Aizawl, India

Technical Assistance — Ongoing

Basic information

Urban area	→	129 km²
Population	→	370,000 (2020)
Growth rate	→	+2.16% (from 2011 to 2020)
GDP per capita	→	USD 2,540 (Mizoram State, 2022-23)
Baseline motorisation	→	Unknown
Modal share		
Formal public transport	→	8%
Informal public transport	→	13%
Walking	→	31%
Private cars	→	8%
Private motorbikes or 2-wheelers	→	40%
Transport GHG emissions per capita	→	2.9 tCO2eq national level
Exposure to climate change	→	HIGH

Context

Aizawl, the capital of the mountainous, landlocked state of Mizoram in northeastern India, has undergone rapid, largely urban growth. This development has placed increasing pressure on the city's infrastructure and essential services, with the transport sector facing particularly acute challenges. Mobility in Aizawl is predominantly road-based, and although a state-owned bus service operates in the city, it is overshadowed by a steep rise in private vehicle ownership, from about 52,000 in 2011 to nearly 186,000 in 2020. The city's steep terrain and narrow roads further intensify congestion, posing concerns for safety, accessibility, and environmental sustainability.

The public transport system remains limited in capacity and quality, marked by outdated buses, irregular service frequencies, and weak connectivity across the urban area. As a result, many residents rely on private cars and motorcycles, which compounds congestion and constrains mobility options. In several densely populated neighbourhoods, the lack of pedestrian infrastructure adds to mobility and safety challenges. High transport costs and limited capacity for physical infrastructure expansion further complicate the city's mobility landscape.

To effectively tackle pressing transport challenges, the Government of Mizoram, in collaboration with Aizawl Municipal authorities, has embarked on a robust planning and investment strategy to revolutionise the transport network. A pivotal aspect of this initiative is the formulation of a

Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) with support from the ADB-supported Sustainable Urban Transport Project. This plan identifies urban cable cars as a visionary solution to navigate the city's steep terrain and address the constraints of limited road expansion. The CMP outlines the development of three strategically designed ropeway corridors to deliver reliable, low-emission, terrain-sensitive mobility in areas where conventional transportation methods are significantly hindered.

To enhance and implement these innovative proposals, Aizawl has secured funding from MobiliseYourCity donors for an insightful study tour in France scheduled for June 2024[1]. Organised by ADB and AFD, this tour provided the representatives from Aizawl City and the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department (UD&PA) with the opportunity to examine successful cable-propelled transit systems in Toulouse and the Créteil area of the Paris Region. The valuable insights gained from this experience not only informed the development of Aizawl's planned ropeway network but also equipped the city for robust technical assistance from ADB. This transformative approach positions Aizawl at the forefront of sustainable urban mobility, paving the way for a more accessible and environmentally friendly future.

Building on these learnings, ADB has proposed a dedicated technical assistance package to strengthen the development of the urban ropeway system. This support focuses on reviewing and refining existing feasibility and detailed project reports to meet ADB standards, providing a specialised advisory "hotline" for local counterparts, and assisting in the preparation of bidding documents and operation and maintenance (O&M) contract frameworks.

Support from the Partnership

Technical Assistance: Project Preparation - Cable car technical review and advisory consultancy
Funded by: Asian Development Bank (ADB)
Implemented by: ADB
Local counterpart: the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation Department (UD&PA), the Government of Mizoram (GOM), and Aizawl City
Project start: 2025 Q2
Expected project completion: 2026 Q3 (16 months' timeline)

Supported activities:

- Study tour to France, visiting cable car projects in Toulouse and Créteil (Paris Region)[2]
- Cable car technical review and advisory consultancy

Completed outputs:

- 6 January 2025: The Aizawl-Sairang-Lengpui cable-car project was formally introduced by the Government of Mizoram; a high-level meeting chaired by Lalduhoma (Chief Minister) discussed its feasibility, linking the state capital to the railway station and airport.[3]
- January 2025: In the same meeting, officials considered whether the project would be executed through the tourism department or incorporated into the Aizawl Sustainable Urban Transport Project (ASUTP) under the Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation Department (UD&PA) with external funding.[4]
- June 2025: The Governor of Mizoram led discussions with the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) and UD&PA on ropeway options under the Parvatmala Pariyojana — the national programme promoting ropeways in hilly and remote terrain.[5]

[1] https://www.mobiliseyourcity.net/expanding-reach-aizawl-india-kaduna-nigeria-and-fundacion-despacio-empower-partnership
[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qh13JZRsio&feature=youtu.be
[3] https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/mizoram-news/mizoram-government-explores-ropeway-and-cable-car-project-to-connect-ai-zawl-sairang-and-lengpui
[4] https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/mizoram-government-explores-ropeway-and-cable-car-for-better-connectivity/?utm_source
[5] https://www.adb.org/projects/54335-001/main

Insights from practice: Project Takeaways

Study tour demonstrates that cable cars operate as viable urban public transport systems.

The 2024 study tour to the Téléo cable car in Toulouse (operational since 2022) and the C1 cable car project in Greater Paris (to be commissioned in 2025) provided direct exposure to real-world implementation and operations. The visits confirmed that urban cable cars can function as fully integrated components of metropolitan public transport networks, rather than merely as tourist infrastructure. They illustrated how cable systems can deliver low-carbon, space-efficient mobility solutions, particularly in constrained urban environments or areas with complex topography.

Strategic integration determines project relevance and performance.

A central lesson from implementation experience is that cable projects must be embedded within a broader urban mobility strategy. Their effectiveness depends on integration with existing and planned public transport networks, fare systems, and interchange hubs. Urban cable systems require high service availability, universal accessibility, and operational compatibility with other modes. Technical parameters, such as boarding times and headway constraints, directly influence capacity and must be addressed early in design. Technology selection (monocable vs tricable systems) must account for local capacity requirements, wind exposure, alignment constraints, and long-term service objectives.

Safety standards and stakeholder engagement secure project acceptance

Implementation experience underscores that safety is non-negotiable in urban cable projects. Strict regulatory standards, continuous inspections, and robust maintenance regimes are fundamental to operational reliability and public confidence. Equally decisive is structured stakeholder engagement at every project stage. Early and continuous consultation mitigates opposition, improves design responsiveness to community needs, and strengthens institutional ownership. Successful projects treat communication and participation as core components of implementation rather than as auxiliary tasks.

Early logistical planning and lifecycle management ensure long-term sustainability.

Cable infrastructure requires meticulous work planning and logistical preparation, especially when access constraints complicate the transport of large components. Anticipating construction challenges—such as dismantling and transporting equipment in modular form- reduces delays and cost overruns. Implementation experience also highlights the importance of long-term operation and maintenance planning from the outset. Contracts must align operational responsibilities with maintenance obligations and include provisions for system upgrades and component replacement, ensuring sustained performance over the asset's lifecycle.

Highlights in the past year

Broader connectivity improvements reinforce the rationale for the ropeway.

While distinct from the cable-car plans, the commissioning of the Bairabi–Sairang railway line in 2025 provided Aizawl with its first direct rail connection to India's national railway network, significantly altering the region's transport landscape. This new rail link enhances access to the Sairang area and supports arguments for multimodal integration with any future cable system.

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