

● The JNNURM looks at Pune's Bus Rapid Transit System as a mass transport project which moves people and keeps roads less clogged

● The third part of the series on JNNURM projects looks at how the pilot project is falling apart and if a special cell can save it



Poor implementation has plagued the pilot route from Katraj to Hadapsar. There is gross violation of the dedicated lanes by two-wheelers, cars and other four-wheelers (1&2). Lack of frequency of buses (3) essential for mass transit is another issue

# BRTS cell hopes to put plan on track

Radheshyam Jadhav | TNN

**Pune:** One of the must-haves for a smooth-running Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) is a dedicated cell manned by a team of experts to monitor, control and implement the mass transit project.

Four years after the BRTS was introduced, such a cell with officers and technicians came into being recently. It is now hoped that the BRTS will finally get on track.

Chief engineer Anant Waghmare has been appointed as head of the BRTS cell. "I have taken charge of the cell this week and have started working on the operational part of the BRTS. The cell will be responsible for the operations on the pilot and other proposed BRTS routes," Waghmare told TOI on Friday.

All issues related to the BRTS will be handled by this cell, Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited's joint managing director Satish Kulkarni said.

The cell was mooted in 2007 by Union urban transport director S K Lohia. He had asked civic officials to improve the implementation of the pilot project. The cell should have a team of officers and technicians who could concentrate on the project's implementation, he had said.

Experts wonder why the cell took so long to come up. One reason is that the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and the PMPML have been at loggerheads over setting it up. The civic body has executed the pilot project on the Katraj-Swargate-Hadapsar route under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission while the transport utility runs the service. Officials clashed over roles and duties of the person who would handle the cell.

In order to make the corridor a true-blue BRTS, and make it more efficient, the civic body recently decided to give the Katraj-Swargate-Hadapsar pilot BRTS corridor to private contractors for maintenance on a build-operate-transfer basis. The maintenance works will include putting up of road signages, painting of lane markings and pedestrian crossings.

It will also involve the appointment of traffic wardens, who, along with the traffic police, will prevent private vehicles from entering BRTS lanes. Wardens will work under instructions from the traffic police and will not have the powers to collect any fine.

The steps have come after the BRTS corridor had problems with private vehicles, state transport buses, company buses and emergency vehicles, like ambulances, using the bus lanes.

There are other glaring pitfalls. The civic body has consistently claimed that the pilot corridor is ready barring a few stretches where land acquisition has run into problems. The PMC has fully utilised the Rs 103-crore funds given by the

central government for the pilot corridor.

The ground reality is different. The BRTS pilot was launched on December 3, 2006 by then Union minister for urban development Jaipal Reddy. Ten air-conditioned Volvo buses were flagged off on the 6.5-km Swargate-Katraj stretch. However, days after the inauguration, the project drew all-round flak because of a series of accidents on the route, some fatal. The hasty implementation ballooned into an election issue in February 2007 and the ruling Congress lost power in the PMC.

Road experts have maintained that the BRTS lacked proper implementation. "The BRTS has not been implemented anywhere in India. What we have in Pune and Delhi are segregated bus ways. A complete BRTS essentially needs to have rapid boarding and alighting

facility, efficient fare collection system, comfortable shelters and stations, clean bus technologies, sophisticated marketing identity, integration of other modes of transport, and excellence in customer service. Unless the BRTS is complete with all these aspects, we cannot comment on whether it has been a success or a failure," said Shreya Gadepalli, senior programme director of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, in a recent presentation on the BRTS.

## TRACKING MASS TRANSIT

### PUNE'S PILOT PROJECT

**TOTAL LENGTH** 16.5 km  
**INAUGURATED ON DECEMBER 3, 2006**

- The project found itself in a mess with frequent accidents on the Katraj-Swargate route. Finally, the civic administration admitted that there was no integrated project report when it launched the BRTS
- The BRTS started without a detailed project report (DPR) that should have covered elements like reserved lanes, off-board ticketing, an intelligent transport survey, integration with other modes of transport, routes and fares, depots, buses and financial, managerial and operational structure to run the system.
- The civic administration has presented statistics showing that accidents on the route have reduced since the BRTS was launched.
- Thirty-four fatal accidents occurred annually before the BRTS was implemented. It came down to 23 after the launch.
- The travel time has reduced because the buses ply at the speed of 14 kmph as compared to the 8 kmph.
- The number of commuters on the route has increased by 30 per cent. From 2.75 lakh commuters per day, the number of people went up to 3.57 lakh per day.



Cycle tracks along the BRTS are often blocked

## Not all routes in the city will have dedicated lanes

Radheshyam Jadhav | TNN

**Pune:** Only 45 per cent of the total BRTS routes proposed in the city will have dedicated lanes while the remaining will have mixed traffic.

The entire BRTS will cover a distance of 117 km. In the first phase, the civic body intends to formulate a 52-km stretch across the city. The rest will be done in the second phase. Bids from construction companies have been invited for completion of BRTS facilities on 28 roads in the city (which cover 12 PMPML routes). The central government has sanctioned Rs 98 crore for implementation of the BRTS in the initial phase under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission. The urban develop-

ment department has approved Rs 476-crore funds for ten, phase I routes across the city.

"The new routes where implementation of the BRTS has been planned will have dedicated bus lanes only if sufficient road width is available. In many parts of the city it is impossible to have dedicated lanes for buses considering the traffic flow and availability of land for road widening," said Vinay Deshpande, officer on special duty of the PMC's JNNURM project management cell.

"We can provide 45 per cent dedicated lanes. This will help improve the existing traffic congestion in some parts of the city," said Deshpande.

"BRTS is a high-capacity transport system with its own

right-of-way. Buses are operated in lanes reserved for their exclusive use. If mixed traffic is allowed on the BRTS route, it cannot be a BRTS," said Sujit Patwardhan of Parisar. The organisation works for the city's traffic and transportation issues.

Political parties have begun opposing the other BRTS routes. Shiv Sena's district unit liaison chief Neelam Gorhe said that her party will oppose the execution of the BRTS project in other parts of the city as it will result in chaos.

"The PMC should first complete the pilot corridor and make it successful, and only then experiment on other roads. The PMC should toy with people's lives or add to the existing traffic chaos," said Gorhe.

### SECOND PHASE

**THE ENTIRE BRTS WILL COVER A DISTANCE OF** 117 km

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- The central government has sanctioned Rs 98 crore for implementation of the BRTS in the initial phase under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission.
- The urban development department has approved Rs 476 crore funds for ten, phase I routes
- The civic body has attributed the escalation to rise in rates of construction material
- A total of Rs 1,000 crore has been approved 'in principle' for the entire project, including phase II
- Dedicated bus lanes will be provided only on those roads where the width is more than 30 m. On other roads, buses will move with mixed traffic
- At least three lanes will be available for private vehicles. The PMC has already widened and concretised many roads

## RISING POLLUTION

Of the total 19 lakh vehicles in the city, 74 per cent are two-wheelers and 15 per cent are private four-wheelers

For every 1,000 people, Pune has 473 private vehicles which means that every family in the city has two vehicles

**16 buses serve 1 lakh people**

Vehicles plying on pucca roads blow 6,456 tonne dust every year while the dust raised by vehicles plying on kuccha roads is 1,229 tonne every year

(PMC ENVIRONMENT STATUS REPORT 2009-10)  
(REPORTS WRITTEN UNDER THE AEGIS OF CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT MEDIA FELLOWSHIPS)

## How Pune is done in by poor public transport

The poor public transport is largely to blame for the city's burgeoning traffic population.

The Regional Transport Office figures show that till December 2009, the number of registered vehicles was 18,91,929, not including the six lakh vehicles in Pimpri-Chinchwad.

In Pune, over 74 per cent of the total vehicles, 14,10,821 are two-wheelers. Cars and jeeps account for about 14 per cent of the total vehicles. In sharp contrast, the number of PMPML buses is a mere 1,300.

With such a high number of private vehicles on the city's roads, Pune is already among the most pol-

luted cities in the country.

"As of now, the PMPML runs about 1,300 buses in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad area, while the actual requirement is 2,500 considering the new areas added to the city limits. The PMPML has a fleet of 1,554 buses of which 321 are hired from contractors. With JNNURM funds coming, we hope to get 500 new buses soon," said top PMPML officials.

However, the purchase of buses under JNNURM is stuck as opinion has been divided over the type of buses to be bought. While the standing committee insists on buying buses with doors on the left, the

PMPML wanted to those with doors on both sides, since the bus stops in PCMC area are on the left.

"In such a situation, people have to opt for private vehicles. Most would prefer to use the public transport if there is good service and frequency," said college student Tejas Deshpande.

The large number of vehicles have given rise to many problems, among them accidents on city roads and the highways that pass through Pune. The number of mishaps in 2009 almost doubled since 2000. There were 533 (288 fatal and 245 serious) mishaps in 2000 which in 2009 rose to 906 (383 fatal and 523 seri-

ous). While 49 per cent accidents in 2000 (263 accidents) were due to overspeeding, the number increased to 59 per cent in 2009 (540 accidents).

Vehicular congestion has also increased the air pollution in Pune which was ranked 69th in the list of 91 most polluted cities by the ministry of environment and forests in 2009. The average PM10 level (suspended particulate matter) is 82 micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m3) while the permissible limit of Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) is 60 ug/m3 as per the ambient air quality monitoring standards.