

## **Bengaluru: IISc proposes bus priority week, awaits government approval**

TNN | Feb 24, 2022, 09:02 PM IST



**BENGALURU:** Imagine a week with dedicated lanes for buses and free rides across the city. With Bengaluru consistently figuring in the list of most congested cities in the world, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has proposed to introduce a testbed called ‘bus priority week’ in the city. Ashish Verma, professor & convener, IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab, said on Thursday: “For one week, on every road with two lanes, one should be reserved for buses. Roads with fewer lanes need to be reserved as bus-only streets. We should also make bus travel free for all users during this period. At the end of one week, assessments can be carried out regarding travel time, passenger load and waiting time to ascertain long-term benefits.”

He was speaking to reporters while releasing a jury report prepared after a recent public hearing on high bus fares organised by NGO Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike (BBPV).

He said providing a bus priority lane only on Outer Ring Road will not solve the city’s traffic problems. “This bus priority week concept can be implemented at less than the cost of construction of a flyover. Such a pilot will help the city understand how bus priority impacts ridership, travel time, congestion, pollution, accident levels etc., and provide inputs on policy decisions about mobility,” said Verma.

“We have proposed this idea to agencies like BMTC and DULT. The coordination of multiple government agencies, NGOs and citizens is required to make this initiative a success. We are waiting for a positive response from the government,” he added.

Verma said the government treats BMTC as a profit-making corporation. “BMTC is forced to keep fares high and focus on areas where routes are profitable in the hope of generating more revenue. This is the fundamental reason for unaffordable fares and service gaps in the utility,” he added.

More routes, slashed fare among NGO demands

BBPV said the jury report will be submitted to BMTC and the government. The major demands of BBPV are: reduction in fare by half for general public, free travel for women, transgender community and senior citizens, free student pass allowing travel across the city and not just on specific routes, and additional routes and schedules in places with inadequate services. “We are currently carrying out a signature campaign across the city and demanding at least Rs 1,000 crore allocation for BMTC in the upcoming state budget. The petition will be submitted to the CM and transport minister. BBPV will also meet the opposition leaders to take up this issue,” said Vinay K Sreenivasa of BBPV.