# Chennai introduces new parking policy while Hyderabad fights to protect urban green reserve



Chennai’s parking infrastructure is set for a significant overhaul following the introduction of a new policy by the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA). Addressing the pressing issue of vehicular congestion, the policy aims to streamline parking management across the expansive Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA), which includes Chennai city and its neighbouring regions such as Tambaram, Avadi, and Kancheepuram, covering a total of 5,904 square kilometres.

The policy, approved by the Tamil Nadu government in January 2025 and publicly announced in March, is designed to tackle the city's growing vehicle population, currently estimated at 9.2 million. Experts from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) provided technical guidance during its formulation. By encouraging shifts in transport habits—promoting public transport, ride-sharing, cycling, and walking—the policy targets long-term decongestion of roads, aiming to improve road safety and overall mobility.

A cornerstone of the new framework is the establishment of a Parking Management Unit (PMU) responsible for overseeing parking access and fee collection through a centralised, digitalised platform. This system will integrate both public off-street parking facilities and on-street parking zones within a 500-metre radius. Land for off-street parking will be leased at nominal rates, boosting the availability of dedicated parking spaces away from busy streets.

Residential parking will transition to a prepaid model tailored according to local demand. Residents will be able to apply for ‘residential parking permits’ that designate off-street parking zones, which are priced lower than on-street spots. A ‘proof of parking’ will be required for long-term vehicle registration, confirming access to at least one off-street parking space.

For non-residential sectors, the policy imposes stricter regulations. Workplaces with more than 100 employees must craft travel demand management plans that could include shuttle services linking metro stations, suburban trains, and bus stops, aligned with the commuting patterns of their workforce. Freight vehicles are to be confined to designated off-street parking areas, while commercial establishments are mandated to provide multi-level parking infrastructure equipped with electric vehicle charging points. Educational institutions must adopt staggered class timings to reduce traffic peaks and allocate dedicated areas for school transport operations.

Parking fees under the new regulations will vary, ranging from free to charged based on factors such as vehicle size, parking duration, demand, and location. The city will be divided into high, medium, and low-demand zones, with a dynamic pricing model designed to maintain at least 15% vacancy in on-street parking areas. Revenue generated from fees will be reinvested into local transport infrastructure, including enhancements to footpaths and cycle lanes.

The policy’s phased implementation will be supported by a local parking app and website, enabling users to locate and pay for parking spaces conveniently. The initiative is poised to benefit urban mobility across multiple administrative divisions, including 12 municipalities, 13 town panchayats, and 22 panchayat unions within the CMA.

Meanwhile, in Hyderabad, a separate but equally significant environmental and urban planning issue has come to the fore concerning Kancha Gachibowli, a 400-acre green reserve regarded as one of the last ecological havens within the city. The Telangana Wildlife Warden has been directed by the Supreme Court to prioritise protecting this green belt, with the court stating emphatically that “high-rises cannot coexist with deer.” This landmark ruling follows proposals by the state government to auction the land for IT and infrastructure development projects.

University of Hyderabad (UoH) students have played a prominent role in dissenting against the auction plans, demanding proof from the state that the area lacks ecological value. Their mobilisation was supported by opposition parties, intensifying the conflict. Legal challenges were mounted by the NGO Vata Foundation and a retired scientist from the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, contesting the legality and environmental compliance of the auction under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

The Supreme Court formed the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to investigate the matter. The committee drew upon a 2009 WWF-UoH ecological study and analysis of photographic evidence, concluding that Kancha Gachibowli “appears to have all the characteristics of a forest.” The Forest Survey of India is conducting a vegetation density survey, expected to be completed within a few weeks. Despite these findings, the state government maintains that the land is considered ‘Kancha’—unproductive revenue land—and not legally classified as forest area. The UoH has rejected plans for a separate survey by revenue authorities due in July 2024.

The developments in both Chennai and Hyderabad highlight ongoing efforts in urban centres to balance infrastructure development, environmental protection, and sustainable mobility solutions. Both cases underscore the complexities faced by metropolitan administrations in managing growth while addressing ecological and quality-of-life concerns.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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