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IISc Bengaluru Transport Expert's 4 Big Red Flags For Tunnel Road Project

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, however, is confident the tunnel project will ease congestion in the city.

Reported by: [Deepak Bopanna](#) [Cities](#) Sep 23, 2025 19:08 pm IST

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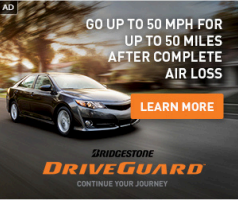


Bengaluru: Bengaluru's Hebbal-Silk Board Tunnel Road project - to be built at a cost of nearly Rs 18,000 crore and meant to ease traffic congestion in a city infamous for massive jams - may have little to no impact, a sustainable transport expert from the Indian Institute of Science has said.

Professor Ashish Verma told NDTV of red flags surrounding the project, including high costs for commuters and damage to the environment. NDTV also studied the research and simulations.

The study by IISc scientists suggests the project may not be a viable transport option.

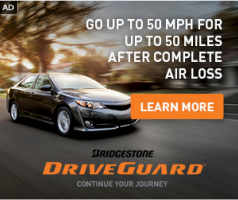
In December Prof Verma wrote to the Karnataka government to highlight these red flags and similar concerns over other infrastructure projects supposed to ease the city's traffic and associated road quality problems, including 'double-decker' flyovers and buffer roads.



Prof Verma pointed out these measures only encourage the use of private vehicles, potentially triggering a vicious cycle of more bought because the roads have been widened and causing, down the line, more traffic jams. Instead, he argued, the solution is to improve public transport.

Key Findings

Exorbitant costs: With a projected toll of Rs 300 per trip, a daily commuter will need around Rs 18,000 per month. This, the report points out, is a steep cost, unaffordable even for many IT professionals who call Bengaluru, India's 'Silicon Valley', home. And a sum of Rs 18,000 is entirely out of reach for middle- and lower-income groups, Prof Verma said.



Elitist access: Following from the red flag over the cost of travel, Prof Verma's report argued the tunnel would then largely only serve the city's elite. This means the traffic congestion in other parts of the city - jams the tunnel was meant to solve - would continue as before.

Limited impact on congestion: The project does not offer a sustainable and city-wide solution to the traffic problem. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, traffic flow in the tunnel will likely be far below designed capacity; this is because the high costs mean only the rich can afford it.

Environmental damage: And, far from easing the city's air pollution crisis, the report



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said, the tunnel road will only increase harmful emissions by encouraging the purchase of more vehicles.

Prof Verma's research was based on macro-simulation models, which also included the possibility of a low- or zero-toll scenario. At least one other scientist raised similar concerns.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, however, is confident the tunnel project will ease congestion in the city. Last month he said, "It is our responsibility to ensure this city moves forward - seamlessly. The Tunnel Road Project is one such solution, among the most cost-efficient in the country - designed to ease traffic and power Bengaluru's growth. I am committed to transforming the city, not just for today, but to leave behind a lasting legacy for Namma Bengaluru."



DK Shivakumar
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However, DKS, as the Deputy Chief Minister is called, is under heavy fire over the condition of Bengaluru roads, particularly after a tech start-up founder's lamentations on X.

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On Saturday Mr Shivakumar, also the state's Development Minister, insisted the ruling Congress is doing everything possible to address the issue, and criticised the BJP for politicising the topic.

He also took a swipe at the BJP, declaring "there are potholes everywhere, including in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence in national capital Delhi".