

✘ [Marine Drive in Bombay](#), better known as the Queen's Necklace (pictured), is one of the most beautiful waterfronts in the world. That's why it is so depressing to learn that the Maharashtra state government seems to want to destroy it. [Per DNA India](#), the state's chief minister, Prithviraj Chavan, is meeting with Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to gain approval for the six-lane structure, which Chavan says will be "built on stilts." *Yecch.*

Like most megacities, and particularly megacities in the Global South, Bombay has terrible traffic problems, but you can't engineer your way out of the problem, especially in cities with a topography like Bombay's, which sits at the tip of a peninsula. If you are really trying to reduce traffic, a better way has been mooted by Delhi, whose traffic is even worse: the Union capital has [recently proposed a congestion charge](#):

Delhi may soon become the first city in the country to levy congestion charges on vehicles following the recommendation of a special team constituted by the Delhi High Court to address the capital's growing traffic woes.

Delhi has almost 70 lakh [7 million] vehicles, which is more than what the other three metros together have. Plus, there are 11 lakh [11 million] vehicles entering the capital everyday from adjoining towns, slowing average speed on its roads to a crawling 12 kmph. The best way to deal with it is to slap a traffic congestion fee on vehicles that will encourage people to use public transport, feels the high-power special task force, constituted by the high court to minimise congestion, reduce pollution and ensure equitable access to all classes of vehicles.

"There is congestion and we are looking at various things to reduce it," Delhi's Principal Secretary and Transport Commissioner RK Verma told ET. "We are studying in detail the plans for congestion charges which are at a conceptual stage," he added. Government officials said that the special team has proposed different options to introduce the congestion charges in the city based on the principle of "those who congest must pay".

India needs better infrastructure, but building a horrific six-lane elevated road along its most significant topographical feature doesn't seem to be the best way to do it.

During the 1950's and 1960's, American cities cut themselves off from their waterfronts, blighting their downtowns with concrete (think FDR Drive in New York City, Charles River Drive in Boston etc.) and impairing their downtown life. Some cities, like Portland, [have been wise enough to remove the concrete](#) (sometimes at great cost) and create amenities like [McCall Waterfront Park](#). Bombay's issues are different, and it is wrong to insist that they learn from our mistakes — they will have to make their own. But this one seems like something to avoid. Surely the money could be used to employ thousands of Indians in more useful infrastructure projects.