
SHAKTI YOJANA: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KOPPAL, KARNATAKA

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Abstract

This study provides an analysis of the Shakti Yojana. Shakti Yojana is one of the major schemes of the Government of Karnataka, and this scheme is eligible for women of all castes, religions and classes, and the implementation of this scheme has helped in achieving the welfare of women. Therefore, it is important to understand the confusion caused by the implementation of the scheme and the government's financial implications. To make this scheme successful, it is necessary to collect and analyse the suggestions of beneficiaries. For this reason, a study of the Free Bus Scheme, or Shakti Yojana, has been undertaken. For this study, information was collected through primary and secondary sources as well as through field study sources such as interview schedules and observations. To fulfil the objective of this research, 80 female beneficiaries of Koppal City were selected through simple random sampling. According to this study, 100% of the women saw a change in the financial condition of their families, and 100% of the women reduced their dependence on men. The study further observed that 75% of beneficiaries expressed the opinion that the government's financial insolvency and price rise are two factors that affect them.

Keywords: Women's welfare, gender equality, and Women's economic empowerment.

Introduction: Women constitute 48% of the total population in India, and their contribution to the growth of the gross domestic product is only 18% (NFHS, 2023). The latest PLFS survey shows that the rate of female participation in the labour force has increased to 28.6% in 2022 and 35.4% in 2023. This growth indicates a significant increase in women's participation in the workforce. Moreover, the employment participation gap is due to the constraints faced by women. Despite obstacles such as the unavailability of domestic and unpaid care workers, a lack

of support from family, a lack of proper travel facilities, and their high rates, women play a vital role in economic development.

Governments are keen to formulate women-centric and women-friendly policies. For example, the government of Karnataka is implementing the Ujjain Yojana, the Samruddhi Yojana, the Stree Shakti Yojana, the Grihalakshmi Yojana, and the Shakti Yojana. These schemes aim to improve the social and economic conditions of women, uplift them from weaker sections, and empower them. The Shakti Yojana provides free travel in non-premium government buses across the state to women and transgender people residing in the state of Karnataka.

The Government of Karnataka has implemented the "Shakti Yojana", which provides free bus transport to women and trans genders of all categories in non-premium government buses of all Road Transport Corporations (RTCs) in the state. The scheme was introduced in the state budget for 2023-24 and has been operational since June 11, 2023. The main objective of the scheme is to empower women by providing free travel to about 42 lakh women and trans genders. In July 2023, the government allocated Rs. 4000 crore annually for this scheme.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the social, economic, and educational status of the Shakti Yojana beneficiaries.
2. To analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the Shakti Yojana.

Literature Review:

1. **Cirillo, C., Tabrizi, A., Rakha, H., and Du, J.** (2023) conducted a study based on a preliminary survey to determine the impact of a fare-free public transport policy on the travel behaviour of the public. After the policy was implemented, it was found that about 32% of the respondents increased their bus usage, and about 80% of the people are using buses more than before. This finding indicates an increase in the number of riders as a result of the fare-free public transport policy.

2. **Wojciech Kieblowski** (2018) conducted a study on free public transportation in Chengdu, China. The policy was implemented to help senior citizens and was later expanded to all citizens, regardless of age or social status. This free transportation initiative was small-scale and targeted a specific community or category of citizens. It improved inter-neighbourhood connectivity and filled a gap in the larger public transportation system.
3. **Kats O, Remal T, and Susilo Y** (2014) evaluated the impact of fare-free public transport on service performance, passenger demand, and accessibility for different passenger groups. They found that fare-free public transport accounted for a 1.2% increase in passenger demand, with the remaining increase attributable to an expanded network of public transport primary lanes and increased service frequency.

Share of the Shakti Yojana in the Karnataka Government

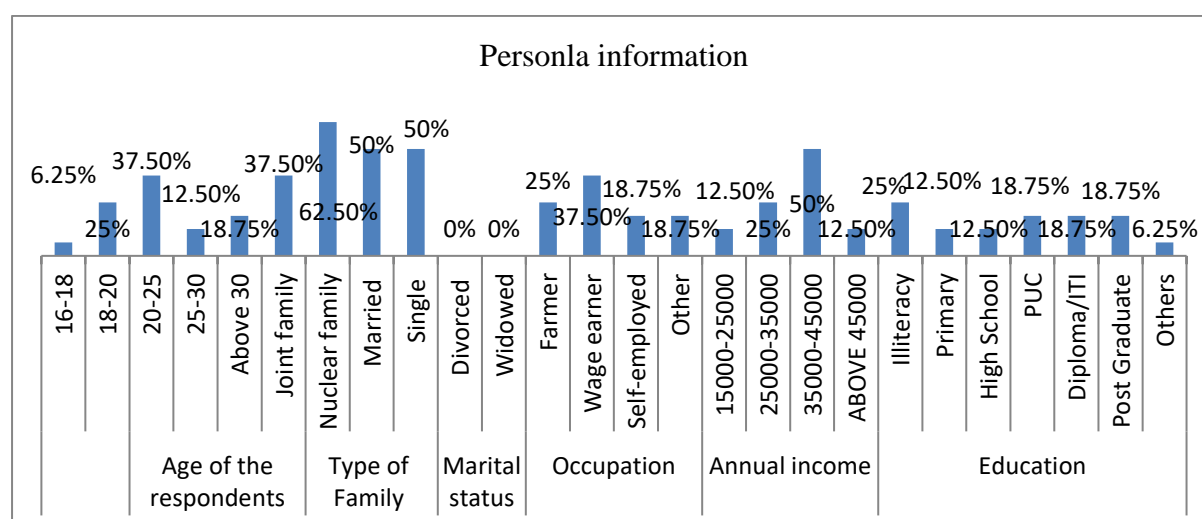
Sl No	Details	2023-24 (Rs. in cr.)	2024-25(Rs. in cr.)
01	Allocation/Expenditure for Energy Scheme	4380.37	5015

Source: Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement. Medium-Term Fiscal Projection 2024-28

Results and discussion:

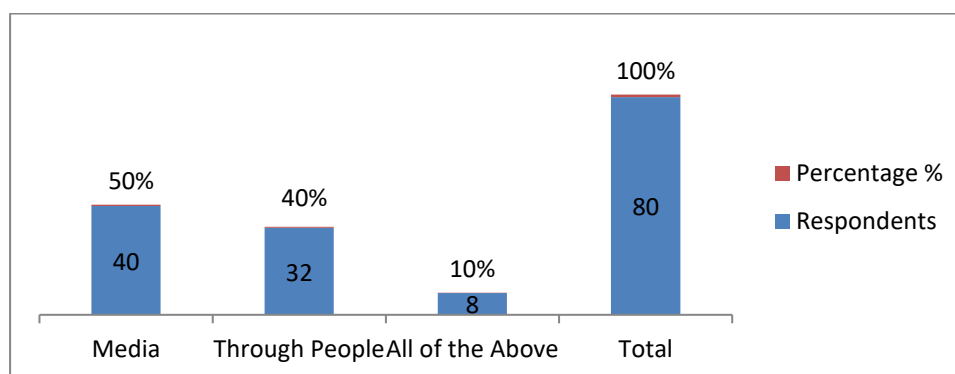
1. Personal information

Chart -01



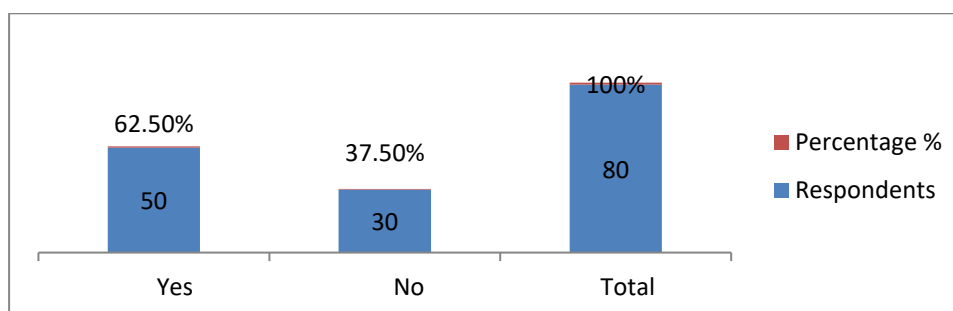
The above statistics from the chart, in a discussion with women in Koppal city, 6.25% were in the age group of 16 to 18, 25% in the age group of 19 to 20, 37.5% in the age group of 21 to 25, 12.5% in the age group of 26 to 30, and 18.75% in the age group of 30 and above. In terms of family structure, 62.5% were joints, and 37.5% were single. The percentage of married women was 50% and that of unmarried women was 50%. Regarding occupation, farmers were 25%, wage earners were 37.5%, the self-employed were 18.75%, and other employees were 18.75%. In terms of annual family income, 12.5% were in the range of 15–25 thousand, 25% in the range of 25–35 thousand, 50% in the range of 35–45 thousand, and 12.5% were in the range of 45 thousand and above. In terms of education, 25%, primary 12.5%, high school 12.5%, PUC 18.75%, diploma/ITI 18.75%, postgraduate 12.75%, and others 6.5%.

How do you know about this Scheme? Chart-02



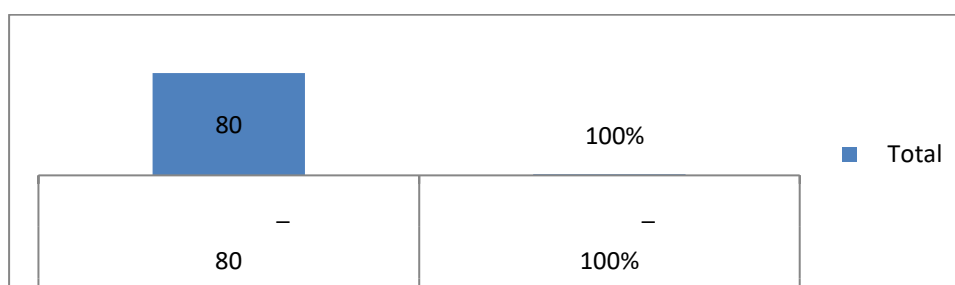
The above statistics from the chart in a discussing it with women in Koppal city, we found that 50% of the women received information about this scheme through the media, 40% through word of mouth, and 10% from both sources combined. After the implementation of the free bus scheme, the people of Karnataka came to know about the Shakti scheme through the media and word of mouth.

RTC Smart Card application? Chart-03



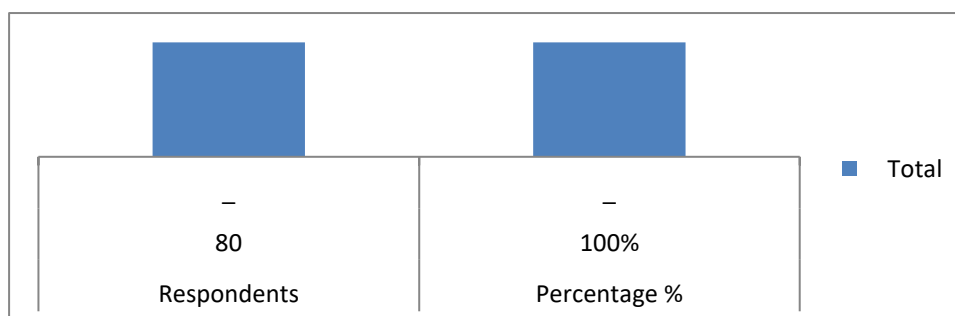
The above statistics from the chart, this study shows that when discussing with the women of Koppal city who were included in the study, 58.75% are using Aadhaar cards, 8.75% PAN cards, 15% ID cards and 23.75% are using other forms of identification. This finding indicates a diverse range of identification methods for women in Koppal City, highlighting the importance of accessible identification options in the region. 75% of the women used all of the above documents.

Has women's dependence on men decreased? Chart-04



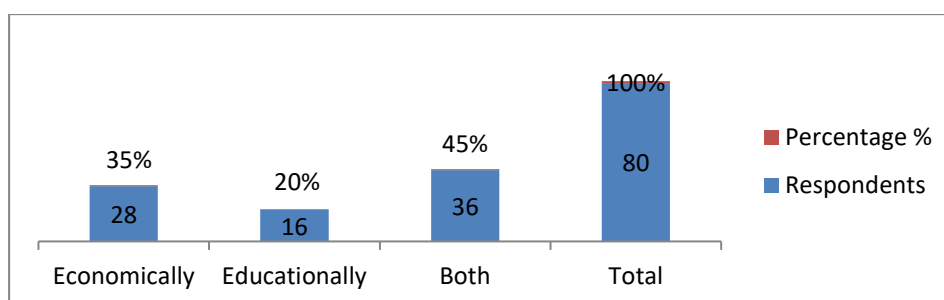
The above statistics from the chart in a discussion with the women of Koppal City, who were the subjects of the study, showed that 100% of these women were previously dependent on men. After this scheme, women's dependence on men decreased. Women were previously dependent on men when travelling by bus, but after the government implemented the free bus scheme, it was observed that the dependence of women on men decreased. This shift indicates a growing sense of independence among women in Koppal City as they are now able to travel freely without relying on male family members. Consequently, this empowerment could lead to increased participation in various aspects of society, further enhancing their role within the community.

Has your family's income situation changed? Chart-05



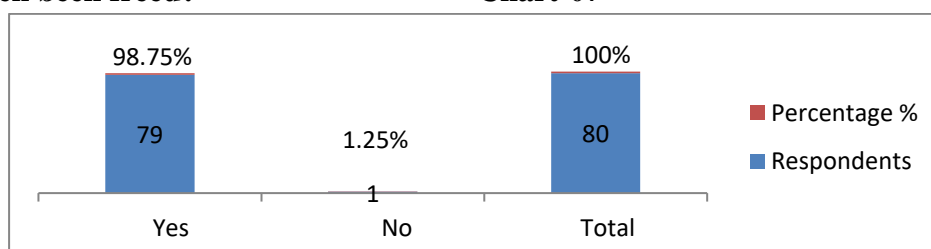
The above statistics from the chart in a discussing it with the women of Koppal City who were included in the study, 100% of the women saw a change in their families' economic status. It can be said that the economic status of women's families has improved due to the free bus scheme, and they are achieving economic growth due to free bus travel for daily jobs and activities. This new mobility has enabled them to access better employment opportunities and engage in income-generating activities, thereby contributing to their families' overall prosperity. As a result, the women expressed a sense of empowerment and increased confidence in their ability to support their households.

How useful is that to you? Chart-06



While discussing the above statistics from the chart with the women of Koppal City who participated in the study, 35% reported that the free travel scheme has helped them financially, 20% stated that it has aided their education, and 45% indicated that it has benefited them in both ways. The free bus scheme has helped women economically by reducing their daily work expenses and has enabled students to travel to schools and colleges. They expressed their opinion that the system saved them in their daily travel expenses. This financial relief has allowed many to allocate resources to other essential needs, thereby improving their overall quality of life. Furthermore, the convenience of accessible transportation has fostered greater participation in educational and professional opportunities, ultimately contributing to a more empowered community.

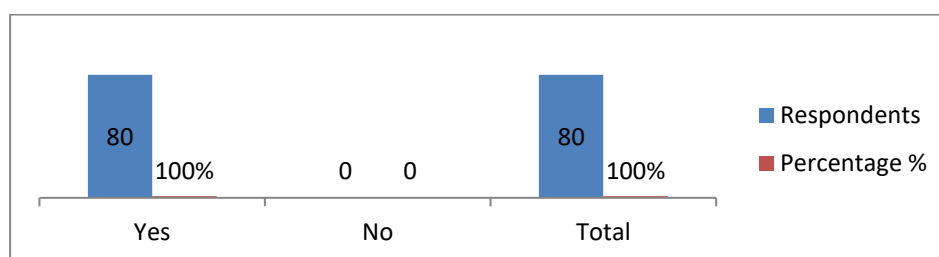
Have women been freed? Chart-07



The above statistics from the chart, in a discussion with women in Koppal City, 99% expressed that they were independent, while 1% said they were not, according to the statistics from the chart. After the implementation of the Shakti scheme, women gained the freedom to travel and participate in daily activities in Karnataka. This newfound independence empowered them socially and contributed to their economic participation, allowing them to access job opportunities and educational resources more readily. As a result, the overall quality of life among women in Koppal City has significantly improved.

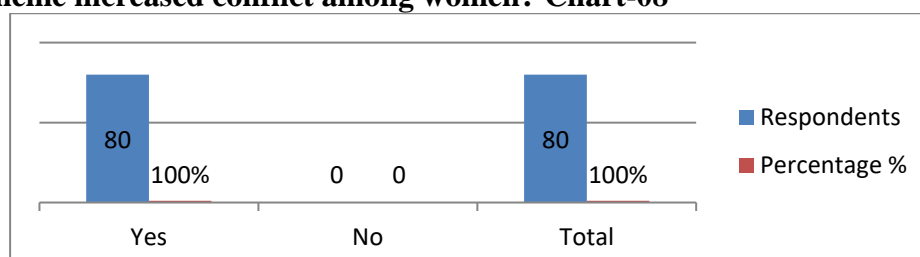
Further, the Shakti scheme allows women to travel across Karnataka, participate in various programs, and see tourist attractions. This initiative promotes tourism and empowers them by providing safe and affordable travel options, thus enabling them to explore the rich cultural heritage of the state.

Are you facing problems with this Scheme? Chart-08



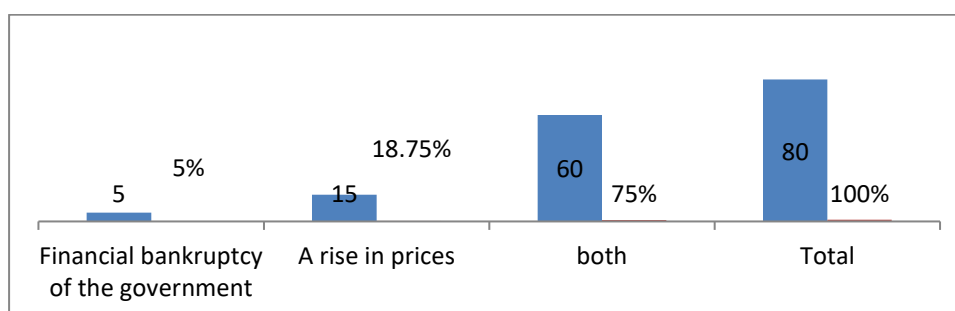
The above statistics from the chart. The women of Koppal City who were included in the study faced various problems on the bus and various types of impacts due to this scheme. Men across Karnataka are facing problems daily because of the free bus (Shakti) scheme, and students travelling to schools and colleges have problems getting a seat on the bus. Students travelling to schools and colleges have daily problems getting a seat on the bus, leading to increased frustration and delays in reaching their destinations. This situation highlights the pressing need for a more effective public transport system that accommodates a growing number of passengers while ensuring a comfortable journey for all passengers.

Has this scheme increased conflict among women? Chart-08



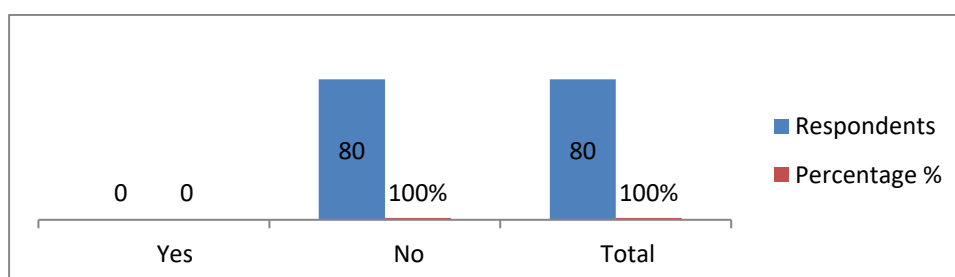
The above statistics from the chart in a discussion 100% of the women reported jostling and fighting for a seat while travelling in buses. Under the Shakti scheme, women experience jostling and fighting while travelling by bus on a daily basis. This situation emphasizes the need to implement better management and additional measures to ensure safer and more comfortable travel experiences for women. Addressing these challenges is essential for promoting equal access to public transport and enhancing the overall quality of travel for all passengers.

What kind of impact will this scheme have in the future? Chart-09



The above statistics from the chart with women in Koppal City, 5% of the people were informed about the financial bankruptcy of the government, 18.75% were informed about the price hike, and 75% expressed the opinion that the above two things would have an impact. The women expressed that if the government continues the Shakti scheme, it may lead to financial bankruptcy and create many problems for citizens in the coming days. They emphasised the need for the government to reassess its financial strategies and consider sustainable alternatives that do not jeopardise the welfare of its citizens.

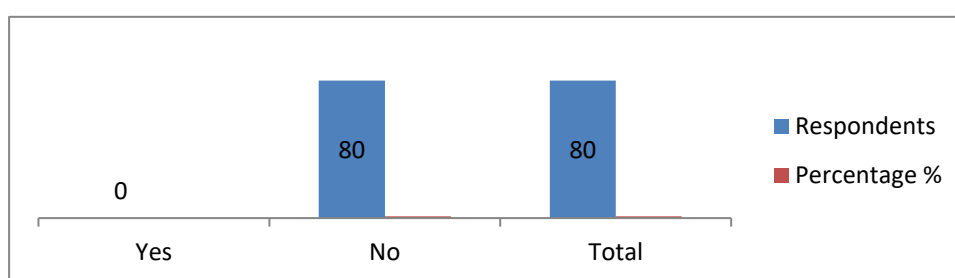
Is this scheme necessary? Chart-10



The above statistics from the chart in a discussion, 100% of the women surveyed indicated that there is no need for the scheme. If the government implements such a scheme, it may lead to a price hike, a tax increase, and various other future problems. Therefore, the need for this scheme can be agreed upon and said to be necessary for marginalised groups, such as

senior citizens, disabled people, transgender people, and school and college students. This highlights that the surveyed women do not see the need for the scheme, but it may still be essential for certain marginalised groups who could benefit from its implementation. Thus, the potential consequences of introducing the scheme must be carefully considered in relation to its perceived necessity among different demographics.

Do you say the government should continue this scheme? Chart-11



The above statistics from the chart, if 100% of the women surveyed continue this scheme, several problems may arise and the government's financial system may be crippled. Therefore, if the government continues free bus travel, there may be an increase in taxes on people and the costs of goods, petrol, diesel, and other items. Therefore, they expressed their opinion that the government should stop continuing this scheme. This suggests that the financial burden of maintaining free bus travel could lead to broader economic consequences such as increased taxes and higher prices for essential goods. Consequently, the surveyed women believed that discontinuing the scheme was necessary to avoid these potential issues.

Findings:

- Until women receive the RTC smart card, they should carry a government-issued identity card to obtain a 'null ticket', which can help avoid unnecessary confusion.
- We encourage women to report any issues or challenges they encounter to the relevant authorities, who will promptly take appropriate action.
- There have been instances of misuse of this scheme by some women; therefore, it is essential to implement appropriate measures against such actions.

- It can be challenging for men attending jobs and students commuting to schools and colleges to travel by bus; hence, the government and relevant authorities should take necessary steps to address this issue.
- It should be mandatory to allocate 50% of seats for both women and men.
- The scheme should be expanded to include all students, regardless of their age or educational institution. This expansion will provide significant advantages to students from rural areas and low-income families.
- Consider the possibility of offering free bus services to senior citizens, particularly those residing in remote areas or those with limited mobility.
- Increasing the frequency of buses is essential to alleviate crowding and reduce waiting times, especially during peak morning and evening hours and on popular routes.
- Implement measures to enhance passenger safety, such as installing CCTV surveillance, establishing emergency management systems, and conducting regular vehicle inspections.
- Conduct awareness campaigns to inform passengers about their rights, responsibilities, and safety guidelines.
- Continuously monitor the scheme's performance to identify areas needing improvement and to address emerging challenges effectively.
- Gather feedback from passengers, bus operators, and other stakeholders to refine the scheme and ensure that it meets their needs.
- The initiative must adapt to changing circumstances and evolving passenger expectations to meet their needs. By fostering collaboration between all parties involved, the scheme can create a safer, more reliable transport environment that encourages greater public usage and enhances overall satisfaction.

Conclusion: The Shakti scheme reduces the financial burden on women by reducing transportation costs. This allows women to travel easily to work, education, health facilities, and other essential places. This enables women to find employment opportunities and contributes to the economy. In this regard, the study found that 100% of women reported struggling and jostling for seats while travelling on buses. If 100% of women continue with this scheme,

several problems may arise and the government's finances may be crippled. Implementing and maintaining free bus travel can be costly for local authorities, and the Shakti scheme can lead to congestion and reduce the quality of service, if not managed effectively. Therefore, an alternative solution could be to extend affordable or concessional fares for marginalized or vulnerable groups instead of providing free travel.

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