

## City of Bangalore and its approach to 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

The history suggests that Bangalore has all the credits of achieving the 'first of any kind of development' in India. Bangalore is the first state in India which got electricity through hydro electric project in 1906. The reputation of Garden City is followed by the silver jubilee celebration of the rule of Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. Followed by these celebrations, many parks, public spaces and buildings were added to the state. Post Independence, Bangalore remained in the new Mysore State.

Dating back in 890CE, Bangalore is over 100years old as in scripted in hero stone and referred as a place in which a battle was fought in 890 CE. The inscription also says that the place was known as 'Bengaval-uru', 'The City of Guards' in old Kannada.

The old and popular anecdote says that 11<sup>th</sup> century Hoysala King Veera Ballala II while on a hunting expedition lost and tired in a forest met an old lady who had served him boiled beans (Benda Kaal) and the grateful King named the place as Benda- Kaal- Uru (Town of Boiled Beans) which eventually evolved into Bangalore probably during the tenure of East India company, pre independence. In 2005, Government of Karnataka accepted the proposal of Jnanapith Award winner U R Ananthamurthy's to rename Bangalore to Bengaluru. In 2006, Bruhut Bangalore Maha Nagare palike (BBMP) the administration in charge of the city passed a resolution of the name change and Government of Karnataka officially implements the name change from 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2006. However this process is not completed due to the delay in the process of approval from Union Ministry of India.

The plague epidemic in 1898 paves way for improvement of sanitation and health facilities in the state. During this time, many temples were built and dedicated to Goddess Mariamma. Telephone lines were laid to coordinate the anti plague operations. Under the British influence, the city bloomed with modern facilities like the railways, telegraph, postal and police departments. When the city was returned to Wodeyar's by Bristish, Dewans like Sir Mirza

Ismail and Sir M Visveswaraya were the pioneers to help Bangalore to attain its modern look. These world class facilities have lured people to the city initially from within the state and later around the world. The climate had a great role in bringing people down to this place.

Majority of the city of Bangalore lies in Bangalore Urban and some parts are in Bangalore rural of the Karnataka State and it is positioned at in the southern Deccan plateau at an average elevation of 920 m which gives the city the best possible climate among all the cities in India. The topology of Bangalore is flat and except for a central ridge passing through NNE- SSE (North-North East- South - South East). Due to its high elevation, Bangalore usually enjoys/rather enjoyed a moderate climate throughout the year.

Apart from the climate, the developments in public sector, education, health, science and technology has attracted people from the rest of the states even before independence starting since 1941 onwards. This immigration was rapid during 1941-51 and 1971-81. Manufacturing sector in the state has established with the establishment of private companies such as MICO (Motor Industries Company). Followed by this transition, the real estate market has seen a boom converting the large plots and colonial bungalows into multi stories apartments in 1980's and 90's.

Texas Instruments became the first multinational corporation to set up a base in Bangalore and end of the century had achieved the city a tag of Silicon Valley of India to the state as many such companies followed the suit of Texas Instruments.

Kempegowda I was visionary and foreseen the development the city that can bring forth considering various favourite factors and has constructed many tanks and lakes to meet the needs of the city. But most of those lakes and tanks were overrun by modernization of the city and of late during summer and year which gets less rain fall will see water shortage many areas in the city.

The first car which polluted the city was in 1903 and the craziness towards individual luxuries wins over the public transportation thereafter. Though government has struggled to put fair enough public transport across the city, the least thought given to the last mile connectivity has promoted the private vehicles along with the affordability and lucrative jobs available in the city. Now the city has the tag of one of the most polluted city in the country. A random sampling of Air Quality Index of the city in different twenty stations within the city indicated scores that ranges from 76-314 suggesting heavy to severe air pollution around the area of traffic concentration in 2005 and it might have increased may manifold due to the increase in the number of vehicles on the road.

### **Pedestrian environment and Indian roads**

Infrastructural developments of a city in India means make way for vehicles and promotion of private vehicles than for promoting public mode of transportation, be it to school, office, shopping or for any other purpose. As each year, more number of vehicles is added daily, the roads are not been able to take the volume due to heavy flow. When all developments concentrates on widening of the roads, construction of flyovers, express highways etc which will not follow the standards of Indian Road Congress, a guideline on roads and its amenities like footpath, medians, pedestrian crossings etc for a number of population and volume of traffic for a particular area; the scenario has put the pedestrian in to a difficult or rather un safe situation.

As the volume of traffic increases, the immediate encroachment is on the space available for footpath which does not have monitoring mechanism to check whether the pedestrian has all facilities. This will result either too narrow footpath or non existence of the same. Also we Indians are so used to the similar situations, even if we have a proper wide and safe footpath, people prefer to walk on the road. Another issue with the existing footpath if at all exists; due to the traffic, the footpaths are used by two wheelers to reach them fast to their destination or at the most closest to the signal which clearly danger the life of footpath users especially elders

and children. The conditions of the footpaths also be a difficult to use by pedestrian as it is uneven, broken, used for garbage disposal, debris of construction sites or storage space for them. In the neighbourhood of elite housing colonies, this space has been utilized for beautification of the area which is just in front of their house leaving the pedestrian to the road and risks his life.



In some other cases, especially in the commercial areas where the footpaths comes to the help of the shoppers as well as the passersby, but in majority of the cases this has been encroached by the vendors and shopkeepers to display their sign board, material or the utilization by hawkers. Though these small vendors also need to be promoted for the vibrancy and affordability of the community, most of the time we do not have a mechanism to accommodate them by clearly demarcating an area for them without sacrificing the space of the pedestrian. The situation hence demands them to utilize whatever space available on the footpath. The latest additions to this are encroachment of playgrounds, parks; river beds are converted to the growing need of parking space.

Our very own Kempegowda Bus Terminus which is the largest bus station in central Bangalore connects across the city and with other states stands in the Dharmanbudhi lake bed which is paved way for the need of the lakhs of people coming to Bangalore city for various purposes from different locations. The reality shows that any Indian cities, be it metro or any other big city, pedestrian is the last person thought for as part of the development of the city.

Walking Plazas in M G Road of Pune was very successful and reports shows that both the shoppers as well as the merchants have started reaping on the pedestrian friendly street. But followed by the 26/11 terror attacks on Mumbai has put this area also in to the issue of safety and Pune Cantonment Board was forced to close down the walking plazas. Though efforts have been putting in to bring back the same, looks like it might time to take the reschedule the whole program

Though not in the similar fashion, Mumbai city also put in effort to educate people and create awareness on how your day will be without cars by celebrating car free day for the past 2 years. Reported that it is huge success on these two years, new organizations also have pitched in to the celebrate car free day this year. 2011 has seen two car free days in Mumbai by different organisations. Though this is not encouraging as such, on a positive front we can take it up as more people are getting aware on the benefits of the same or rather people have started thinking about the same.

Though Hyderabad City had tried to take some initiative on this line, the final project could not materialize due to various reasons. All these examples show that unless government pitched in and take the major role in initiating and implementing, the program will be neither sustainable nor successful. The same policy initiated elsewhere in globe has been successful and more streets or people are advocating or adding to the band wagon.

**Quick Introduction to Commercial Street:**

Bangalore is known for its shopping facilities and the wide choice it offers for all kinds of shoppers. Commercial Street is one of the oldest, most popular and frequented shopping places in Bangalore, which has a glorifying history of nearly 400 years. It is situated in the Central Business District of Bangalore and commands the distinction of being the most happening shopping place in Bangalore along with M.G. Road and Brigade Road.

Commercial Street a legacy of the British is a shopping Mecca that sells international brands (similar to Brigade road) alongside locally produced items. The Commercial Street is one of the busiest areas in CBD of Bangalore. It lies between Shivaji Nagar and Kamaraj Road. Garments, hosiery, textile stores and shoes form the major part of the shops. In addition, there are shops selling artifacts and art materials, jewelry, eatables, hardware goods, sport goods and other general goods. The term Commercial Street is also generally meant to include the by lanes around it like Dispensary Road, Ebrahim Sahib Street, Narayan Pillai Street etc. This is one of the most frequented shopping places in Bangalore, a shopper's paradise for anybody in the city. Shopping and women are synonymous and people whom set up the street very clearly studied the sex in the city. It is a bit fair/ unfair that almost 75% of the shops cater exclusively to women.

Many of the old buildings that were on Commercial Street have been pulled down to make way for larger, modern buildings. Once the place used to be a mixed use of neighborhood, which comprises of residential as well as commercial space, but as the city expanded and given more importance to commercial purpose people have moved from this area and converted their space to fully commercial space. Still we can find nearly eight to ten families living on the street along with their business on the one of the busiest street in CBD.

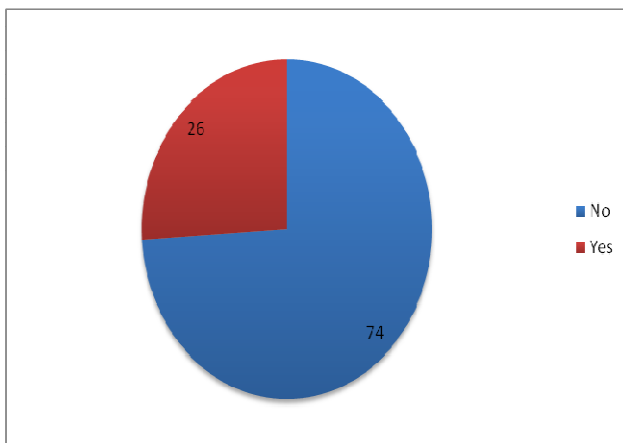
As the business progressed and attraction of the most sought after place grew, the place once closed on Sundays opened for 365 days business. We have generation of merchants who had played cricket and other country games on the street fifty years back reminisces about those past glories of the street. As the business increased due to the high paid jobs of Bangaloreans and affordability of luxuries such as cars have changed the scenario of this quiet street into a busy area where today people are fighting for parking space as well as pedestrian rights.

### Can Commercial Street be pedestrianised: Research Results

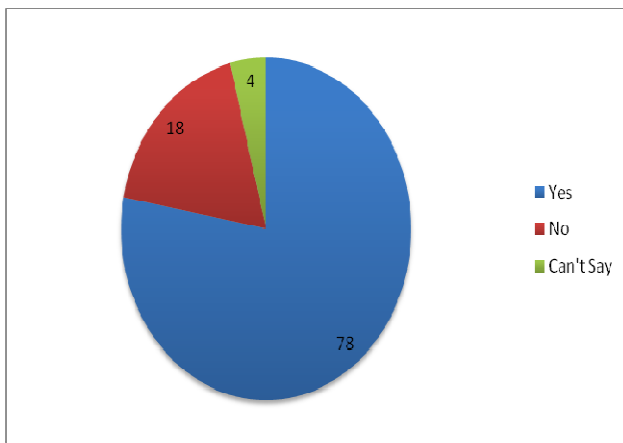
The research was conducted with merchants on the street and followed by the discussion with them it is understood that they consider malls mushrooming in and around the area have taken away a greater meal of theirs and hence they assume that only by having car parking facilities, those people can be brought back to the street. This has instilled the interest in researchers to know the facts from the mall shoppers and hence the survey with mall shoppers who were visiting those malls in and around the C. St was also researched. Also study conducted by Mr Das on C. St with visitors also taken in to point while the research conducted.

#### Results with the survey with merchants Association:

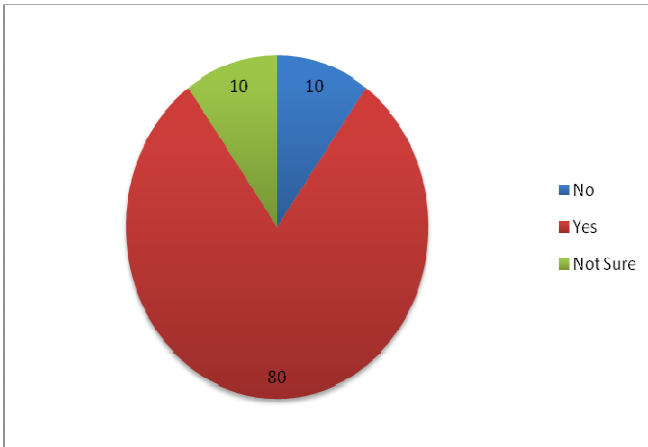
- 74% were opposed to Commercial Street being pedestrian-only



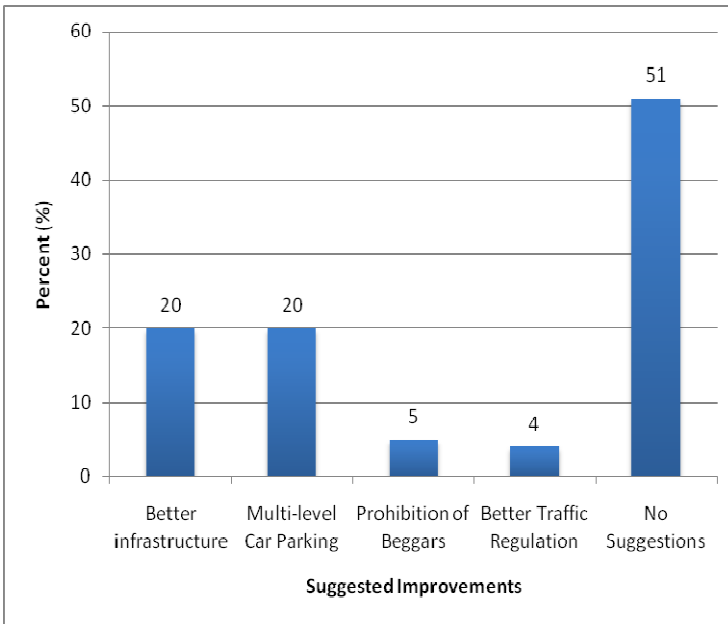
- 78% of merchants believe that their business would be negatively impacted if car-free



- 76% believe that the number of customers would be reduced if cars were no longer allowed to park or drive along the street
- 73% could not think of any positive reasons for going car-free.
- 80% consider the street as safe for their customers to move around though the customers have different opinion.



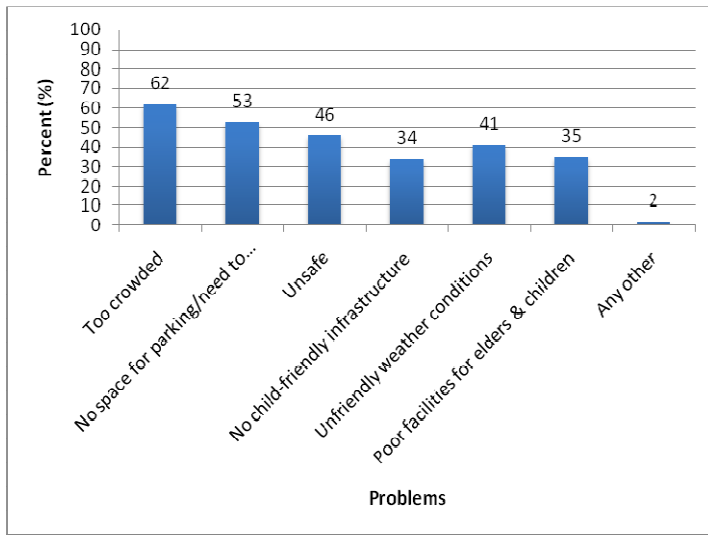
- The majority of merchants (51%) believe that Commercial Street is charming as it is and there is no need for improvements.



Research with mall shoppers:

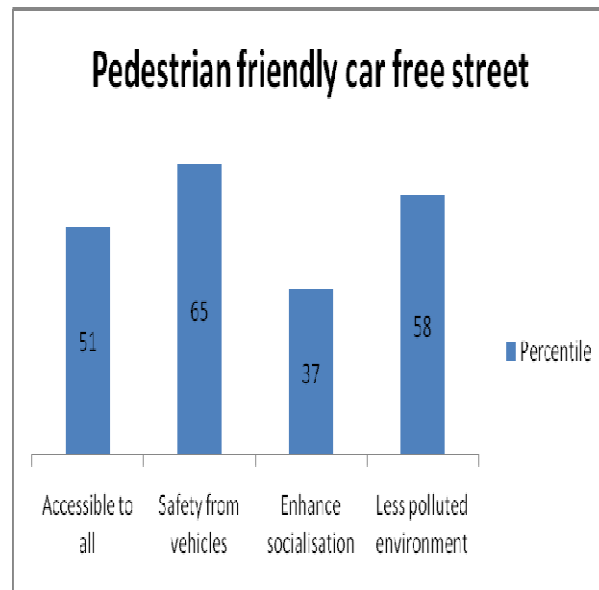
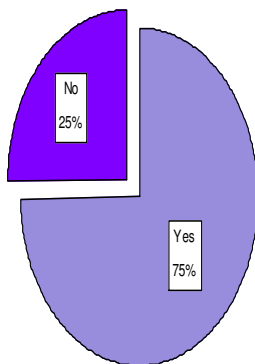


The mall interceptors who still make visit to the street mentioned the following possible reasons for losing the charm of the street.



- 75% customers prefer to have the street pedestrian friendly and the changes there by they are looking forward are as follows.

C.St made car free for pedestrian friendly



- When asked where they preferred to shop, 35% of respondents said malls, 23% said a shopping street and 15% said the liked both.
- When asked about why they shopped at a mall, only 19% indicated that parking was the main reason. Although this was the largest single response percentage-wise, this is by no means the majority of mall shoppers. Other reasons included:

High end products/ exclusive (17%)

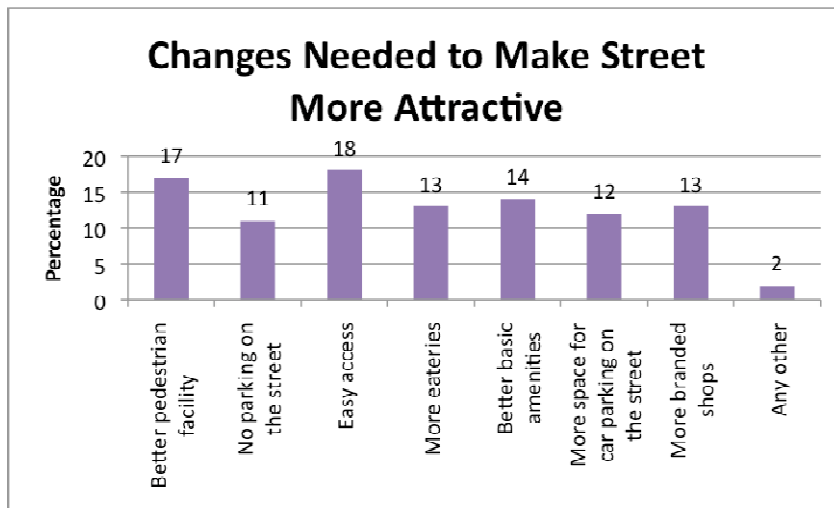
Best place to hang out (15%)

A lot of different facilities under one roof (14%)

A variety of hygienic eateries (14%)

Good/clean basic amenities (14%)

- These responses partly reflect the younger demographic. But, they also suggest the mall is perceived as an “exclusive” and “clean” place with amenities such as washrooms, places to sit, and drinking water, and is a place where friends can hang out.
- When asked about the shopping experience on Commercial Street, lack of parking was raised as an issue by 17% of respondents. This demonstrates that it might not be as big an issue as the merchants believe.
- The customers are very clear on what they want on the street in terms of safe and comfortable shopping and make the street comfortable and attractive.



### **ESAF, HB and pedestrian friendly streets:**

ESAF has started the *Liveable Cities program* in two states of India, Bangalore and Nagpur in 2009 with special reference to the needs of children. The first year had seen an extensive study in both the states to identify the existing state of affairs based on the indicators of transportation, safety, health education, neighbourhood, land use and governance. The children as well as other stakeholders were unhappy with the facilities given to children or in the

existing conditions. Children were very vocal to their needs and priorities. In Bangalore, they have highlighted the need of safe route to school as majority of the children walk to school, facilities such more public transport system especially during school hours, poor basic amenities in terms of infrastructure in schools, parks and playgrounds both at school and neighbourhood level, child friendly adults at all places wherever child is bound to interact and various policies which takes care of these programs, implementation as well as monitoring.

The lack of public space available for the children as well as the safety of the children while they travel, play or move around simply has encouraged the team members to have a discussion with Commissioner of Directorate of land and urban Transport (DULT) with the research results.

The area selected for trial version of how a public space can be exciting and bring more life to the community is Commercial Street, shopper's paradise. Another criterion for this area to select was as the street is not thoroughfare which is just 459m long street makes easy for working out the modalities for pedestrian Friendly Street technically speaking. But in reality there are numerous hiccups and initiatives gone in to the procedure which is not been able to rectify even though the visitors are ready for the same.

Our interaction with the merchants association as well the merchants on the streets (125) shows that they are really concerned about losing business as they feel that people who comes in car gives them more business than people who walks through the streets. Also these so called business givers belongs to elite family which recommends them to breathe and travel in cars and any change in their existing pattern would directly affect the business of the merchants as assumed by them. This has been a common assumption across the world when any area had to be changed to pedestrian friendly. At the same time the greater part of merchants been very nostalgic about the cricket they played on the street from morning till night on Sundays few years back. When some are longing for those memories to become reality, many are concentrating on how their business can be improved by inviting more vehicle dependent

shoppers. The merchants on the street strongly feel that the mushrooming of malls has hit their business compared to the few years.

Based on this, we have interviewed 385 shoppers who have visited the malls nearby the street as well as Commercial Street regularly for their shopping shows that they still consider C. St as the best place for shopping provided they are given safe place for walking without the need of worrying about moving vehicles, clean and safe roads with very basic amenities.

### **Past efforts in C. St for Pedestrian Friendly:**

Many efforts have put in to make the street pedestrian friendly by different stakeholders which has started since 2003, first conceived by the then commissioner Mr. M R Srinivasa Murthy which had not seen the light for unknown reason. Later in 2005, Bangalore Mahanagare Palike (BMP) revived his plan, got the approval governing council and sent for government approval as part of the revival of Central Business District (CBD) in Bangalore. This plan was excellently designed to make the shopping a real exciting experience with dividing the 11 meter wide road divided with medians, park and play area specially designed for children with fountains and other attractions. Alternative arrangement was identified the street behind in Dispensary road for multi story parking which has planned for Build operate Transfer (BOT) basis for maintenance.

Meanwhile the Mayor Mr. N Narayanaswamy revised the contract with Commercial Street Merchants Association for pay and park system in the city and got automated meters for C. St in 2005. This could be one of the reasons for the setback of implementation of pedestrian friendly programs in C. St as it had benefitted both merchants as well as City Corporation on 60:40 basis. As the contract gets over by the 2010 in the first tenure, people also have started talking about reviving the plans. We also do not have the details of what is the status of this contract after 2010 which need to be explored.

Many civil society organizations as well as independent consultants who promote pedestrian friendliness in the city had numerous numbers of discussions with both the merchants

association as well as the government which has not seen the light till today. Apart from this non recordable illustrations described by merchants while had interaction with them stated that once the Police Commissioner Mr H T Sangliana also tried to enforce the same on the street and could succeed only for few weeks due to the pressure of merchants association.

As of now, cars are parked on either side on alternative days with either encroached on the footpath which is on the same level of the road, or parallel parking which waits for the parking space or their customer. Some are smart enough park it on the other side with driver waiting in so that whenever security alarms them, they keep moving and park their car somewhere else while waiting for their owner.

ESAF & HB have pitched in to this scenario, even though many attempts are failed, because that has been the history of any city to become the pedestrian friendly. Different people work together and promote for the theme, convince various stake holders involved in it and in the longer run people understands the benefit of the same give a trial of it. Once they experience the taste of it, people long for it and thus the program become successful.

Another reason for us to join this band wagon as the city aims and scores for many heights, it is also losing its charm for its people, many public places where children and adults used for their interaction, play space have taken away for the sake of developments and have become a concrete jungle which does not instill any excitement among people. This has promoted /ing a exercise free human beings who for each and everything depends upon motor vehicles, creativity is killed due to the more time spent watching television, playing video games, less tolerant and irritable youths, poor problem solving and communication skills. The coping mechanism of the current generation seems to be poor or almost nil which otherwise was the platform for learning through the various interactions and avenues they had.



### **Why the situation is so:**

It is not that these people are not travelled or seen anything of this sort in other part of the world. Most of the merchants are well travelled and knows or rather experienced the same benefits elsewhere and agree for the concept and success of the same. But they feel that considering the attitude of Indian in their natives, this program cannot be successful at all. Apart from attitude issue, affordability of the people by having both the members in the family earning well, high paid jobs in IT & IT enabled services encourages the people to afford cars. In most of the houses, having two cars has become quite normal and necessity. And now owning four wheelers and considering the traffic Bangalore city has, people are very comfortable using personal vehicles than public mode of transport. But people are still not understand or analyse being in one of those cars in the traffic snarls, they are also the contributor for the same issue.

### **Future Plans for ESAF & HB for Pedestrian friendly C. St**

The discussion with commissioner, DULT was primarily on to get an over view on what is the current thinking process of merchants and expectations of shoppers and how best we can educate all these stakeholders for a pedestrian friendly street. The final report will be submitting to DULT in few weeks and we also will be giving a recommendation paper for them to act on for making it happen. We strongly feel that unless it is the initiative from government, the program cannot be sustainable in the long run.

Meanwhile we have few programs such as

1. Sharing the report with the merchants as well as shoppers. This will be in the form of full report, educational hand bills and posters either directly or through newspapers
2. Encouraging people to use the public transport for reaching the street and then appreciate them by spreading the messages through T shirts distributions and buttons which promotes pedestrian friendly slogans
3. Requesting the merchants to think about car free street on any week days if weekends give them more business. Among the weekdays, Tuesday is assumed to give less business which can be selected for celebrating the car free street so that if at

all they feel that this process will affect their business by doing it on any other weekday

4. To start with, we may try for half a stretch of street by allowing the cars to come in partially to the street to drop & pick up the visitors.
5. When such initiative is done, pollution level of the street to be measured and educate the people on the benefits of the same
6. Similarly, to keep a track by the merchants on the business they do on these days and compare with other days' trade. This would enable them to have a cross check on the business they do on all these two separate days
7. Also to undergo a small scale survey / interview with people on how do they feel on the changes they have seen with the pedestrian friendly days and non friendly streets

These programs will probably support the following objectives of the program:

1. Increased or identification of public space
2. Increased no of people using public spaces
3. Decreased noise pollution
4. Increased economic activities
5. Create awareness and increased number of network on similar issues