

BENGALURU

Commuters demand free bus service for women, lower fares in Bengaluru

Special Correspondent

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At a public hearing on bus transport, commuters say they cannot afford ₹ 1,050 for a monthly pass on their meagre earnings



On a daily basis, most of the working class people depend on buses to commute to and from their workplaces. However, travelling in Bengaluru becomes a costly affair for many as bus fares here are the highest among all major metro cities including Mumbai and Delhi. While the price of a BMC ticket for only 5 km is ₹15, it is less than ₹10 in Mumbai and Chennai.

At a public hearing organised by the Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike, citizens who depend on BMC to commute to work demanded that the State government should provide free bus travel for women and reduce the existing fare by 50% in Bengaluru. People from various walks of life including pourakarmikas, Ashas, domestic and garment workers said that the existing fare structure is unaffordable.

Lakshmi who works as a pourakarmika said she has to spend ₹1,050 for a monthly pass to travel by bus. “I am unable to meet family expenses. It will help if the government provides free bus passes for women,” she said. Pushpa, a domestic worker, who participated in the hearing had a similar story. “I earn ₹5000 per month of which ₹1050 goes for a monthly bus pass,” she said.

Regular commuters questioned BMTC’s decision to reduce fares for only AC buses. “Why wasn’t this done for non-AC buses that poorer sections of society depend on,” they enquired.

It is sad that one of the richest cities in the country can’t provide an affordable public transport system, said Dr Manu V Mathai of Azim Premji University. He highlighted the huge disparity in BMTC buses and private vehicles plying on the road. “The city has 80 to 90 lakh private vehicles whereas there are hardly 6,000 buses,” he said.

Observe ‘Bus priority week’

Prof Ashish Verma, convenor, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Sustainable Transportation Lab suggested that BMTC observe ‘Bus priority week’ to promote public transport in the city. He also demanded the government not to treat BMTC as a corporate body, but as a public service entity.

Participants also addressed other grievances such as lack of sufficient buses in areas where working class people reside and last mile connectivity. “Several workers who live in Bovipalya beyond Sarjapur travel long distances for over an hour every day for work. They leave their homes at 5 am, take shared autos, reach bus stands, and then board the bus to go to Marathahalli, Bannerghatta Road, and other localities, Shanthamma.

Some participants also raised the issue of bus crew not allowing school children to board buses.

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