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Bengaluru: Expedite Phase 3 Namma Metro with focus on city areas, say experts

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BENGALURU: With BMRCL setting a 2024 deadline for Namma Metro's Phase 2, activists and commuters want Phase 3 planning to be expedited with a focus on city areas.

BMRCL had earlier planned corridors like Carmelaram - Yelahanka, Marathahalli - Hosakerehalli, Bommasandra - Attibele, Gottigere-Basavanapura, RK Hegde Nagar-Aerospace Park and Kogilu Cross-Rajanukunte as part of the Phase 3 project. In the 2018-19 state budget, it was announced that BMRCL will prepare DPR for the 105-km Phase 3 corridor.

In 2019, BMRCL identified three Metrolite corridors under Phase-3: Magadi Road Toll Gate to Kadabagere (13km), Whitefield- Domlur (16km) and Katamnallur Gate (near Hoskote) - Sarjapur Road-Hebbal (52km). In

addition, a 34-km underground Inner Ring corridor and Hebbal to JP Nagar (ORR-West) was also proposed under this phase. In 2020, BMRCL decided to take up two Phase 3 corridors on priority— 13km Magadi Road and 42km JP Nagar-Hebbal.

However, BMRCL is yet to prepare DPR even for one corridor so far. Sources said approvals from the state and Central governments, mobilising funds, land acquisition and identifying contractors will be time consuming. For instance, the DPR of the first phase of the 42-km network (Byappanahalli- Mysuru Road and Nagasandra- Yelachenahalli) was prepared in 2003 but the entire project was finally completed only in 2017.

'Metro should focus on city areas'

Activists said two corridors – Hoskerehalli- Marathahalli and Yelahanka - Carmelaram – which pass through the core city areas should be revived. While Hosakerehalli- Marathahalli line on Old Airport Road is to pass through HAL, Domlur and Town Hall, Yelahanka-Carmelaram corridor will serve areas like Hebbal, Shanthinagar, Dairy Circle, Forum Mall, Koramangala, Iblur and Carmelaram. However, BMRCL kept these two key routes under cold storage reportedly to make way for the controversial elevated corridor project.

BMRCL has recently stated that Metro should focus within BBMP/BDA limits and suburban rail should be extended to nearby districts and satellite towns. Pruthvin Reddy, a commuter rail activist, said: “Hoskerehalli-Marathahalli and Yelahanka - Carmelaram are two crucial Metro lines which were scrapped for the elevated corridor project. We need more Metro lines through CBD areas and BMRCL should focus within the core city areas. BMRCL could plan more Metro or Metrolite corridors instead of elevated corridors to decongest the city. This will help people to access a Metro network every 1-2km,” he said.

BMRCL officials said DPR is being prepared by RITES for two corridors: JP Nagar-Hebbal along Outer Ring Road (ORR West) and Magadi Road, from the toll gate (Hosahalli station) to Kadabagere. BMRCL managing director Anjum Parwez said: “DPR of these corridors will be ready by June. We are planning a total of 317km of Metro rail network by 2030.” At present, only 56km of the network is operational.

Ashish Verma, IISc associate professor (transportation systems engineering), said: “We had suggested a fully underground Inner Ring Metro (IRM) line connecting places like Yeshwantpur, Cantonment, Indiranagar, Koramangala, Ashoka Pillar and Mahalakshmi Layout. In fact, this was included in the Comprehensive Mobility Plan but it was not prioritised. In a circular city like Bengaluru, a spider-web like Metro network is required but unfortunately, the government agencies are doing little to decongest dense core city areas and are focusing on the outskirts. Expansion of the Metro network will decongest the city than road widening and flyover projects.”