

# Bengaluru’s civic body should get its basics right before vanity projects: Experts

While large parts of the city still lack basic infrastructure and many projects remain stalled or incomplete, BBMP—without an elected council since September 2020—continues to prioritise big-ticket projects.

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Amid the mounting criticism over Bengaluru’s crumbling infrastructure, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) recently presented a Rs 19,930-crore budget that experts call unrealistic.

Moneycontrol had earlier [highlighted](#) at least 10 infrastructure projects in Bengaluru, including the long-delayed Ejipura flyover—mocked as ‘Bengaluru’s Stonehenge’—that remain incomplete or delayed.

However, BBMP’s recent budget makes no mention of deadlines, or any mechanism to fast-track stalled projects. Instead, it has announced big-ticket projects while relying on state government funding.

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This could also be BBMP’s last budget, as the state government plans to restructure the civic body into multiple smaller corporations for better efficiency. The BBMP budget proposes Rs 73,600 crore worth of projects in the next few years under a special purpose vehicle (SPV). These moves reflect a lack of confidence in the current system, which has resulted in the poor state of the city’s infrastructure.

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Major roads are dotted with potholes, garbage piles up on a regular basis and waterlogging is common occurrence after even a brief spell of rain, streetlights remain dysfunctional, while bus shelters, parks and playgrounds are poorly maintained, tarnishing the image of a purported global city. For instance, many railway level crossings in Bengaluru have yet to be replaced with Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and Road Under Bridges (RUBs) due to delays in land acquisition and poor coordination between BBMP and SWR, causing severe bottlenecks.

Since September 2020, BBMP has been functioning without a mayor or elected councillors. In fact, city council meetings—where elected representatives would raise or discuss ward-level issues and policies—have not been held. The last BBMP elections were held in 2015, and since the council's term ended, budgets have been prepared by state government-appointed bureaucrats without any public consultation.

## 'Unrealistic budget'

Urban mobility expert Ashwin Mahesh called the budget unrealistic. “BBMP has never spent more than Rs 7,600 crore in a year and suddenly doubling that would require better capacity and contractors, which don't yet exist,”he pointed out.

BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath told *Moneycontrol* that the civic body’s usual expenditure was around Rs 10,000 crore but had been affected by revenue shortages.

“This time, the state government had increased the budget allocation by Rs 4,000 crore. Additionally, BBMP plans to generate Rs 3,000 crore through premium FAR (floor area ratio, relating to the permitted size of a building as a proportion of the size of the plot it is on) and advertisements. While tax rates are not being increased, better compliance is expected to add Rs 600-700 crore, with annual revenue growing by about Rs 1,000 crore,” he said.

He added that they are also expecting funds from the World Bank and the central government’s National Disaster Mitigation Scheme. However, he refused to comment on how stalled projects would be expedited, saying only, “It’s in the budget.”

Mahesh also questioned the feasibility of raising Rs 750 crore a year from garbage cess, arguing that citizens wouldn't be willing to suddenly start paying a monthly amount for waste collection.

Moreover, he pointed out that SPVs won't solve the issue unless they bring in skilled professionals. “If they simply reassign existing BBMP staff, there will be no real capacity addition. In fact, SPVs are now being used to bypass corporator scrutiny rather than improve efficiency,” he said.

Ashish Verma, professor and convenor of the Indian Institute of Science's Sustainable Transportation Lab, also criticised the budget, calling it a case of misplaced priorities and unscientific mobility projects. “Despite contributing to the Brand Bengaluru report, none of our key recommendations—except vague mentions of ‘quality of life’—have been incorporated,” he said.

Instead, he warned that the proposed tunnels, flyovers and double-decker roads would degrade urban liveability.

According to Verma, research at IISc's Sustainable Transportation Lab has already demonstrated the negative impact of such projects on Bengaluru's sustainability. He expressed hope that evidence-based planning would prevail, warning that citizens would otherwise face serious mobility challenges.

Sandeep Anirudhan, convenor of Citizens' Agenda for Bengaluru, a non-governmental organisation, termed the budget 'illegitimate', arguing that it lacked both an elected council and public consultation. He accused BBMP of prioritising contractor lobbies over essential infrastructure and criticised the focus on vanity projects like tunnels and flyovers while ignoring urgent issues such as pothole repairs and illegal construction.

“Citizens should demand BBMP elections, a functional Metropolitan Planning Committee and a legally valid masterplan, otherwise the city would continue to suffer,” he said.

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## Budget focuses on Brand Bengaluru projects

The BBMP budget outlines a plan for a Rs 17,780-crore tunnel road from Hebbal to Silk Board, with the detailed project report (DPR) already prepared and implementation set to begin this year. A DPR is also being prepared for an East-West tunnel from KR Puram to Mysuru Road. The total cost of both tunnels is estimated at Rs 42,000 crore, with 40 percent funded by the government through loans and 60 percent by concessionaires under the build-operate-transfer or hybrid annuity model, backed by a Rs 19,000-crore government guarantee.

The budget also proposes 110 km of flyovers at a cost of Rs 13,200 crore to improve connectivity and create signal-free corridors. A 40 km integrated metro-road flyover (double-decker) is planned at a cost of Rs 9,000 crore. Additionally, 300 km of roads along stormwater drains are proposed to be built for Rs 3,000 crore. The white topping project has been allocated Rs 6,000 crore, with 200 km completed and 157 km currently under construction.

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A Rs 400-crore project will develop a 22.7 km stretch from Central Silk Board to KR Puram via Byappanahalli, covering key IT-BT hubs. The budget also proposes a sky deck “to enhance tourism and city aesthetics”. Additionally, Rs 2,828 crore worth of projects under Brand Bengaluru will be implemented over three years, with Rs 660 crore allocated for 2024-25, Rs 700 crore for 2025-26 and the remaining funds in 2026-27.

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