

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಬಸ್ ಪ್ರಯಾಣಿಕರ ವೇದಿಕೆ

BENGALURU BUS PRAYANIKARA VEDIKE

#122/4, ಇನ್ಫಾಂಟ್ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು - 560 001; 9880595032, 9341258123, 9686757053

ಇ-ಮೇಲ್: bbpvedike@gmail.com, <http://facebook.com/bbpvedike>

ಸಹಭಾಗಿಗಳು: ಅಖಿಲ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಯೋವೃದ್ಧರ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ, ಅಪ್ಪ, ಪರ್ಯಾಯ ಕಾನೂನು ವೇದಿಕೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕೊಳಗೇರಿ ಜನರ ಸಂಘಟನೆ, ಫ್ಲೇಡಿನಾ, ಗಾರ್ಮೆಂಟ್ ಅಂಡ್ ಟೆಕ್ಸ್ಟೈಲ್ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಸಂಘ, ಫ್ಲೇಡಿನಾ, ಗಾರ್ಮೆಂಟ್ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ, ಹಸಿರು ಉಸಿರು, ಜೀವ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಡೊಮೆಸ್ಟಿಕ್ ವರ್ಕರ್ಸ್ ಯೂನಿಯನ್, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಜನಶಕ್ತಿ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೈಂಗಿಕ ಅಲ್ಪಸಂಖ್ಯಾತರ ವೇದಿಕೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೈಂಗಿಕ ಕಾರ್ಯಕರ್ತರ ಸಂಘ, ನ್ಯಾಷನಲ್ ಅಲ್ಟ್ರಿಯನ್ಸ್ ಆಫ್ ಪೀಪಲ್ಸ್ ಮೂವ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ಸ್, ನ್ಯೂ ಸೋಷಿಯಲಿಸ್ಟ್ ಆಲ್ಟರ್ನೇಟಿವ್, ಪ್ರಜಾ ರಾಜಕೀಯ ವೇದಿಕೆ, ಸಾಧನ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಸಂಘ, ವಿಜಯನಗರ ಬೀದಿ ವ್ಯಾಪಾರಿಗಳ ಸಂಘಟನೆ, ಸಂಗಮ, ವಿಮೋಚನೆ, ಸಮರ, ಮಹಿಳಾ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ, ಜನಸಹಯೋಗ, ದಿ ಇಂಡಿಯನ್ ಇನ್ಸ್ಟಿಟ್ಯೂಟ್ ಆಫ್ ಜಿಯೋಗ್ರಾಫಿಕಲ್ ಸ್ಟಡೀಸ್

To,
The Chief Minister,
Government of Karnataka.

The Comissioner,
Bangalore Development Authority,
Bangalore .

Date 30th June 2016

Dear Madam/Sir,

Reg: Regarding the steel flyover to be built by BDA from Basaveshwara circle to Hebbal

Comments have been sought from the public by BDA on the proposed steel flyover project referenced with three days time being given, reducing the exercise to a farce. The window for public consultation should be extended for at least 30 days more after providing adequate information to the public about the proposed flyover, the needs assessment, the pros and cons of building the flyover and the alternatives explored.

We have several objections to the proposed project. These objections can be broadly classified into 3 groups -

i) Law and Policy related objections ii) Futility of Flyovers iii) Project specific objections These objections are listed below under the respective categories.

Law and Policy related objections

1. At the outset we would like to state that the manner in which this whole project is being done is symptomatic about how transport projects are illegally and undemocratically undertaken in this city -
 - a. For BDA to conceptualise and implement a project when we have a MPC set-up is violative of the 74th amendment.
 - b. This project envisages a change of land-use that is being done without following the provisions in the Karnataka Town and Country Planning (KTCP) Act as far as change in land use norms are concerned, making this illegal. This also violates the ruling of the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka in WP 13241/2009 which mandates that for all future projects involving change in land use as has been depicted in the Master Plan it must be done as per Sec 14-A of the KTCP Act and that for the preparation of a scheme, the BDA shall comply with the Sections 29, 30, 31, 32 and 34 of the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act. The project which will cost 500 trees is also violating the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act.
2. The way our transport planning revolves around getting people to the Airport reeks of elitism.

3. Rs 100 crore has been earmarked for the demolition of the underpass and overpass built precisely for the same reason as the steel flyover. These structures had sprung up when BBMP was pushed to ensure a hassle-free commute to KIA. The Palike began work only when the airport was nearing completion. The civic agency, led by then commissioner Dr S Subramanya, initially planned to widen the road. The only option was to acquire a portion of Palace Grounds. But the property was under litigation and it could not be touched. Clueless, BBMP eventually opted for an overpass near the BDA head office and an underpass near the Cauvery Theatre junction, now infamous as the Magic Box. If the BDA overpass was glaring in its poor design, the Magic Box has been ridiculed by architects and motorists alike. Each of these structures cost about Rs 2.5 crore to Rs 4 crore to build. Widening and relaying the road cost the Palike about Rs 250 crore. Now all of these will be laid to waste.
4. We seem eager to build our way out of congestion by taking up mega projects like Signal-free corridors, flyovers etc. which are all either misguided or inappropriate in their approach to urban transport. Instead, investing on mass transport i.e. BMTC and Sub-urban Rail, and strengthening pedestrian facilities would be offer more lasting and sustainable solutions to mobility issues in the city.
5. Last year, the Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike demanded¹ an investment of 1300 crores into BMTC in-order to have more buses, have shelters at all the 8000 odd bus-stops, have accessible bus-fares and improve the working conditions of BMTC. We were told that there is not enough funds available for the same. How then are we spending more than 1600 crores on a single flyover project, that too only to ease travel to those going to the Airport?
6. The Bangalore Development Authority is set to implement its plan despite the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT)'s reservations against building more elevated corridors. DULT would instead give a greater push for public transport, dis-incentivise private transport and explore other sustainable options.

Futility of Flyovers

1. We don't have to look any farther than home to understand this basic point that flyovers do not solve traffic congestion or other traffic problems. None of the flyovers that have been built in the city have solved the traffic problems in the city or offered any lasting solution for traffic problems anywhere in the city.
2. Rather than connecting nodes in the city, flyovers further break up an already fragmented city in several ways. In urban design this can be thought of as lost space, or the treating of part of the city as isolated and not part of the larger fabric. It isolates people, places etc. Many pedestrian-related deaths and injuries occur on the stretch after Hebbal Flyover, the point at which road is wider and speed greater. We need to be making our roads less not more dangerous for NMT users. What will happen at the end of the flyover when this vehicle traffic is required to merge with the existing vehicle traffic? Well, a traffic jam of course! You are not alleviating a problem merely delaying it. Instead of concentrating on the people who are entering and exiting the city we should focus on those who are circulating within the city. All discourse in policy literature is pointing toward the inclusive city. Flyovers go against this mantra
3. In much of the world, there is now a move away from piecemeal flyovers as these are seen as to bring no long term solutions to the question of traffic congestion and in fact ultimately bring more congestion along with other problems. Most famously, the example of the Cheonggyecheon² in South Korea, a project in which an elevated freeway construction project was done during the "Asian Tiger" years and then dissembled and restored back to a river with a prioritization of pedestrians. The ridding of the superhighway has had no visible effect on traffic congestion.
4. The pillars of the flyover will eat into the existing road space. Seasoned campaigners for sustainable transport refer to the reduced footpath space time and again. The effective width of the road below will further reduce, triggering congestion on all approach roads.

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/shri-siddaramaiah-bengaluru-needs-bus-bhagya-allocate-1300-crores-in-2015-16-budget-to-make-bmtc-affordable-reliable-and-equitable>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheonggyecheon>

5. Instead of a steel flyover, more roads should be built to reach the airport. The Hennur-Bagalur road is the shortest route to the airport from the heart of the city. Instead of building flyovers, options such as this and others should be explored.

Project-specific Objections

1. The initial estimated budget of the project was mentioned in the State budget of 2014-15 to be between Rs. 1,100 crore to 1,200 crores. As expected the project cost has now escalated to a whopping 1900 crores and it is common knowledge that the government does not have the funds to meet this requirement as they have written to the Centre, State government and the Urban Development Department seeking steel at a subsidised rate under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) to construct the 6.9 km long steel flyover from Chalukya Circle to Hebbal.
2. A flyover will not be completed more quickly than other, more inclusive transportation projects. In an assessment of flyover projects, it was found that the average overrun time is between 10-30% of original project duration. Over 70% of flyover projects experience time overrun. It is alarming to think that, in the aftermath of the Kolkata flyover collapse, such a frivolous infrastructure project is being considered in Bengaluru. As pointed out by Samares Kumar Das (EPW vol Li 23, pg 5): "On 16 April I visited the site (Ganesh Talkies at Girish Park in Kolkata) where a portion of the flyover had collapsed...What is more surprising is the fact that a flyover was not even needed at the site, according to local people. They believe that the sole purpose of building this flyover was to earn money out of the construction." Does the government want the people of Bengaluru to think the same thing of it and its government?
3. The work on the steel flyover is estimated to take two years. Despite repeated assurances that it will not cause any traffic issues in the first one and a half year's time as most work will be pre-fabricated in a factory, it is evident that the last 6 months of the project will be chaotic. The project will end up demolishing three flyovers, an underpass and two skywalks that are en route the alignment. We needn't stress more on the complications that arise because of this. Not only will this cause further disruptions in traffic for that time period, but the sheer amount of inevitable pollution is something this city can no longer afford. Moreover, the cost at which the "ultimate freeway" is to be completed at is public money spent without consulting the public, the actual road users.
4. A steel bridge will entail more maintenance cost compared to a concrete structure. Heavy vehicular movement on a steel bridge will result in sound pollution, especially at night. It is also common knowledge that flyovers haven't really helped address Bengaluru's traffic woes. While authorities concerned are racking their brains over building a steel bridge in the heart of the city, plans to extend the Metro network to KIA has been lying on the back-burner for seven years now because they are yet to decide which route the Metro should take to link the airport and the city.
5. According to N Krishnaraju, professor and expert in concrete structures, a steel flyover will initially cost less than a concrete one but unlike the latter, a steel flyover will require constant maintenance. This increases the overall cost. But steel is not recommended for constructing road bridges globally because a concrete flyover lasts longer. Vibrations caused by vehicular movement and rusting of joints will require maintenance on a periodic basis.
6. The design of the flyover eats into the lung space of Karnataka Golf Course, Balabrooie Guest House, Military Memorial Park and a few private properties along Ballari Road and Palace Road. If this project sees the light of day, 500 trees will be axed along Ballari Road deteriorating our environment. Further, no one seems to be objecting to the fact that a blacklisted contractor has been asked to plan an important project.

7. Central funds have dried up for this project. Rumour has it that the flyover may be tolled, despite being at the city's centre. So now it seems evident that the cost for this project will be borne by us, the ordinary tax payers.

In the light of the above issues, we demand that –

1. The project immediately be dropped
2. That the MPC meets immediately to undertake the task of planning for inclusive, accessible transport for Bangalore
3. In the interim, funds immediately be allotted to
 - a. Commuter Rail (Namma Railu)
 - b. Increasing fleet size of BMTC and subsidising bus fares for over 58 lakh users
 - c. Building a network of foot paths and bicycle lanes throughout the city

Thanking You,
Yours sincerely

For Bengaluru Bus Prayanikara Vedike

Vinay K Sreenivasa
9880595032
vinay@altlawforum.org

Shaheen Shasa
Shaheen.shasa@yahoo.com
9341258123