

Short bus travel costliest in Bengaluru, says report

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Bengaluru: Among the major Indian cities, Bengaluru has the highest bus fare for short trips.



This was revealed in a study conducted by Bus Prayanikara Vedike (BBPV), an NGO campaigning for better bus services. In Bengaluru, the minimum fare for the first 5km in a non-AC Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTc) bus is Rs 15, compared to Rs 10 in Pune (PMPML), Rs 10 in Delhi (DTC), Rs 5 in Mumbai (BEST) and Rs 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 fare for all and free travel for women,” the NGO said in a statement.

On Tuesday, BBPV conducted a public hearing to make BMTC services affordable and accessible for all. Many participants said bus fare should be nil for women passengers, like in Tamil Nadu.

Lakshmi, a pourakarmika, said: “Free bus travel will be a boon for single woman-led households. Spending Rs 1,050 on a monthly pass reduces the already limited funds for education, milk and food for children.”

Tara Krishnaswamy of the NGO Citizens For Bengaluru, said making bus travel free for women can also help reduce the dropout rate among girls.

Lakshamma, another participant, said: “Volvo bus fare was recently reduced by half. How come fare for regular buses, used by the urban poor and common people, hasn’t come down?”

How about bus priority week with free rides?

Ashish Verma, professor of transport engineering at Indian Institute of Science, said there is a service gap in BMTC services that is taking a toll on socio-economic parameters. “Students are missing classes, leading to dropout rates, workers are reporting late to work and losing salary, and stage fare discrepancies are making short bus travel expensive.”

He suggested that the government observe a bus priority week. “For one week, one lane of a wider road can be earmarked for buses. And narrow ones can be used only by buses. Also, make bus rides free for all.”

Manu Mathai, assistant professor at Azim Premji University, said bus passengers are doing a public service by not using private vehicles, thus reducing traffic congestion and accidents, and it’s unfair to punish them with high fares.

Sowmya Reddy, Jayanagar MLA, said BMTC should operate mini-buses and also provide better last mile connectivity. “Steps should be taken to make buses safer for people,” she added.