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## One more for the road? May not be a good idea

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Peak-hour rush: File photo of a traffic jam at Hebbal

**As city registers 7% rise in registration of new vehicles, experts say rise in private vehicles, poor public infrastructure do not bode well for sustainable transportation**

According to the Transport Department's data, around 3.9 lakh vehicles were registered in Bengaluru in 2021-22 compared to 3.7 lakh in 2020-21, indicating an increase of around 7%. The number shows that the rate of registration of new vehicles in the city is picking up pace again.

Interestingly, in 2020-21, the rate of registration has fallen by nearly 40% compared to the previous year. While around 6.1 lakh new vehicles were registered in 2019-20, this number had gone down to 3.7 lakh in 2020-21.

When it comes to newly registered cars, the registration rate has gone up by 16% in 2021-22. While around 95,000 cars were registered in 2020-21, this number went up to 1.1 lakh in 2021-22.

Experts say an increase in registration of private vehicles or overall vehicles on road is not a good sign if we are aiming at sustainable transportation. According to Dr Ashish Verma, professor, Sustainable Transportation (IST) Lab, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), we are staring at a lost opportunity.

### Lost opportunity

"The covid-19 lockdown and its cascading impact on reduced traffic should have been used as an opportunity by the city government to boost public transport. While we should have improved on public transport infrastructure, we rather used that golden chance to concentrate on white topping of the city roads, which went unabated throughout the two years," lamented Dr Verma.

As per the data, though the number of newly registered vehicles is the second lowest in the last decade, experts say this increase points to an upward trend over the coming years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of new vehicles registered</b>	<b>Percent increase/decrease over last year</b>
<b>2012-13</b>	<b>4,93,858</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>4,95,961</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>2014-15</b>	<b>5,52,768</b>	<b>11.5</b>
<b>2015-16</b>	<b>5,85,887</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	<b>6,24,473</b>	<b>6.6</b>
<b>2017-18</b>	<b>5,97,389</b>	<b>-4.3</b>
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>6,44,078</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>2019-20</b>	<b>6,10,946</b>	<b>-5.1</b>
<b>2020-21</b>	<b>3,72,226</b>	<b>-39.1</b>
<b>2021-22</b>	<b>3,98,701</b>	<b>7.1</b>

“Presently, we are in the covid recovery period. Our economy is recovering and so is our daily life, as we get back to normalcy. Thus, while some buyers might have planned to buy a vehicle during the pandemic and pushed it then, might now be considering purchasing the vehicle. The pandemic has also fuelled our affinity for private transport mode. This behaviour will only push the number of private vehicles up over the coming year,” said another city-based public transport expert.

#### **Public transport**

With a slew of public transport projects either remaining pending or moving at a snail’s pace, experts say a city of this size requires a public transport network of over 300 kilometres for its residents to make it their

preferred mode of transport.

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– Public transport expert

They rue that the city governance has put road infrastructure projects in mission mode, which will further hamper the cause of sustainable transportation.

“The fact that the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is considering many new flyovers to decongest Bengaluru is unfortunate. The public infrastructure projects, and not the road projects, should be taken up in mission mode. For a city the size of Bengaluru, we need to have at least 200-250 kilometres of an operational metro network system for the public to find it attractive. However, we currently have only 56 km. This can happen only when the decision-makers prioritize public transport infrastructure,” added Dr Verma.