

BBMP hopes to complete tunneling for 18-km underground road in Bengaluru in 3 years, experts question its feasibility

Rodic Consultants submitted the DPR for the tunnel road project between Hebbal and Silk Board junction to the BBMP.

Written by [Sanath Prasad](#)
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The tender for civic works will be called in January 2025. (Express file)

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) expects to finish the tunneling work for the 18-km tunnel road project between Hebbal and the Silk Board junction in three years, officials at the civic body told The Indian Express.

Rodic Consultants, which was tasked with preparing the Detailed Project Report (DPR) at a cost of Rs 9.5 crore, submitted the DPR to the BBMP a few days ago. BBMP officials pointed out that, as per the DPR, six tunnel boring machines (TBM) had been recommended to be deployed for the tunnelling works.

Speaking to [The Indian Express](#), BBMP chief engineer BS Prahalad said, “The consultancy firm has completed the DPR and minor changes are being made to it, before it is finalised. Meanwhile, Altinok consultancy firm has just prepared the traffic management plan as part of the pre-feasibility report. The deadline for the mega tunnel road project mainly depends on the number of TBMs that will be deployed and the locations at which they will be deployed.”

He added, “As per the DPR, six TBMs have been recommended to be deployed for the tunnelling works. If we go by the rate of tunnelling 33 metres (over 100 feet) underground and each TBM cutting 1.2 km, we would be completing tunnelling work of 7.2 km a year. By this rate, we expect to complete the tunnelling work of the entire 18 km stretch in 36 months. However, we need a grace period of 12 more months to complete the road works and other works required to operationalise the tunnel road. However, procuring the TBMs and then deploying them for tunnelling is a tedious and time-consuming job.”

Prahalad also stated that the tender for civic works will be called in January 2025.

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S R Umashankar, administrator of BBMP and additional chief secretary of the Urban Development Department, expressed optimism about completing the tunnelling work in three years, citing the progress made under Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRL) projects.

“Given how tunnelling works have progressed under BMRL with technological advancements, we are hopeful of finishing the tunnelling work for the road project in three years. Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) will review the DPR and appropriate suggestions will be taken into consideration before finalisation,” said Umashankar.

He added, “We are trying our best to undertake the project on government land and depend less on private land. Since most of the projects are underground, there is no need for private land acquisition. Even at the entry and exit points of the project, we are trying our best to work on government lands. However, in case of any requirement of private land, the acquisition process will happen as per the rules.”

Underground road part of Brand Bengaluru initiative

In August this year, the [Karnataka](#) Cabinet gave the green signal for the 18-km twin-tube tunnel road between Hebbal and Silk Board. The Cabinet approved the twin-tube tunnel as it has been done in Mumbai and according to Indian Road Congress norms. The project will be implemented using the Build, Operate, and Transfer (BOT) method.

During the Cabinet meeting, it was suggested that the tunnel be constructed as a toll road through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, supported by 40 per cent Viability Gap Funding (VGF) from the state government. If no company submits a bid for construction under the BOT method after two tender attempts, the project can be carried out on an Engineering Procurement Contract (EPC) basis. In this case, the government would collect toll revenue based on a Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM), as stated in the Cabinet’s decision.

The underground vehicular tunnel project is part of the Brand Bengaluru initiative and connects the north-south corridor from Hebbal Esteem Mall Junction to Silk Board Junction. Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar spearheads this ambitious project. Despite some opposing views, Shivakumar asserts that this major project is one of several road infrastructure efforts being implemented to alleviate traffic congestion in Bengaluru.

Experts say three-year deadline unrealistic

Satya Arikutharam, an urban mobility expert, said, “The three-year deadline for tunneling works is simply a joke. It is not clear whether the [DPR, which was rushed to completion in just three months](#), was reviewed by the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA). Additionally, it is impossible to complete the DPR and set the project rolling in such a short time, without conducting a thorough environment impact assessment, fresh geotechnical and geophysical investigations.

“The DPR for any tunnel projects must be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinised by competent authorities, as per the recent Centre directives. How many alignment options were generated and whether the final alignment was consulted with the impacted parties is unclear. All these processes would take time to complete, but the BBMP is rushing the project, which in the first place is not even required,” he added.

Prof Ashish Verma from the department of civil engineering at Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, said, “It is not only unrealistic to expect that tunneling can be completed within three years, but the entire project itself is also unworthy of consideration. It is absurd to propose building a tunnel road for vehicles in a corridor where there is an upcoming Metro project. There is simply no justification for this decision.”

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“The fundamental premise of the project is flawed in several ways. Ideally, we should reach the DPR stage only after exploring alternative solutions or analyses to address the traffic problem. However, in this instance, the DPR was hastily completed without proper evaluations. Additionally, during heavy rainfall, can we be confident that the BBMP engineers will ensure the tunnel remains free of flooding? That would likely lead to disaster,” he added.

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