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## BENGALURU NEWS

### Karnataka Budget: Will government reduce bus fares?

A city-based NGO, Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike (BBPV) held a public hearing on the concerns of bus commuters, and in a report said that Bengaluru city has one of the highest charges for bus commute in the country.



As per the study conducted by the group, in Bengaluru, the minimum fare for the first 5km in a non-AC BMT bus is ₹15. (AP)

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By [HT Correspondent](#), Bengaluru

Ahead of the Karnataka budget on March 4, a public transport advocacy group has started a petition demanding that the state government allocate ₹1,000 crore to Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMT) so that bus fares in the city can be reduced by half for women, transgenders and senior citizens.

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concerns of bus commuters, and in a report said that Bengaluru city has one of the highest charges for bus commute in the country.

As per the study conducted by the group, in Bengaluru, the minimum fare for the first 5km in a non-AC BMTC bus is ₹15, compared to ₹10 in Pune (PMPML), ₹10 in Delhi (DTC), ₹5 in Mumbai (BEST) and ₹6 in Chennai (MTC). This is despite the BMTC not revising fares since 2014.

“Public transport is an essential service enabling access to work, education, healthcare. BMTC fares, the highest in India, are strangling the working class. BBPV is campaigning to demand lower bus fares for all and free travel for women, BMTC is the most expensive city bus service in the country. A significant reduction in bus fares will provide common people the essential support needed to access economic opportunities and improve their lives,” the petition read.

“Students are dropping out of education. Even families with two earning members are struggling to meet basic needs or care for elders. Single woman-headed households are left with very little for other needs after spending on travel. HIV and terminally ill patients from vulnerable sections are finding it difficult to get essential medical care,” the petition added.

The campaign began following a public hearing on the problems of bus commuters held on February 23. Based on the hearing, a panel of the BBPV decided to start a campaign demanding a reduction of fares by half.

The panel, comprising mobility experts, including Professor Ashish Verma from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and social activists such as Cynthia Stephen, pointed out that the bus fares are unaffordable for the poor in the city. The fact that the government is treating BMTC as a ‘for-profit’ organisation is the main reason behind it, they said at a press conference last Thursday.

“The social and economic costs of high ticket fares and service gaps in bus services are not properly understood. These have a multilayered impact affecting livelihoods, health care, education, etc. People using public transport are doing the city a public service by not contributing to traffic congestion, pollution or accidents in the city. Instead of compensating them for this service, we are making them pay a high price for it,” read a statement from the organisation.

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