**Need For More Bus Public Transport And Last Mile Connectivity In Bangalore**

In Bangalore, buses form the backbone of the public transport infrastructure. The current operational metro network is 74 km long, in contrast, BMTC’s operational jurisdiction extends far beyond the outer limits of BBMP. From school and college students, daily wage earners to white collar employees at large IT firms, buses are the preferred mode of transport for lakhs of people travelling within Bangalore. Pre-pandemic the BMTC would record 30-35 Lakh commuters per day. The Shakti scheme gave BMTC’s ridership a massive boost, increasing the number of women travellers to upto 15 lakhs per day. The BMTC forms the backbone of public transportation in Bangalore, but it suffers from some key systemic challenges.

BMTC has a bus fleet size of 6,132 buses, including non-AC, AC and electric buses. This fleet has been stagnant since 2017, a fact highlighted by the Directorate of Urban Local Transport.. However, the number of buses available to the general public is only 5,102 (excluding the buses allocated to charter services), owing to crew shortages and soaring diesel prices. BMTC’s fleet size has been unable to keep pace with the growing demands, and its inefficient payments infrastructure remains largely cash-dependent, resulting in several inefficiencies and inconveniences for both passengers and conductors. For example, citizens have been refused service when offering to pay for tickets using UPI.

The BMTC operates fewer schedules than it used to before the pandemic. In the face of poor public transportation, the residents of Bangalore have no option but to take matters into their own hands. There has been an explosive growth in private two and four wheelers choking Bangalore’s roads, leading to congestion, pollution, and increasing travel times.

According to data on BMTC’s website, 51 “metro feeder” route schedules exist, which are supposed to act as feeder services for commuters residing near terminal metro stations. However, the bus infrastructure is poorly integrated with the metro and other public transport, leading to inefficiencies. For example, metro terminal stations like Nagasandra, Chalaghatta, and Silk Institute lack any useful metro feeder bus services. The bus routes that exist are extremely infrequent.

Finally, the BMTC services reduce in frequency after the evening peak hours, leading to longer wait times, overcrowding, and little safe public transportation for women.

The BMTC has the capacity to be a key service to the people of Bangalore, moving the metropolis as it grows. Some key improvements in the system must be made for this goal to be achievable.

**Proposed Solutions**

**1. Payment Integration** :

Despite its pivotal role in the city’s transportation network, commuters have experienced rude behaviour from conductors, particularly when unable to provide exact change. In Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai SBI-NCMC cards can be used to make payments on both metro and bus networks of the respective cities. BMRCL launched its version of the NCMC card with RBL Bank in 2023. The BMRCL NCMC cannot be used to make payments on BMTC Buses as BMTC has failed to integrate the NCMC card into its ticketing infrastructure. The BMTC has failed to implement UPI in 100% of its operational bus fleet. In many instances, conductors have cited technical issues with UPI or have outright refused UPI as a mode of payment for tickets. A shared payment medium between BMRCL and BMTC and 100% certainty of being able to perform UPI payments on BMTC Buses is the critical need of the hour for all commuters. Cashless payments improve the commuter experience, the efficiency of ticket collections, as well as time taken to make payments.

**2. Improved last-mile connectivity:**

Improper integration between BMTC and BMRCL causes last-mile connectivity problems for commuters within 1-3 kilometres of metro stations. Other metropolises in the country have developed ingenious solutions to the same, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has tied up with Uber to provide shuttle services to bridge the last mile connectivity. BMTC should explore similar private tie-ups or work out Public-Private models to fill the last mile gap. It is important to advertise this gap in short-range transportation as a gap that needs to be filled by reliable and safe transport options.

**3. Reduction in frequency of buses after evening peak hours leading to longer wait times for buses leading to overcrowding:**

It is essential to coordinate BMTC bus timings with metro services, ensuring seamless connectivity from 5 AM to 11 PM. A comprehensive study of staff and bus availability during off-peak hours can help optimize resource allocation. Understanding passenger behaviour during both peak and off-peak times will enable the rationalization of overlapping bus routes, allowing for the redistribution of buses to routes with higher demand. This strategy will also facilitate extending services to underserved areas within the network. Additionally, improving real-time bus tracking apps, similar to the Chalo App implemented in Mumbai’s BEST buses, can provide passengers with greater convenience and confidence in public transportation.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, addressing the challenges facing BMTC’s public transport system and enhancing last-mile connectivity is crucial to improving the overall mobility experience in Bangalore. With the city's growing population and increasing reliance on personal vehicles, the need for a robust and efficient public transportation system has never been greater.

Integrating payment solutions across BMTC and BMRCL, exploring public-private partnerships for last-mile connectivity, and optimising bus schedules to align with metro services are essential to ensure accessibility, convenience, and safety for all commuters.

It is important to recognise buses as the cost-efficient public transportation solution they are. Priority bus corridors cost only five crores per km, compared to the 275 crores per km required for metro rail. By implementing these changes, BMTC can better serve the city's diverse population, reduce traffic congestion, and create a more sustainable urban transport network.

**ABOUT US**

Make Parliament Great Again (#MPGA) is a citizen’s initiative that aims to raise public issues with representatives & decision makers from across the political spectrum with an objective of reclaiming Parliament as the House of the People.

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