (STA), Public Works Department (PWD), Municipal Corporations of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and Delhi Metro Rail Corporations (DMRC).⁴⁹ The city relies on Metro and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses as key modes of public transportation.⁵⁰ Bus services in Delhi are provided by Private Stage Carriage Operators (PSCs), DTC and DMRC, which provides connecting bus services to the metro rail system. DTC runs various types of buses, which are colour coded (Red, Blue, Green, Orange) with each colour representing features of buses, such as High-floor, Low-floor, Ac and Non-Ac.⁵¹

Route 523 has largely orange and a few red buses. One of the main depots from which this bus fleet operates is in Hari Nagar Depot with twenty-five buses dedicated for this route. The bus route connects the working class neighbourhood/labour colonies (Bhati Mines) to one of the centres of South Delhi (Dhaura Kuan) forming a mobile bridge connecting people of Delhi who lives in the city’s periphery to some of the most important parts of the city, such as Munirka, Hauz Khas, R.K Puram, Moti Bagh, and Dhaura Kuan which also functions as urban centers of the city. With a total number of forty-five stops, the DTC523 covers 25.9kms on road and covers for thirty-eight trips daily. For many passengers bus route 523 remains a popular choice of transit since the bus service helps connects a total of 12kms of road from Bhati Mines to Delhi metro’s Yellow Line via Chhatarpur metro, which

attracts a daily footfall of approximately 58,000 people, making it a major transportation hub. The entire trip from the starting point till the end takes approximately one hour and nine minutes. For the up route (Dhaulta Kuan to Bhati Mines) the first bus starts at 5:30AM and the last bus runs at 9:00PM with frequency varying during peak and off-peak hours. For the down route (Bhati Mines to Dhaulta Kuan) the first bus runs at 7:00AM and the last bus runs at 10:00PM and departs thirty-seven times daily.⁵² Barring a few, most of the route 523 buses are non-ac orange buses. The newly implemented PPP (Public Private Partnership) model for Delhi's public bus transportation system has led to a privatisation of the DTC bus services. Instead of purchasing their own buses for public road transport services, the Government of Delhi rents out route based bus services to private operators (TATA being one of them), who runs these services on behalf of the DTC. Such transformations emerged as one of the reasons behind the unequal distribution of ac and non-ac buses that run in different areas of the city (Conversation with DTC bus conductor, field notes, 2024). Given that route 523 operates in several poor and informal localities, most people are likely to board a non-ac bus for a lesser priced ticket.⁵³

DTC buses have dedicated entry and exit doors for passengers. In a non-ac orange colored bus, the passenger is expected to enter from the second door and exit from the front door next to the driver to disembark. As soon as any passenger boards an orange line bus it will be difficult for them to miss the conductor, a uniformed man, seating with an electronic ticketing machine, and sometimes carrying log sheets like driver memo⁵⁴ or *Marg Patrak*/waybill.⁵⁵ The conductor uses the adjacent seat to place the bag carrying essential items, which includes an electronic ticketing machine that prints bus tickets, the log sheet to jot down journey related details, printed pink passes, and cash for ticket distribution among other things. The passenger is expected to inform the conductor about the destination and accordingly the conductor quotes the price of the journey and issues a ticket. There are many other ways to get the ticket. Tickets can be purchased well in advance via WhatsApp,⁵⁶ or Charter app or One Delhi app with QR codes attached to the windows near the passenger seating area.⁵⁷ There also exists a system of bus passes, offering a cost-effective and convenient way to commute for the daily commuter as well as passengers who access the bus frequently.⁵⁸ DTC bus passes can be obtained by visiting the Delhi Government's website or by applying at designated DTC pass counters or pass sections located at major DTC bus stops, such as Kashmere Gate ISBT.

Women and transgenders are issued a separate kind of ticket. Once they announce their gender identity, the conductor hands out a pink colored ticket. There are a total number of thirty-eight seats (including the driver's seat) out of which eight seats have been reserved for women. The number of seats may vary in buses; however, every public bus in Delhi is supposed to have 25 per cent of its seats reserved for women.⁵⁹ Equipped with high tech modern technologies, these buses have automated mechanical doors (managed by the bus drivers), GPS system allowing real-time monitoring of buses as well as

CCTV technologies and Panic Buttons. Initially DTC523 bus route had fourteen bus stops. Over time several bus stops have been added to route 523 following the requests of passengers. These bus stands are also known to be ‘by-request’ bus stand. As per a DTC conductor, when a group of people, belonging to a certain colony or *Kasba* that falls on the route a particular bus ply, they may request for a bus stop to be built so that they can access the bus service. So, at their request, the state constructs bus stops known as ‘by-request’ stop.⁶⁰ As of now route 523 constitutes forty-five bus stops (Table 3).

When a passenger purchases a ticket, the conductor hands over the ticket to him/her after tearing a small portion from it. This act of tearing is not random, but a ticket punching mechanism. The tickets are marked with numbers on both the sides. These numbers represent the number of bus stops. The pricing of the ticket is determined on the basis of total number of bus stops the passenger is travelling. So, for instance, travelling the first three stops in an AC bus would cost ₹10 for an adult, while it would cost ₹5 in a non-AC bus (Table 1 and 2). During fieldwork from February 2024 till March 2025, I have taken multiple trips in bus route 523 and due to my own gendered positionality, I travelled as one of the beneficiaries of the pink pass scheme. Being able to ride the bus, free of cost, at any given point of the day, have played a significant role in shaping my research. Since it not only allowed me to have an unlimited access to my research field, but also conduct my fieldwork without having to worry about the financial burden of travelling that are associated with fieldwork, in this context which included riding the bus multiple times a day, weeks or months as a participant observer as well as to conduct interviews of bus passengers, conductors and drivers.

Table 1: Ticket Price Determination for AC Buses

Number of Stops	Fare for Adults (₹)	Fare for Child (₹)
1–3	10	5
1–5	15	8
1–7	20	10
Any stop after 7 stops	25	13

Source: DTC Bus Conductor, Field Notes, 2024

Table 2: Ticket Price Determination for Non-AC buses

Number of Stops	Fare for Adults (₹)	Fare for Child (₹)
1–3	5	3
1–6	10	5
Any stop after 6 stops	15	8

Source: DTC Bus Conductor, Field Notes, 2024

Table 3: DTC 523 Bus Routes and Stops (Up Route)

Stop Number	Bus Stand Name	Stop Number	Bus Stand Name
1-23	Dhaura Kuan	24.	P.T.S
	Satya Niketan	25.	D.D.A Flats Lado Sarai
	Moti Bagh Gurudwara	26.	Lado Sarai Crossing
	Nanakpura		
	South Moti Bagh	27.	Ahinsa Sthal
	R.K Puram Sector 12	28.	Qutub Minar Metro Station
	Sangam Cinema	29.	Andheriya Crossing
	R.K Puram Sector 10	30.	Chhatarpur Crossing
	Mohan Singh Market	31.	Chhatarpur Mandir
	R.K Puram Sector 1 & 2	32.	Chhatarpur Village
	R.K Puram Sector 1	33.	Nanda Hospital
	R.K. Puram / NAB	34.	Rajpur Extension
	Munirka	35.	Satbari
	Munirka/Family Planning	36.	Mallu Farm
	Association of India		
	DDA Flats Munirka	37.	Chandan Hala
	I.S.T.M	38.	Shani Dham Mandir Raj Vidya Kendra
	Ber Sarai	39.	Fatehpur Beri
	School of Physics Science	40.	Harswaroop Colony
	F.A.I	41.	Dera More
	Sanskrit Vidyapeeth	42.	R.S Satsang
	Katwaria Sarai	43.	Sawan Public School
	Qutub Hotel	44.	Indra Nagar
	NCERT	45.	Bhati Mines
	M.M.T.C.		

Source: “523 DTC Bus Route – Timings: Dhaura Kuan – Bhati Mines,” DTC Bus, accessed August 28, 2025, <https://dtcbus.co.in/523-dtc-bus-route-timings/>

Journey to Bhatti Mines

Located on the periphery of city, at Delhi-Faridabad border, around 25kms east of Gurgaon, Bhatti Mines is home to nearly 50,000 people spread across in eleven villages, a large section of whom were refugees from Pakistan. More than 20,000 who came as refugees during the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 officially settled in 1976 in village Bhagirath Nagar in Bhatti Mines, a huge complex of quarries that for 25 years (1965–90) yielded red sand (also called Badarpur or Bajri), silica, and stone for Delhi’s construction industry.⁶¹ An overwhelming majority of original settlers in Bhagirath Nagar are members of the Od tribe, the traditional earth diggers and masons. For the past three decades they had mined the Bhatti area of the Aravalli hills. The Od community is a large ethnic group spread over vast regions with important concentrations in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. “Ods, believed to be descendants of Odang, a king of Odisha, are known for their

skill in constructing ponds, canals and embankments and regarded as indigenous civil engineers...They have been leading a nomadic life since the Mughals ruled South Asia, and were the main workforce behind the construction of major dams and canals in the country during the Nehruvian era. They then migrated to Rajasthan and then to Sindh, Punjab and Pakistan. When Bhatti mines started in 1959, in what is today known as Delhi's Southern Ridge, thousands of Od families migrated from Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab to work with private quarrying companies."⁶²

The mines classified by the Directorate of Mines Safety as the "most dangerous" in the northern India division were owned not by individuals but by the state, or, more precisely, the Delhi Administration's Delhi State Industrial Development Corporation (DSIDC). Though it was declared unsafe since 1970 under Section 22(3) of the Mines Act, "the Bhatti mines continued to be ruthlessly exploited by its greed mad owners who brought in migrant labour from neighbouring states despite repeated admonitions from the Labour Ministry."⁶³ These migrant labourers worked in abysmal conditions and faced barbaric treatments. They were forced to pay ₹5 per drum of drinking water and double of that amount during summer months. Forcing the workers to dig for Badarpur and Silica at the bottom of the steep pits without any safety precautions, leading to several macabre events. Furthermore, the mines operated under a blatant system of bonded labour. "The contractors provide advance payments to the workers to buy mules for transporting the extract, then arbitrarily deduct amounts from the Rs 70 per truckload that is paid to the workers. Which resulted to the labourers being indebted to the contractors."⁶⁴ It was only after the death of seven laborers in a pit-side collapse on May 31, 1990, the Union Ministry of Labour closed Bhatti Mines for rectification. The lock out ordered due to the revelation of the violation of safety norms by the Delhi State Mineral Development Corporation Limited (DSMDC) management in collusion with the private contractors. Approximately 4,000 quarry workers were laid off without any compensation, and in April 1991, the closure of Bhatti Mines was finalised by a notification from the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, declaring the area as a wildlife sanctuary under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.⁶⁵ Since the declaration of the Delhi administration which extended the adjoining Asola Wildlife Sanctuary to include the Bhatti mines area and the common land of nearby villages, more than 3,000 families became encroachers on the forestland, as well as lost their source of income.⁶⁶ Bhatti Mines or Bhagirath Nagar Village enjoyed state support until 1990. However, since the 1991 notification, state support for infrastructure development of the area was suspended. As of now Bhatti Mines is one of the poorest localities in the capital.⁶⁷

On a very hot summer of May, 2024, I boarded a route 523 bus from Dera More around 3:50PM, and travelled till the last stop of this route, Bhatti Mines. Moving along the road, one can see dense forests guarded by walls and wires, followed by farmhouses, small temples, and open grounds with heaps of waste dumped on them. Wild cows could be seen roaming around the streets, looking for food sources while hogging the traffic, until they are shooed away

with traffic horns. As the bus nears towards Sanjay Colony, you can spot an establishment named 132 INF BN (TA) ECO RAJPUT DELHI WARRIORS. Also known as the ECO Task Force, the department has undertaken a project for ECO-rehabilitation of 2100 acres of degraded and abandoned Bhatti Mines in the southern ridge (Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary) through 132 Infantry Battalion (TA) ECO Rajput (ECO Task Force) consisting of ex-army persons amongst others. One of their duties consists of protecting the forest land from encroachment and illegal mining in the area.⁶⁸ The roads become narrower after the ECO Rajput area. Here if two buses are adjacent to each other the branches of trees might find their way through the window increasing the possibility of injuries. With no walls or wires surrounding the forest area, the demarcation between the urban and the rural almost seems to vanish. Upon reaching Bhatti Mines, the bus is emptied as this is the last stop of route 523. There is no bus depot in this area. Right after reaching Bhatti Mines, the bus driver takes a U-turn and places the bus near the bus stop, ready for the next journey. One can see several buses lined up one after another in the area. The passengers form a queue in front of these buses, waiting for the bus driver to open the door so that they can board the bus and claim a seat. Bhatti Mines bus stop displayed three bus routes—508, 523 and 947A. I travelled the same route during evening. After the sunset, the entire road after the ECO Task Force establishment, remains pitch dark without any presence of streetlights or any other source of light. On both sides of the road is a stretch of jungle. As you continue the journey at some given point you will feel like you are not in the city anymore, but rather somewhere else, away from the commotion of cities. Not only the road is pitch dark but also silent. Apart from the sound of bus engine, you can clearly hear the sounds of birds and insects coming from the jungle. Next time we encounter light is when we enter Bhatti Mines.

On September 24, 2024, I travelled to Bhatti Mines in an auto, reaching my destination around 7:55PM. I glanced at a faded hoarding reading Police Post Sanjay Colony, Thana Maidangarhi, South District. The Police Chowki's gate was partly open, with a chain holding the two doors together. From outside I could see a police jeep inside and police personnel standing next to it. Inside the station, the lawn area had two broken tables and a bench where two women were sitting. The Sanjay Colony police chowki is an old single storied building. I noticed that there were 3-4 rooms, two of which were Investigating Officer's and Duty officer's room. After a brief encounter with the Assistant Sub-Inspector standing near the police jeep, a person in plain clothes who was sitting in the Investigating Officer's room called me inside and asked my purpose of visit. It was later revealed that he was a Sub-Inspector. Upon telling him that I am a researcher and have come to do my fieldwork, which includes getting to know about the area, he began narrating me the history of this area: "Pakistani minorities settled here to work in mines.



Photo 1: A Locality in Bhati Mines, ©Author

Gradually, their families and relatives as well as acquaintances had also migrated to Delhi after learning about the work opportunities. However, after the mining activity came to a total halt, many of these labourers who were uneducated and unskilled—including women—had to search for other work opportunities and thus began working as labourers at construction sites, as domestic helpers or they took any other irregular unskilled job. For several of the residents living here, bus is the only affordable transport that can help them move from one place to another within a particular stretch of time. These individuals usually commute in buses as well as in private vans belonging to the contractors of a construction site.”⁶⁹ From Bhati Mines, route 523 crosses areas such as Fatehpur Beri, Dera More and Chandan Hola, where a significant population of migrant labourers resides. Chandan Hola for instance has a labour market. From 8:00AM till noon, the labourers wait in the main road in search of work, many of whom use this route to travel to their destination.

Participant interviews with women beneficiaries, bus drivers, conductors and Assistant Traffic Inspectors helped to understand public bus ecosystem. I interviewed four women bus riders, all of whom had migrated to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Jharkhand. These women migrated to the city because of their changing marital status. While they had not migrated to the city intending to join the workforce, three out of these four women have entered the workforce, over a period of years. These women depended on bus for transit. For them buses are not merely a means to access the workforce. Instead, buses also become a site of leisure and exploration as a way to become a part of the city. During my bus journeys, women interlocutors have time and again shared how buses are critical to their movements. However their experiences show a varied range of effective associations, they associate a range of affective ties with bus, two predominant parallels and contradictory emotions run parallel in their narrative—fear and freedom.

Gendering Mobility: Experiencing Fear and Freedom

It's hard to overestimate the effect of daily fear. Even when fear isn't actively present, the burden of a set of routinised precautions is always there, although they're so naturalised that we barely notice them. What's amazing and typically overlooked is the fact that women constantly defy their fears and act in ways that are brave, empowered, and liberating in cities

Leslie Kern, Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World

Chanda lives in Bhati Mines and works as a *Mistri* (daily wage labourer). She earns around ₹600 for day's work; however, she receives her wages only once a week. Every day she takes the bus route 523 along with her husband, changing to metro route in between, to travel to her place of work in Janpath. She has been living in Delhi for more than twenty years, but has recently joined the workforce, not more than four/five years. However, Chanda has been using the bus since she had moved to Delhi from Madhya Pradesh. For Chanda, a bus journey is connected not only to places but also to people. Apart from employment, she takes the bus for leisure activities and loitering, as well as for inter and intra city travels, often to visit her native place as well as for site seeing, visiting historic monuments. As she stated, "*Maine bus me sab jagah ghuma hai, Laal Quilla, Qutub Minar, Jama Masjid. Mai Maike aur Sasural bhi gayi hu bus me*" (I have roamed around everywhere in Delhi including Laal Quilla, Qutub Minar, Jama Masjid, by travelling in the bus. I have visited my family and in-laws' homes by travelling in buses). Why do you prefer travelling by bus? I asked her. She replied it is the cheapest mode of transportation, "*Roṛ ka 50 rupay save ho jata hai*" (I can save ₹50 daily). However, I do not travel in buses all the time. I might even take autos or metro occasionally. But I only travel in auto's when accompanied by someone else." Why do you not travel alone in autos? I asked her. She replied with a hesitation, "*Kiski niyat kaisi kya pata? Auto kaha le jaye pata nahi*" (I don't know whose intentions might be what. I don't know if the auto will take me to my destination or take me elsewhere). The trust she had for bus as public transportation, she did not have for autos. Why could she trust the bus driver but not an auto driver? I asked her. "*Bus bahut safe hai*" (Buses are very safe) she replied. Fear affects women's mobility in many ways as it "is connected not only to the crime rate but also to the degree to which people feel they have control over their life."⁷⁰ What Chanda expresses in her statement are "feelings of uncertainty, helplessness and vulnerability" and in many ways are similar to the anxieties the upper class and middle-class women experiences when travelling in cabs for instance.⁷¹ The fear of untrustworthy cab drivers, "who does not behave with women properly," "has vulgar mentality," makes women often resort to certain "taxi tactics" to feel safer in cabs.⁷² Chanda's trust towards the bus comes from the state sanctioned legitimacy of the drivers, conveyed through their uniforms and the presence of other officials such as the conductors, that can produce feelings of safety and security.

For women travelers, both the fear of isolated and an overcrowded transport is an important determinant behind their travel choices. During my

fieldwork, many women travelers expressed how they avoided taking the bus at night, as drunk men could occupy that space. At the same time, they would also avoid an overcrowded bus during peak hours in the morning and evening, given that such spaces become a host for sexual harassments, especially inappropriate touching. Alongside buses, in Delhi, a large segment of population depends on Intermediate Public Transport (IPT), or informal transport such as rickshaws, not only for travel but also to make livelihood. The unorganised and neglected IPT or paratransit, make up for at least 11.5 per cent of total daily trips, almost three times to that of Delhi Metro.⁷³ As these Phat-Phat's (Gramin Sewa Paribahan) passed on the roads, I saw some of them were in absolute dire state, with roofs missing from the transport's head. Yet it was crowded with so many people. Instead of taking a phat-phat or an e-rickshaw, Seema waits for the bus daily when she comes to Chandan Hola to drop her son to school. "*Khali ek stop (Fatehpur) jane ke liye faltu me 10 rupaiya le lega yeh toto wale, isiliye bus ka intezaar kar rahi hu*" (Just for going one stop will charge me ₹10, that's why I am waiting for the bus). Seema is a housewife and had migrated from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi some fifteen years back. Her husband works as a security guard and earns around ₹15,000 a month: "*15,000 kaafi nahi hota hai ghar chalane eke liye, isiliye 10-20 rupaiya bachana bhi zaroori hai*" (₹15,000 a month is not enough to run a household, that's why saving ₹10–20 is also necessary) she told me as we both waited for the bus. I asked her if the pink pass scheme has helped her save money and whether the scheme is important for women bus riders. Even if we are required to pay ₹5 ticket price for a stop it is still more reasonable than the fare of Phat-Phats or e-rickshaws, prompted Seema. More than free tickets, people need frequent bus services, she continued. We had been waiting for the bus for 30 mins, and I could see that she was growing impatient. And even after 45 mins there was no sign of a bus, she ultimately gave up and boarded an e-rickshaw, taking out a ₹10 note from her purse and giving it to the driver.

Several studies and reports on Delhi's pink pass scheme reveal the true importance of such universal schemes is the ability to empower women across the barriers of class and caste. But the question still remains to what extent can women enjoy such advantages which are fought by many as nothing but a gimmick to win political favour. The lack of adequate number of buses for the people lead to issues like overcrowding and breakdowns which have become synonymous with Delhi's public bus services. Almost every woman perceives an overcrowded bus as an unsafe space, because in such spaces it becomes easier to harass a woman while maintaining anonymity. During weekends and non-peak hours, a person can end up waiting for 45 minutes to an hour for a bus. Instead of a ride to freedom, a bus ride then becomes the reason for exhaustion. Sometimes the hesitancy with which women, especially middle class, young college/university students, approach bus rides often stem from the fact that whether a free ride is worth so much hassle. The long waiting hour in an unlit-unsafe bus stand, the empty and/or overcrowded bus where you are responsible for not only keeping your body safe from the sexual violations, but also take care of your belongings while also managing to navigate your body

amidst a crowd of people who are all struggling to find a space inside the moving transportation.

“Whenever our extended family visits our place, don’t we adjust and make space for them? So, for me this bus journey is a part of my daily routine. People travelling on the bus seem like family to me since I see them everyday. I am taking this bus everyday, that too on the same timetable, so I end up seeing the same faces. It feels like I have known them for a long time now” Savitha replied to me when I asked her if she finds buses to be crowded while travelling. Savitha lives in Dera More and works as a domestic help in Katwaria Sarai. She had migrated from Haryana to Delhi at the age of 24 when she got married. She had been living in the city for the past twenty years but had joined the workforce quite recently, for the past three years. What made you join the workforce? I asked her. She replied, “my husband drink daily. I have two kids, one son, and one daughter. My daughter is 17 years old to be 18 soon, just cleared her 12th boards and my son is very young, only 6 years. I started doing a job for them.” She earns around ₹10,000 a month and for her a bus journey means saving at least ₹100–200, that she would otherwise have to pay to travel in an auto. Savitha said that her life is constantly revolving around duties, “*jaise ghar me uthte hai, kaam karte hai bhir bhagte hai. Waha se kaam karke ghar jaate hai, to ghar jake fir kaam karte hai*” (I get up in the morning, do all the household chores and then run for my job. After coming back from the job, I am again back to household duty).

“Chandan Hola toh phir bhi sheher hai, Bhatti Mines toh Debaat hai” (Chandon Hola can still be considered as a city, but Bhatti Mines is village) stated Manju, after learning that I live in Chandan Hola. Manju had migrated to Delhi from Karnataka almost fifteen years back and has been living in Bhatti Mines since then. She works as a domestic help and earns ₹6,000 a month after working six days a week. She takes the route 523 bus daily around 6:15–6:30AM early in the morning since her duty hours start from 7:00AM till 3:00PM. For Manju there is no other option than taking a bus given other modes of transport are quite expensive. I asked her if fare free initiative has helped her save money. She told me “*ab jhut to nahi bol sakte, kuch to madat kia hi hai, lekin kya fayeda. Mahangai kitni bad chuki hai. Yaha ₹10 bachate hai to kahi aur 20 kharch ho jata hai*” (I can’t lie. Of course, free travel in buses have helped to a certain extent but the cost of living has increased as well. I save ten rupees here, but somewhere else I am having to spend twenty). Manju had to join the workforce after husband met with an accident that left his legs paralysed and thus rendering him incapable of working. When I asked if her earning is enough to sustain her family, she told me: “No it’s not and that’s why my son who is now in school also works to contribute to the family.” For Manju, bus journeys entail an integral part of her everyday life. It is the only means through which she can attain economic empowerment. I asked her if she only uses the bus for going to work, “of course not” she replied, “I take the bus for roaming around the city as well.” During my fieldwork, women interlocutors had time and again shared how buses are critical to their movements. The interviews show a varied range of affective ties with bus, two predominant parallels and contradictory

emotions run in their narrative—fear and freedom. In many of my interviews, women passengers engaged in stories about buses. Often, such stories are not about what has happened but rather what could happen. For instance, even when women passengers themselves may not have been a victim of harassment and/or violence in a public space such accounts are told, shared and circulated almost as precautionary tales that guide their female mobility choices. Gendering space means taking into consideration how gender can shape one's corporeal experience of a space.⁷⁴

Fear in this light is a survival toolkit. An alarm to safeguard oneself. Beyond just a feeling, it is a bodily experience tied closely to space and time. Their relationship with the city is also tied to insecurities, which are a result of the city's history of violence against women. Besides fear, another feeling dominates women's travelling decisions, which I call the experience of freedom. For many women passengers, a bus ride entails a ride to freedom. One that allows women (especially marginalised women) to get out of their houses and access different parts of their city as per their wishes.⁷⁵ Of course, buses, for many women passengers, are a means to an end, a source to attain means of livelihood. Due to limited transportation choices which arise from social, cultural and economic factors, including concerns of safety, high prices of other modes of transportation, as well as their overall inexperience of accessing the public space regularly and for spontaneous reasons, make buses a popular choice of transit for a huge number of women in Delhi. There is constant meaning making that takes place inside a bus, since buses, just like other forms of public space, tend to structure a habitus.

For many women, the bus is a source of security and confidence. Manju tells me that buses are not the only way to connect to the city not as a worker but as someone who belongs to the place.⁷⁶ "Sundays are my holidays and sometimes I take the bus to visit places, like Mehrauli Park or Chhatarpur Mandir. I don't go very far though, she continued, because that would mean spending hours on the road in traffic." Now that it has been announced that the paper pink ticket will be replaced with smart cards, will you register for a smart card then? I asked. "Yes, what can we do, we have no other choice" she replied, "the paper pink tickets were created for women to travel hassle free, but now the process of making a smart card adds to the hassle that we were supposed to be freed from." I asked her if she knew what had to be done to get a smart card? Where is she supposed to register for her smart card? Where does she have to submit her documents? She did not have answers to any of these questions and asked me instead if I knew what had to be done. But she did clarify that "I have all my documents".

Right to Free travel and Politics of Belonging

In February 2024, when I started my fieldwork on bus route 523, I boarded the bus and received a paper pink ticket. I was not asked any documentary evidence about my residential status in Delhi. The proposed Saheli Smart Card Scheme will be issued through the banks. "Delhi's new smart pass draws an invisible

line between belonging and exclusion.”⁷⁷ The promise of modernising the bus ticketing system with smart technology and tighter verification process will leave thousands excluded from the free ridership scheme, especially those who cannot produce any formal proof of residency in Delhi. This change “marks a decisive shift: from a universal benefit, available instantly to any woman in Delhi, to a conditional one, restricted to those who fit the state’s eligibility checklist. And for the thousands of women who live, study, or work here without official proof of residency, that shift is not a minor inconvenience—it’s a potential loss of independence.”⁷⁸

Public Transport Forum (PTF), India is an organisational initiative that works towards highlighting the importance of public transportation in Delhi. In a petition titled “Demand to Save Pink Ticket Scheme for Women in Delhi: Roll Back the Introduction of Saheli Smart Card,” the organisation pointed out that paper pink ticket scheme was a pioneering step toward enabling women’s equal rights and access to the city and had majorly benefited women in Delhi especially those from lower income groups, in terms of access better economic and educational opportunities. Replacing the paper pink tickets by Saheli Smart Card for which one has to apply online or visit the nearest metro station can create exclusion. Given that not every woman has access to the internet and can visit a metro station. Furthermore, one of the most important groups of beneficiaries of this scheme were the migrant women in Delhi who significantly contribute to the city’s economy and thus deserves equal access welfare provisions like the free bus travel scheme for women. Following demands were put forth in the petition: paper pink tickets should not be discontinued; free bus travel for women scheme should be applicable to all women like it was before; if “leakage” is the basis for proposed changes, the government must disclose the scale and definition of the alleged leakage. The smart card if introduced will impact women’s mobility specially working class women in Delhi. The recent debates of Saheli Smart Card clearly show how the state is trying to curtail rights of those who cannot provide a proof of residence in Delhi. Proof of residence in Delhi remains a distant dream for scores of migrant workers who work as caregivers, domestic workers, construction workers especially female migrant workers whose identity documents are inherently tied to the documents.

Conclusion

The scholarship on urban transport specially Delhi metros has clearly shown that affordability remains a deterrent factor in women’s mobility. The move towards Saheli Smart Cards attached to identification documents and possible collaboration with banks and adopting Know Your Customer clearly shows how the technocratic state is using digitisation as a surveillance mechanism, and control access of public transport to those who can provide identification documents.⁷⁹ Public transport should be free to ensure equitable access and the right to free mobility. Arguments supporting the abolition of transportation fares are often framed upon the logics of transport and mobility justice, sustainability, and its potential for sociopolitical transformation. In the case of

Delhi fare free travel scheme through pink passes was a measure towards a just sociopolitical transformation to make mobility within Delhi safe, and a safe public space could potentially increase labour force participation.

Notes

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⁷ Kęblowski, “Why (Not) Abolish Fares?” 4.

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²⁰ The Delhi Government made amendments in the Delhi Transport Corporation (Free & Concessional Passes) Regulations, 1985 act to launch the scheme that allows women to travel fare free in all AC and non-AC buses operated by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and Delhi Integrated Multimodal Transport System (DIMTS) which runs cluster buses by availing a ‘single journey free travel pass’, popularly known as the ‘pink ticket’. See, Delhi Transport Corporation, “Minutes of the 4th Meeting of 2019 of the DTC Board Held on 23.09.2019,” Government of NCT of Delhi, 2019, https://dtc.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/DTC/circulars-orders/cir20193426._23.9.2019_0.pdf; Nishant A. Singh, “Riding the Justice Route: Assessing the Impact of Free Bus Travel on Progress Toward Gender-Just Public Transport in Delhi,” *Greenpeace India Society*, Bengaluru, 2024, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-india-stateless/2024/10/c293ab29-riding-the-justice-route-1-compressed.pdf>

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⁵⁴ Before the start of their shift, the bus drivers are issued a driver memo, an official document of the DTC, detailing critical operational information such as the driver’s and conductors name and badge number, bus number, route number, schedule timings, duty hours and reporting location. It also includes notes on vehicle condition (engine oil, radiator water, tire pressure, oil pressure, breaks, steering, body panel, windows and doors, lights, horn, engine, clutch, wiper, seats, floor carpets, cleaning, battery, and fire extinguisher). The drivers are required to fill out these details once before and once after the trip stating if there were any issues in the above-mentioned vehicle parts. It

may also include instructions from the depot manager, notes on vehicle condition, or notifications regarding traffic diversions or special services. This document essentially serves as a formal deployment order and accountability record for the driver's duty for the day.

⁵⁵ The Marg Patrak (translated as waybill in DTC) is issued to the bus conductor. A waybill is a route-specific log sheet that outlines the entire bus route, including designated stops, distances, and scheduled arrival and departure times at each halt. It is carried by the conductor or sometimes the driver and is used to track adherence to the route and schedule, assisting in time management and ensuring service reliability. Additionally, the Marg Patrak is often used to record passenger counts, ticket sales, or any deviations or incidents that occur during the journey, which are later used for auditing and performance evaluation. In Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses, a driver memo and waybill also known as Marg Patrak are essential documents required in the daily operations and monitoring of bus services. Both documents are crucial for maintaining operational transparency, safety, and service quality in public transport management within DTC.

⁵⁶ "DTC Bus Ticket Booking made Easy with WhatsApp," DTC Bus, accessed August 23, 2025, <https://dtcbus.co.in/dtc-bus-ticket-booking-made-easy-with-whatsapp/>

⁵⁷ These are common mobility mobile applications. The One Delhi app was launched by the Delhi Government which allows users to plan their journey on the Delhi Metro as well as all state-run-buses. Similarly, the Charter app was launched by the Transport Department of Delhi, called Contactless Ticket booking, for booking digital DTC and DIMTS tickets on smartphones. See, "Contactless Tickets for 3000 Cluster Buses from Today," *The New Indian Express*, March 1, 2021, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2021/Mar/01/contactless-tickets-for-3k-cluster-buses-from-today-2270290.html>; "Govt Launches One Delhi App, Promises Seamless Commuting on Metro, Buses," *Hindustan Times*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/govt-launches-one-delhi-app-promises-seamless-commuting-on-metro-buses/story-slRB7O3pziWswljQmWHAoJ.html>

⁵⁸ "DTC Buss Pass and Fare," DTC Bus, accessed August 20, 2025, <https://dtcbus.co.in/dtc-bus-pass-and-fare/>

⁵⁹ In 2013, the Delhi government released an order titled "Updated Permit Conditions for Public Service Vehicles (stage and contract carriage) which include DTC, cluster, school, private and minibuses/midi buses/RTVs and feeder buses". Under section 39, the government mandated the permit holders of buses to ensure that their bus has at least 25 per cent seats reserved for women, two seats for senior citizens/disabled persons on the conductor's side towards the front gate. Furthermore, it stated that the reserved seats should be marked accordingly. And that the conductor of the bus shall ensure the occupancy of these seats by the above said reserved passengers. In the same order, under Section 30, it was mentioned that in case an incident of indecent behaviour, molestation or eve-teasing etc. against any woman takes place in any bus which tantamount to outraging her modesty, it shall be the duty of the crew of the bus (i.e. driver and conductor as the case may be) to inform the police immediately and take the bus to the nearest police station/police post/PCR van and hand over the culprit to the police. See, "Permit Conditions for Stage Carriage Buses (DTC, Cluster and Private Buses Including Feeder, RTV, Mini, Midi Buses, Updated Upto January 2013," Government of Delhi, 2013, https://transport.delhi.gov.in/sites/default/files/transport_data/permit%2Bconditions%2Bfor%2Bstage%2Bcarriages_02.pdf

⁶⁰ Conversation of DTC Bus Conductor with Author, July 2024.

⁶¹ “URGENT ACTION APPEAL: Case IND-FE 300806,” Housing and Land Rights Network, accessed August 28, 2025, https://hlrn.org.in/documents/UA_Bhatti_Mines.htm

⁶² Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava, “Indigenous Civil Engineers,” *Down to Earth*, January 30, 2015, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/indigenous-civil-engineers-48425>

⁶³ Coomi Kapoor, “Despite Being Classified ‘Most Dangerous,’ Work Continues at Forbidding Bhatti Mines,” *India Today*, accessed: August 29, 2025, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19830228-despite-being-classified-most-dangerous-work-continues-at-forbidding-bhatti-mines-771288-2013-08-23>

⁶⁴ Kapoor, “Despite Being Classified.”

⁶⁵ “Urgent Action Appeal: Case IND-FE 300806,” Housing and Land Rights Network.

⁶⁶ Shrivastava, “Indigenous Civil Engineers.”

⁶⁷ Varsha Singh, “The Forgotten Residents of Delhi’s Bhatti Mines Charitable Organisations Step in as the Government Fails,” *Media India Group*, June 21, 2020, <https://mediaindia.eu/politics/the-forgotten-residents-of-delhis-bhatti-mines/>

⁶⁸ “ECO Task Force,” Forest Department, Government of NCT of Delhi, accessed May 2024, <https://forest.delhi.gov.in/forest/eco-task-force>

⁶⁹ Conversation of Sub Inspector Delhi Police with Author, September 2024.

⁷⁰ According to Koskela (1997, 304) Hille Koskela, “‘Bold Walk and Breakings’: Women’s Spatial Confidence versus Fear of Violence,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 4, no. 3 (1997): 304.

⁷¹ Sneha Annavarapu, “Risky Choices: Women and Cabs in Hyderabad India,” *Public Books*, May 22, 2019, <https://www.publicbooks.org/risky-choices-women-and-cabs-in-hyderabad-india/>

⁷² Annavarapu, “Risky Choices.”

⁷³ Singh, “Mobility in a Mega City.”

⁷⁴ Deepti Adlakha and Diana C. Parra, “Mind the Gap: Gender Differences in Walkability, Transportation and Physical Activity in Urban India,” *Journal of Transport & Health* 18 (2020): 100875, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100875>

⁷⁵ Anvita Anand and Geetam Tiwari, “A Gendered Perspective of the Shelter–Transport–Livelihood Link: The Case of Poor Women in Delhi,” *Transport Reviews*, 26, no. 1 (2006): 63–80.

⁷⁶ Sona Sharma, “Housing, Spatial-Mobility and Paid Domestic Work in Millennial Delhi: Narratives of Women Domestic Workers,” in *Space, Planning and Everyday Contestation in Delhi*, eds. Surajit Chakravarty and Rohit Negi (Springer, 2016), 201–17.

⁷⁷ Masrat Nabi, “Delhi’s New Bus Pass Draws a Line Between Belonging and Exclusion,” *Feminism in India*, August 20, 2025, <https://feminisminindia.com/2025/08/20/delhis-new-bus-pass-draws-a-line-between-belonging-and-exclusion/>

⁷⁸ Nabi, “Delhi’s New Bus Pass.”

⁷⁹ Alisha Dutta, “Excluded by Address: Migrant Women, Transgender Persons Decry DTC’s Saheli Cards,” *The Hindu*, August 4, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/excluded-by-address-migrant-women-transgender-persons-decry-dtcs-saheli-cards/article69890935.ece>