

# What can help Bengaluru's Outer Ring Road?

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 **Tini Sara Anien**

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A massive traffic jam on the Outer Ring Road in Bengaluru on Wednesday. A day after the bandh the tech corridor witnessed traffic gridlocks. [Special arrangement](#)

The hours-long gridlock (see box) on Outer Ring Road (ORR) brought attention to the mismanagement of traffic on that stretch.

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The public-private partnership (PPP) model addresses traffic management and road and civic amenities maintenance. It also takes stock of pedestrian facilities like sidewalks, footpaths, and pedestrian crossings, and public engagement. The report has also identified 36 pain points that lead to the traffic snarls in and around ORR.

## Long history

The stretch has a long history of traffic snarls, says Manas Das, president of ORRCA. As the number of companies have increased, so has the number of people and traffic on the road, he points out. "There is no proportionate increase in the road and transportation infrastructure despite the burgeoning traffic. Namma Metro construction has added to the pressure on the roads. Other conditions, like floods, also add to our concerns," he shares.

Manas adds that while these concerns including attention to the 22 ancillary roads leading to ORR are addressed and connectivity is improved, "campaigns to move from personal to public transport would be actively suggested to the companies on the stretch".

## Citizens weigh in

At a glance the report covers important points but there are some loopholes, says Muralidhar Rao, an active member with citizen group Praja-RAAG. "The emphasis is on infrastructure. For politicians, this means flyovers. It doesn't look at how daily commute can be handled. There are supposed to be around 6,000 BMTc buses plying our roads. However, 1,000 of them are not functional. Simultaneously, there are over 50,000 buses licensed as contract carriages in the city, which should be licensed to operate as regular buses," he says.

Muralidhar recalls ZipGo, an on-demand bus service that existed in the city (between 2015 and 2019). More than 50% of the cars in his apartment would stay in the basement when the service existed, he says.

"In the bigger cities of developing countries, more than 70% of traffic is caused by people commuting to work or school. If our public transport system addresses this, half of the traffic congestion can be eased. Not just Namma Metro lines, but proper last-mile connectivity, and well-constructed footpaths for the last few metres covered by foot are mandatory," he says.

Dedicated lanes are not a good solution, he states. "For example, in London, 90% of their transport services are provided by the private sector. They have priority lanes and not dedicated lanes. Restricting lanes to a certain category of vehicles will not help in decongestion," he adds.

## Not cohesive

Dr Ashish Varma, convenor of IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab (IST Lab), agrees with some points but feels that it is not as cohesive as it should be. Though improving signalised junctions and coordination of signals around the corridor are "good measures", he notes that "the proposal says nothing about what the companies located on the stretch can do to improve the situation". "Employer-led initiatives like staggering work timings, segregating opening and closing hours of offices and more flexible working schedules will help solve almost 50% of the problem," he says. Not providing parking space to employees will discourage them from driving their vehicles to work, he adds.

However, nothing will work better than the completion of Metro construction, he believes. "Corridor-level interventions don't work well as there is always a network effect to everything. Traffic decongestion cannot be seen in isolation but has to be seen as a larger urban mobility vision of the city," he says.

## Covers important points

Pawan Mulukutla highlights the "analysis and feasibility study" of the report. "In the long run also, the report talks about improving public transportation and pedestrian safety," says the director of integrated transport, electric mobility and hydrogen, WRI India.

Making the stretch a separate municipal zone will require a lot of legal provisions and acts. However, from a traffic perspective, considering a model of a single zone would be interesting, adds Pawan. "ORRCA's inclusion in the Metro committee is a good suggestion too," he adds.

## What happened?

On September 27, traffic on the Outer Ring Road (ORR) was jammed for almost five hours. According to the traffic department, at least 6 lakh cars hit the ORR and surrounding areas, which is double the 3.33 lakh usually seen on a typical Wednesday. Reasons cited for the jam included the long weekend, waterlogging on potholed roads, and multiple vehicle breakdowns. Traffic snarls on the ORR are a common sight during weekdays, from 8 am to 9 pm.

## 10 ideas to address congestion on ORR

By Srinivas Alavilli

To the Government

Start Purple line metro immediately and operationalise the Yellow line in January 2024.

Introduce metro feeder buses in large numbers, particularly on ORR and Whitefield.

Fix bus stops, junctions and footpaths on ORR, making it safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Long distance buses should not be allowed until 9 pm, and no parking should be allowed on service roads.

To corporates

Incentivise public transport by offering bus/metro passes to employees.

Start charging parking fees inside campuses.

Lease BMTc buses for last-mile connectivity from tech parks to Metro stations.

Open up thoroughfares to enable movement of vehicles.

To commuters

Use public transport at least twice a week as a social responsibility.

To auto unions

Resolve to ply by the meter, as auto rickshaws do outside Mumbai local train stations.

(Srinivas is a campaigner of #Personal2Public, WRI India)

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