Geography · GS - I

How is efficient and affordable urban mass transport key to the rapid economic development in India?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Urban productivity; labour mobility; congestion reduction; public transport; metro and bus systems; affordable accessibility; air pollution; employment; transit-oriented development; economic inclusion; sustainable urbanisation

Model Answer

Introduction

Efficient and affordable urban mass transport enables large numbers of people to travel safely and economically between homes, workplaces, educational institutions and markets. As Indian cities expand, reliable public transport becomes essential for productivity, inclusion and sustainable economic growth.

Importance for Economic Development

1. Higher Productivity

Congestion wastes time, fuel and productive working hours. Reliable buses, metro systems and suburban rail reduce travel uncertainty and allow workers and businesses to operate more efficiently.

2. Better Labour-Market Access

Affordable transport connects people to jobs beyond their immediate neighbourhoods. It expands employment opportunities for low-income workers, women and residents of peripheral settlements.

3. Lower Logistics and Economic Costs

Efficient public transport reduces pressure on road networks and can improve the movement of goods and services within cities.

4. Environmental Benefits

Mass transit can reduce private-vehicle dependence, air pollution, fuel consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions, particularly when supported by clean energy and integrated urban planning.

5. Inclusive Urban Growth

Affordable fares improve access to education, healthcare and public services. Accessible stations and vehicles also improve mobility for elderly people and persons with disabilities.

6. Improved Land Use

Transit-oriented development can encourage compact urban growth around transport corridors, reducing travel distances and supporting mixed-use neighbourhoods.

Challenges and Solutions

High capital costs, weak last-mile connectivity, fragmented transport planning and inadequate maintenance can undermine effectiveness. Cities need integrated ticketing, feeder services, safe walking and cycling infrastructure, reliable buses and coordinated land-use planning.

Public transport investments should also be supported by transparent financing and sound operational management.

Conclusion

Affordable and efficient mass transport is productive infrastructure, not merely a mobility service. By connecting workers to opportunities, reducing congestion and improving environmental quality, it can accelerate India's urban economic development while making cities more inclusive and liveable.