

Top Indian IT companies need to intensify action on meeting business travel emission reduction goals.

Among 8 global Indian¹ IT companies assessed based on their carbon reduction emission goals and business travel reduction performance (study period 2019-20 to 2023-24), 5 out of 8 companies have indicated the need for more efforts towards meeting their climate goals. Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) has exhibited an increase in business travel emissions in the FY 2023-24 by 30% compared to FY 2022-23, almost equaling its pre-Covid emission levels. Setting short term business travel emission reduction goals, can help it achieve its overarching climate goals. Cognizant has witnessed an increase in business travel emissions by 30% in FY 2023 compared to FY 2022, in spite of the interventions mentioned in its Environmental Social Governance (ESG) report. In FY 2023, it exceeded its pre-Covid emission levels. Infosys, TechMahindra and Accenture have managed to keep business travel emissions from peaking to pre-Covid 19 levels, however, their recorded emissions in FY 2023-24 have indicated growing trends. These IT companies' business travel emissions performance was studied by cBalance Solutions Pvt Ltd. as part of its efforts towards facilitating the establishment of a "fair travel" ecosystem, given that air travel is found to be one of the major contributors to climate pollution and the infrastructure needed to support transport as a whole intersects with social-ecological justice issues. Despite IT companies identifying business flying as emission hotspots and committing to emission reduction, there is considerable variation in implementing reduction measures and meeting climate goals. Some companies demonstrate robust tracking and mitigation efforts, while others lag behind or focus predominantly on direct and energy-related emissions. National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), an apex body for IT companies, through its study has recognized that indirect emissions account for 60 % of tech companies total emissions, wherein, business travel is the 2nd highest component contributing to these emissions. The NASSCOM study states that business travel emissions along with other key indirect emission categories is at a scale that needs systemic reduction intervention.

Of the other 3 IT companies; Wipro Technologies has proven to be a pioneer in business travel emission reduction among the Indian-headquartered IT companies, since 2015. Its travel policy is inclusive of train travel. Thoughtworks, a US headquartered company, is another noteworthy company making efforts in the direction of experimenting with behavioural change and sustainable travel policy through its engagement with cBalance Solutions as part of the [FairTravel](#) program, an evidence-building business travel reduction program for IT companies. HCL Tech has also reduced its business travel emissions compared to its base year 2019-20 and not exhibited growing trends from the FY 2022-23. HCL Tech can perform better by setting specific business travel reduction targets. Wipro Technologies, Thoughtworks and HCL Tech have reduced their business travel emissions in FY 2023-24 by 71%, 63% and 39% respectively, compared to base FY 2019-20. LTIMindtree has set targets specific to business travel emissions and has exceeded in meeting its reduction targets as per the [Travel Smart Ranking, conducted by Transport & Environments as part of its Travel Smart campaign](#).

¹ Accenture, Cognizant & Thoughtworks though not headquartered in India has significant presence and operations in India.

The unseen reality of airport expansion projects- According to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, an estimated 150,000 acres of land will be required to expand to an additional 200 airports, based on the country's airport expansion plans. Land acquisition for airport projects impacts the health, livelihoods, social interactions and other aspects of human lives, while the sources of food and shelter for other beings (biodiversity) are impacted too. The [report](#) evaluates these impacts and resistance/protests by local communities towards the same, through studying 2 airport expansion projects - Kempegowda International Airport (KIA)/ Bengaluru International Airport (BIAL) in Bengaluru, Karnataka and an airport proposed in Parandur situated in Kanchipuram district, Tamil Nadu.

Based on these learnings, the report presents recommendations for IT companies, policy makers and administrators to catalyse action in the direction of rethinking and reimagining actions to minimize aviation emissions and aviation induced injustices. Some key recommendations are as follows -

For IT companies :

- Align to emission targets recommended by [Science Based Targets Initiative \(SBTi\)](#)
- Measure and benchmark business travel emissions.
- Enforce sustainable travel policies that promote business travel emission reduction options such as flying by economy-class, choosing non-stop flights, train/bus travel, and capping frequent flyer trips.
- Motivate employees via incentives e.g. bonuses for adhering to company emission targets and using low-carbon travel modes.
- Integrate individual and business unit emissions targets, super-flyer rankings, and sustainable travel preferences into travel approval workflows, enabling informed decisions aligned with company emission reduction pathways.
- Integrate business travel carbon price as part of business opportunity cost to make informed decisions that are not solely based on business opportunity but also inclusive of climate impact.

For policy makers and administrators :

- Enhance the current Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure for infrastructure projects by introducing multiple public consultations to ensure that there are adequate opportunities for local communities to share their input.
- Make space for indigenous community member representation on EIA expert committee panels.
- Introduce policies to cap aviation emissions, levy carbon taxes on air travel and discourage airlines from operating short distance flights.
- Prioritize investment in high-speed and enhancement of regional rail infrastructure to encourage train travel instead of short distance flights.
- Integrate 'earth law principles' in existing infrastructure development policies to ensure that the rights of nature's elements (waterbodies, land etc) are recognised and protected.

- Adopt non-aviation centric urban development lenses e.g. redirecting resources from airport construction to green infrastructure and sustainable urban planning to reduce dependence on air travel.
- Support a just transition for aviation workers by offering sustainable livelihood training and making social security provisions.
- Optimize existing airport infrastructure to prevent new airport construction.

The aspiration towards a fairer mobility ecosystem, warrants that all stakeholders envision socio-economically, ecologically and climatically-just roadmaps and exercise their agency to ensure equitable and sustainable travel systems and practices.

Read the detailed report here : [The Urgency and Potential of Aviation Impact in India](#)

Overview of cBalance:

[cBalance.in](#) is a knowledge-centric solutions hub specializing in tool building and strategy development to support the management and mitigation of the impacts of the climate crisis. It works on carbon impact measurement and reduction projects in addition to system change programs; the [Fairconditioning](#) program works on developing and testing sustainable indoor cooling strategies and building the capacity of diverse stakeholders on the same, the [FairTravel](#) program aims at systemically reducing air-travel related emissions of India's IT Companies through capacity building, evidence-based travel policy advocacy, and behavior change.

Media Contact Information:

Savitha Narayanamurthy savitha@cbalance.in

Vinita Rodrigues vinita@cbalance.in