

Less delay on city roads as traffic police make smart tweaks

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Chennai: Inventive tweaks and embrace of technology have brought traffic delays across the city dramatically down from upto 30 minutes to negligible levels, reveals a 2023 study. Not just delays, even the frequency of such slowdowns are far less than earlier.

The team from Loyola college's department of statistics, which studied the travel time on Anna Salai, Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) and T Nagar, said motorists earlier faced delays (of three or more minutes) at all key intersections at least three times a day. In some locations like Thoraipakkam, delays were recorded up to 25 times a day.

But a slew of interventions by the Greater Chennai Traffic Police (GCTP) in the last six months has brought down the delay time to zero at some intersections and it is minimal at other locations. Vehicles get stuck in traffic only twice or thrice a day, that too only during peak hours, said K Prathibaa, a traffic expert, who guided the Loyola statistics team.

GCTP has attributed this to use of Google's live traffic monitoring tool, a paid and advanced version of traffic map, which can precisely locate congestions. Using this information, a traffic control centre at GCTP headquarters in Vepery alerts the local team, headed by assistant commissioners. They immediately deploy additional workforce and introduce minor traffic changes to streamline vehicular flow.

"For example, in Koyambedu, we unplugged a traffic signal and in Maduravoyal, encroachments were removed to widen the motorable road space. Such measures brought down travel time," said R Sudhakar, additional commissioner of police, GCTP.

“Besides, we also adopted a traffic signal synchronization technique to reduce stops and ensure that the maximum number of vehicles pass through,” he said.

The Google live map tool currently shows that only two stretches in the city -- OMR near Apollo-Lifeline signal and VR Mall-Padi junction at Thirumangalam -- witness major delays frequently and GCTP is planning to introduce newer interventions here.

Under this technique, police coordinate the functioning of all green lights (in traffic signals) at successive intersections in a stretch. Therefore, if motorists maintain a steady speed, they will cross the stretch without halting anywhere. Only if they speed up, they will get caught in a red signal.