ON A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

On World Children's Day on Sunday, the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad, which is celebrating its platinum year, took underprivileged children of Bhudarpura to Kankaria Lakefront where they enjoyed a balloon ride, train ride and also took the BRTS

NOW, CHECK AUTO FARES, BEST CITY ROUTES ONLINE

A Gujarati living in Pune, Swapneel Shah, has launched a site where one can calculate fares charged by autos in 15 cities

The idea to start taxiautofare.com struck 28-year-old Swapneel after he faced difficulty in commuting in Mumbai and Bangalore

FARE GAME

Over 56,000 fares have been calculated by the site so far

Of these, 3,000 hits have been for Ahmedabad

17,000 fares have been calculated for Mumbai

More than 25,000 people from 50 countries access the website every month, resulting in 3 lakh hits

Taxiautofare.com is user friendly and can also be accessed from mobiles with GPRS

AKSHAY KAUSHAL

Anyone who visits Ahmedabad or any other city for the first time always wonders how much will a trip from the airport or railway station cost. The person also wonders how much — and how long — will he/she have to haggle with auto or taxi drivers. A website launched by a Gujarati now offers freedom from such worries.

Swapneel Shah's *taxiautofare.com* calculates fare of a trip not just from the airport or station, but from any one area to another. Along with the fare, the site also displays the best route of travel between two places on Google Maps.

Currently, it provides taxi and auto fares for 15 cities, including Ahmedabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore. More cities may be added gradually.

The interesting thing about *taxiautofare.com* is that it is very user friendly and can be also accessed from cellphones.

For instance, if you want to check fares for a trip between Vastrapur and Shahibaug, all you have to do is type names of the areas in the fare calculator on site and press enter. In a few seconds, auto and cab charges along with a map will be displayed on the site.

Swapneel (28), a software professional who lives in Pune, said that the idea of starting such a website struck him after he faced difficulty in commuting in Mumbai and Bangalore.

"During my stay in the two cities, I used to travel by auto. I used to be worried that the driver might tamper with the meter and overcharge me. Often, I argued with dishonest drivers and faced the risk of being beaten up by such people," he said. "Later, I thought — how about a free service that can help people determine fares beforehand. I felt such a service would save people, especially those who are visiting a new city, from being cheated."

Taxiautofare.com was launched on October 1 and so far more than 56,000 fares have been calculated. Of these, about 3,000 hits are for Ahmedabad. Swapneel said that starting the site proved to be a tough task.

"The biggest challenge was to create a database of various areas, routes and fares charged by autos and cabs in different cities. The idea was to cover not just major areas and landmarks, but all known places and destinations within a city," the 28-year-old said. "Marking so many routes on Google Maps was also a task."

Interestingly, users of the site help its team update fares regularly. "I now plan to provide auto and taxi charges for travel between two cities. I also want to start a cab booking service on the site," he said.

HOW THE WEBSITE WORKS

1 Visit *taxiautofare.com* and pick your city

2 Type name of the place you wish to travel to

3 In secs, the site will display auto, taxi fares

4 It will also display the best route of travel