

To,
Shri Pardeshi,
Commissioner,
Pune Municipal Corporation
Pune, India

Re: Complaints based on my observations about civic life in Pune

Dear Sir,

Recently your prompt response to my mail led to the issue of the work order for footpaths on S B Road. While I await the work to begin and be completed, before leaving for UK I made several observations about civic life in Pune. I have managed to capture some on camera; the concerns are detailed below. I will request you to kindly treat each observation as a separate complaint inherent with the expectation that remedial action is taken by the PMC.

However, as you will gather and perhaps agree my observations point to the general lack of professionalism within the PMC. The civic body needs to be protocol driven, further a whole systems approach is vital as the examples detailed below demonstrate that different departments perhaps do not communicate with one another (a case of right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing).

Observations & complaints –

1. My recent communication about lack of footpaths on S.B Road is only a symbolic representation of what is missing in Pune. The PMC statistics suggest that over a third of citizens ‘walk’ – yet over 40 % of roads are without footpaths. Even the under-passes of recently completed flyovers remain without footpaths. I will once again urge the Commissioner’s office to issue a memorandum to its staff that the principle of working ought to be – **First Footpaths, Then Roads** (a metaphor for saying get the basics right first). Also the PMC should henceforth state to each contractor that **no road works should be deemed completed until pavements / footpaths are finished.**
2. Continuing with the above theme – **where footpaths exist, they are encroached.** While I was in Pune, a major drive was underway to rid the illegal hawkers off the footpaths. But Pune is unique in having what I call **‘official encroachers’ of footpaths.** The first example is that of the **PMT bus stops.**

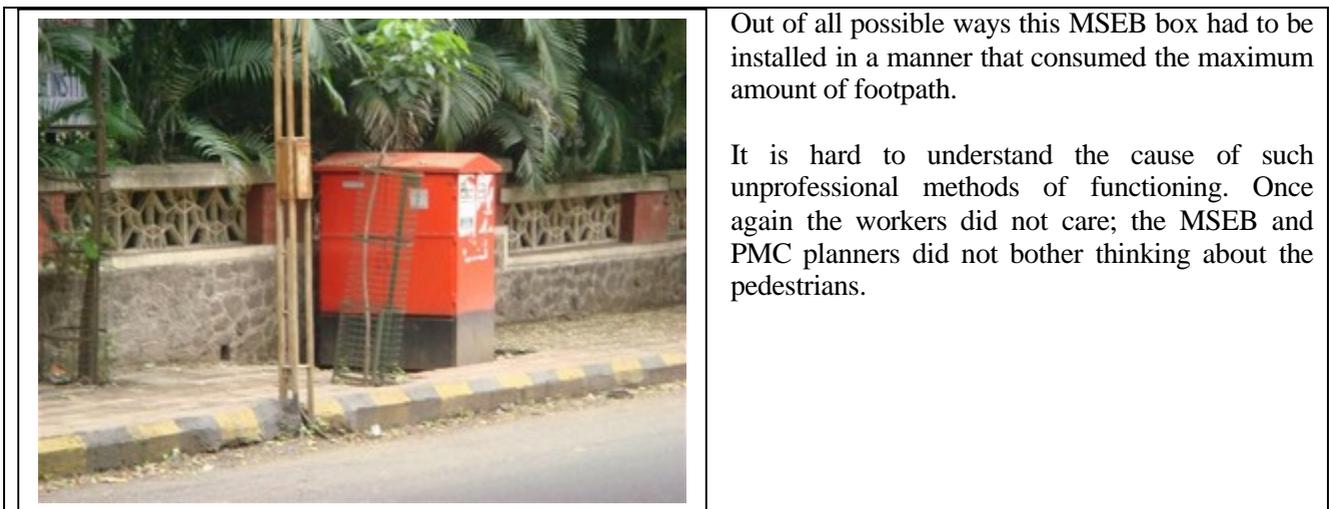


It is obvious the person who designed these bus stops, the one who commissioned them did not leave their office desk to carry out site visits.

In contrast below are two examples of bus stops in London, UK. Both use a simple right angle frame design ensuring the footpaths remain un-encroached. The bench provided is often only 6 inches wide and slanted at an angle to deter any one who hopes to make the bus stop their home.



3. Continuing with the examples of **official encroachment** – at a number of places the **MSEB boxes** occupy a big chunk of the footpath. The picture below is of a box on BMCC road. Once again it is apparent that MSEB installed the box with or without planning permission from PMC.



Out of all possible ways this MSEB box had to be installed in a manner that consumed the maximum amount of footpath.

It is hard to understand the cause of such unprofessional methods of functioning. Once again the workers did not care; the MSEB and PMC planners did not bother thinking about the pedestrians.

4. Similarly, the entire city is littered with **garbage skips occupying the footpaths**. While there are examples from a handful of locations, the situation near Model Colony is appalling. It is shocking that a city proud of its heritage and also part of the IT revolution has footpaths that provide a secure habitat to pigs. **The garbage skips raise numerous issues** –
- a. Illegal occupation of pavements
 - b. Health and safety hazards – especially infectious diseases (are we waiting for a Surat like plague to hit the city before we ensure basic amenities).
 - c. If the city does not have resources to collect and dispose of its garbage by way of recycling and incineration, **how does the administration justify** further growth of the city in terms of:
 - i. The city limits
 - ii. Raising FSI to 100 feet (this was in newspapers in Aug 07).

Please see pictures of garbage skips below –



Outside Persistent and a stones throw from Shah Hospital near Vetal Baba Chowk – off S B Road.



On Bhandarkar road, opposite Tru Mart.



BMCC road



Pigsty at Model Colony – almost a dozen pigs occupy the footpath. The nearby notice reads



5. I started this communication by pointing out that the PMC should be protocol driven. The reason for emphasising this is my observation of the tree planting carried out in August 07 by the PMC's Garden department on the S B Road. Once again it seems someone issued an order for trees to be planted and the workmen were out and did so without a thought about whether the road would / should have a footpath or not. The haphazard way of planting trees is apparent from noting how one tree is close to the roads outer edge while the other is closer to the road. In any case both will block pedestrians when a footpath is built in the future.

An example of poorly planned tree plantation drive is seen in the picture below -

Trees planted in areas that ought to be footpaths.



6. Further lack of planning, unprofessional and ad-hoc ways of working are on display on BMCC road. As one walks along this road towards FC road, on the left suddenly the **footpath narrows down to almost 'one foot wide'**, worse still, the footpath has railings!! **Did the PMC workers not have responsibility to apply their common sense and imagine whether the work they are embarking on is going to facilitate or obstruct the pedestrians?** Similarly in numerous places footpaths narrow down (at times disappearing completely) on bends. This is an obvious flaw, yet it is repeatedly seen all over the city.
7. Several NGOs have made repeated representations to the PMC about making the city 'pedestrian friendly'. Road signage and signals are an important part of this service provision. Yet poor planning is on demonstration at every nook and corner. Some observations are detailed below:
 - a. During August 07, one leading newspaper carried a picture of a zebra crossing that runs in to a 3 feet high road divider.
 - b. On Pashan road it is obvious that someone in the PMC decided to paint zebra crossings outside each academic Institute. Unfortunately that is literally what has been done. Every zebra is bang in front of the front gate and driveways of every Institute. It is common sense that this is simply wrong. This would not have happened if road signage were provided as per established norms.
 - c. Traffic signals –
 - i. Virtually **all-pedestrian green signals last less than 6 seconds?** Did the people who installed these signals not know that this time is insufficient for the fittest of people?
 - ii. On several signals the green left turn light comes on first – this is rather useless as most people going straight occupy the left lane. Yet again simpler methods are being overlooked. In UK a green light (no arrows) is all that is used.
 - iii. Green light traffic **signal synchronization** is not in use. This is vital for reducing frustrating waits for motorist who in turn will be better behaved.
 - d. On the whole **signage is missing** and where made available ill-planned. I wonder if the PMC workers in charge of road signage are even aware of where to put a continuous line or a hatched line and what purpose each is meant to serve. Unfortunately there cannot be excuses for this as much of the information needed on such matters is available on the web. I am attaching the UK Road marking Guidance available as a download from the internet. Given that we follow international signage (much of which is in keeping with UK and Indian laws) this guidance should be handy. You may also download it from <http://better.pune.googlepages.com/UKroadmarkingguidance.pdf>
8. **Finally the PMT.** A bustling city like Pune cannot survive without an effective public transport system. While we invest in BRTS, as I have pointed out in previous communications, without a robust and modern PMT serving on non-BRT routes, up take of public transport will be poor. The PMT buses are so poorly maintained – dusty and rusty, they fail to enthuse anyone hoping to use them. The picture below (taken in 15 Aug 07) says it all.



Broken down, shattered and tired, it is the basic PMT service and not the BRT which is a priority.

Conclusion

It is apparent that Pune has suffered from poor administration in recent times. While your office may not be able to un-do every ill within the system, I hope that alongside making whatever physical changes possible, you are able to get the PMC staff to become more professional, protocol driven and holistic in their approach. **PMC needs to invest in changing its work culture as this will ensure a better future for the city.**



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