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Multi-modal transport working? DULT to see

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Commuters on a BRTC bus (File photo), experts say a shift to public transport can help reduce congestion

By Melvin Mathew

Experts say unified transport authority like TFL in London can aid transport system in city

The Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) is conducting a study of multi-modal integration across three locations in Bengaluru. The study aims to identify various challenges involved with the implementation.

DULT Commissioner, Manjula V, said “We are conducting studies in Whitefield, Byappanahalli, and Majestic. The data collection stage is over. We hope to explore aspects like easy access to transport and the issues and challenges regarding the implementation of the project. We were asked by the state government to explore multi-modal integration for Byappanahalli, but we are doing it in Majestic and Whitefield as well.”

DULT is also funding a separate study on multi-modal integration conducted by RITES. They hope to conclude the study by December-end or January 2023. This is a novel method to ensure seamless connectivity of different modes of public transport meeting distance-travel and last-mile connectivity at the same time. It is also expected to lead to a greater shift to public transport and reduce congestion in the city. Irrespective of crores being put into road infrastructure, congestion cannot be reduced without a larger shift to public transport.

Dr Ashish Verma, Convenor, IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab, said, “Multi-modal integration is inevitable in Tier 1 and 2 cities. We already have different phases of the metro under construction, suburban railways are slowly progressing, and we have an existing bus service. This type of integration allows seamless travel. However, to bring about the change, there is a need for policy-level interventions as well as operational-level. There is a need for timely service, dedicated lanes for buses, and disincentivising private transport usage.”

He added that physical integration between these modes is another key aspect. In terms of infrastructure, there is a need to ensure easy accessibility between transport modes. Commuters should be easily able to

jump from one mode to another, he said. Such a system, he explained, will allow commuters to depend largely on a sustainable mode of transport.

Experts also feel that there is a need to address basic issues before conducting a complete overhaul of the system. “In airports, from boarding a flight to reaching your destination, everything is coordinated by different groups. We need a similar approach within the city. For example, commuters should be able to take the buses and utilise skywalks to reach metro stations. Adequate parking infrastructure and taxi/auto stands should be provided near transport hubs. We would also need real-time tracking and updates about the transport,” said urban mobility expert, Sanjeev Dyamannavar.

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Aloke Mukherjee, Senior Associate World Resources Institute (WRI), noted that most of the congestion on Bengaluru roads is due to an increase in private vehicles. “Bengaluru has seen a big jump from 13 lakh vehicles in 2001 to over a crore today, he said. “Only a pivotal shift towards public transport is an actual solution to congestion. There is also a need for bringing a unified payment system for all transport modes as well. We need to establish a unified transport authority like TFL (Transport for London) in London to enable a birds-eye view of transport in the city. It also means developing an inclusive transport system,” said Mukherjee.