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Bill on formation of Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority evokes mixed response

December 28, 2022 10:39 pm | Updated 10:39 pm IST - Bengaluru

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The response of citizen activists and experts on the adoption of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Bill, 2022, by both Houses of Karnataka's Legislature has been mixed.

The Bill proposes the formation of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority, headed by the Chief Minister, for urban mobility region in the city of Bengaluru for regulation of the development, operation, maintenance, monitoring, and supervision of urban mobility.

The Chief Secretary, heads of various departments (including BBMP, BMRCL, BMTCL, BDA, and others), experts, representatives from civil society groups, and others are part of the proposed authority.

In the past, many attempts have been made to bring various civic agencies and other stakeholders under one roof to provide a seamless public transport system and promote a sustainable transport system.

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The Bill states that multiplicity of institutions, departments and independent legislations that they are bound to follow are currently causing overlap in responsibilities and functions, whereas the National Urban Transport Policy lays down a framework for integration of various functions of institutions and departments to enable holistic transportation planning.

Ashish Verma, convener, IISc. Sustainable Transportation Lab, said: “This was a long awaited and desired step to fix governance issues related to urban transport system. Lack of integration and coordination by the various government agencies have caused many problems. I am happy that the DULT is the secretariat for the BMLTA. It is one agency that spearheaded many sustainable initiatives in the city. However, how the proposed BMLTA is going to be structured, the experts they are going to appoint, and other issues will decide on the effectiveness of functioning of the Authority. Once it is formed, there is a need to take measures on implementation of ongoing public transport projects on a war footing and integration of various public transport modes.”

The Bus Prayanikara Vedike opines that the proposed BMLTA concentrates power in the State government and bureaucracy.

Shaheen Shasa of Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike said: “We are in favour of having an authority for integrated transport planning, but the current Bill shows a complete lack of a coherent vision and purpose. It concentrates power in the State government and in the bureaucracy. The CM is the chairperson and most of the members are State-level bureaucrats. There is no representation for elected representatives of either BBMP (except the Mayor) or other planning areas within the jurisdiction area.”

She added that the proposed BMLTA is anti-decentralisation, which is the core of the 74th constitutional amendment for urban local governance.

“This is also contrary to the spirit of public participation in governance as there is minimal or no role for city government and no space for public participation in planning through ward level engagement in the act. The integration of transport planning with land use planning is also not well laid out or thought through.”

D.T. Devare of Bangalore Environment Trust argued that BMLTA must be made operational immediately because its formation has been inordinately delayed.

“Parking policy and CMP were approved long ago but no signs of their implementation are visible. In the last two months, at least four flyover/road widening projects have been announced without publishing their DPRs and without any public consultation. These four projects must be referred to BMLTA and no work on them should be initiated till BMLTA studies them thoroughly with scientific traffic studies and consideration of all possible alternatives,” he said.

Welcoming the Bill, Vishnu Reddy of Bengaluru Navanirman Party said the infamous traffic jams, lack of last-mile connectivity, and an absence of integrated ticketing are well documented gaps but none of the existing institutions have either the inclination or the accountability to solve these issues.

“The BMLTA with necessary statutory backing is urgently required. The passage of the bill has finally brought some hope towards addressing the traffic woes.”

Prominent objectives of the BMLTA

Promote seamless mobility through sustainable urban transport and integration of land use and transport planning in the Urban Mobility Region by preparing and updating regularly, the Comprehensive Mobility Plan.

Review and approve the City Mobility Investment Program prepared in accordance with the Comprehensive Mobility Plan.

Put in place frameworks, regulations, and mechanisms to establish an effective coordination mechanism, encompassing all strategic and operational matters, among various Urban Transport agencies, Infrastructure Development agencies and Traffic Management agencies providing facilities and services in the Urban Mobility Region.

Cause preparation of plans and implementation of travel demand management measures such as congestion pricing, parking regulations, tolling, special purpose lanes etc. to regulate travel demand.

Adopt standards and guidelines issued by the State Government, Central Government and agencies there-under from time to time

Establish a fully operable monitoring, verification, reporting and evaluation framework to monitor the performance indicators and service level benchmarks, and to ensure effective implementation of policies, plans, regulations related to Urban Mobility by all concerned agencies;

Develop detailed frameworks for financial arrangements between Urban Mobility agencies for planning, project implementation and integrated management of mobility and transport networks

Assign the development, construction, repair, operation, and management of any integrated or stand-alone Urban Mobility facilities and services that aid and enhance the efficiency or service levels of Urban Mobility

Establish appropriate frameworks for engagement of private sector in planning, development and management of mobility service delivery and effective contract execution by the Urban Transport Agencies, Traffic Management Agencies and Infrastructure Development Agencies

Prepare norms for implementation of transportation projects on Public Private Partnership framework or through other financing mechanisms or instruments.



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