

'Brand Bengaluru' caught between DK Shivakumar's vanity projects and city's crumbling infra

Deputy CM and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar has been pushing for tunnel roads, skydecks, double-decker flyovers, Metro extensions to the outskirts, and an amusement park near the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam in Mandya district. However, many existing infrastructure projects in Bengaluru remain stalled.

CHRISTIN MATHEW PHILIP | AUGUST 27, 2024 / 16:35 IST

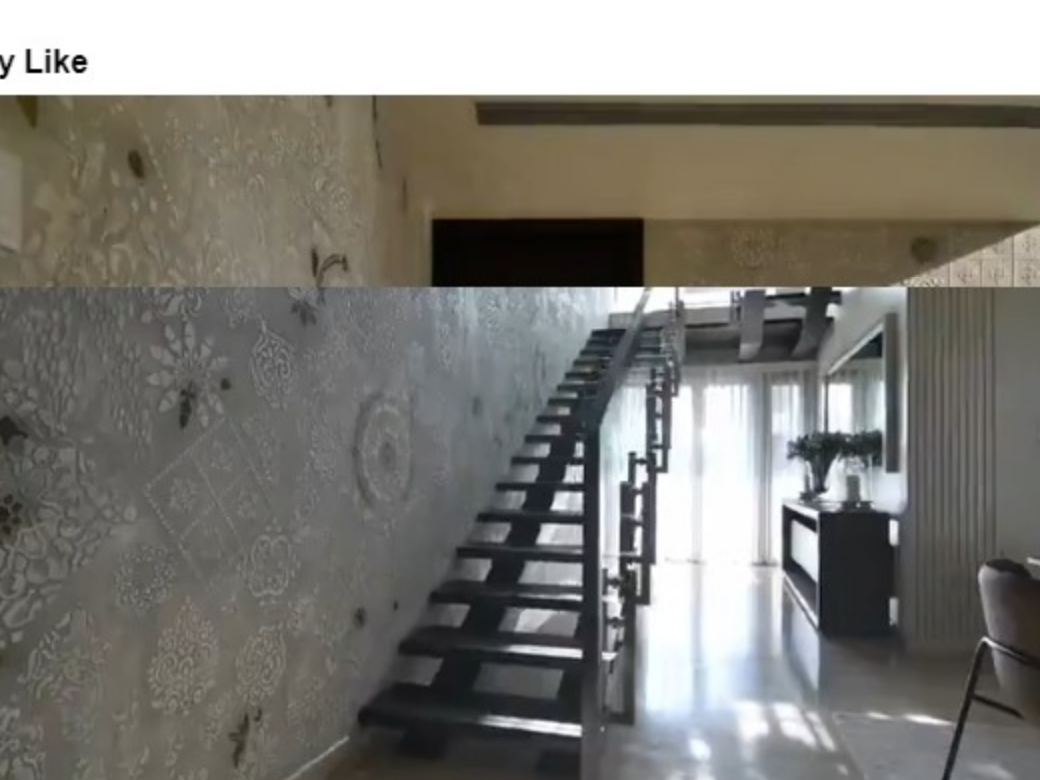
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DK Shivakumar has been pushing for his vanity projects—tunnel roads, Skydeck, double-decker (Metro-cum-Road) flyovers, elevated corridors, metro extensions to the outskirts, and an amusement park near the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam in Mandya.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister (CM) and Bengaluru Development Minister, DK Shivakumar, often credits three figures from the Vokkaliga community— Kempegowda, former CMs Kengal Hanumanthaiah, and SM Krishna—for Bengaluru's growth.

"Kempegowda built Bengaluru, Kengal Hanumanthaiah built Vidhana Soudha, and SM Krishna made Bengaluru a global city," says Shivakumar, who also belongs to the Vokkaliga community.



In May 2023, Siddaramaiah was sworn in as Karnataka CM after the Congress secured a landslide victory, ousting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from power. State Congress party chief Shivakumar became the Deputy CM, and is in charge of plump portfolios like Bengaluru development and water resources. Nurturing his [ambition](#) to become CM, Shivakumar, who is also the face of his party in Bengaluru, follows in Krishna's footsteps to leave his mark. There is also a family link as well: Shivakumar's eldest daughter is married to Krishna's grandson.

Also, read: [Karnataka to get new chief minister? Here's what Siddaramaiah said](#)

Bengaluru — known as India's Silicon Valley — has a population of around 1.6 crore. Citizens have been expressing concerns about pothole-ridden roads, water-logging on arterial roads and subways during rains, stalled infrastructure such as flyovers, and worsening traffic congestion due to a surge in private vehicle ownership following the Covid-19 pandemic and the suspension of work-from-home (WFH) facilities.

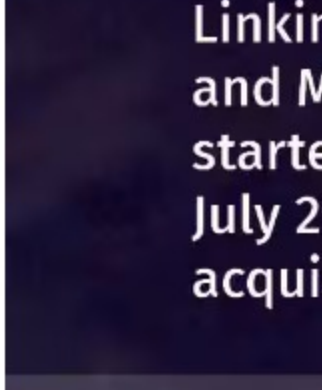
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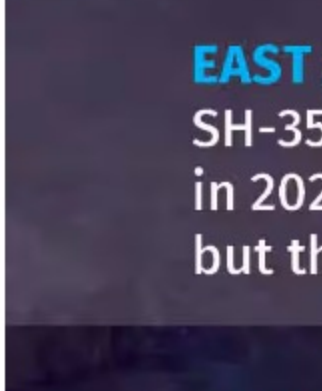
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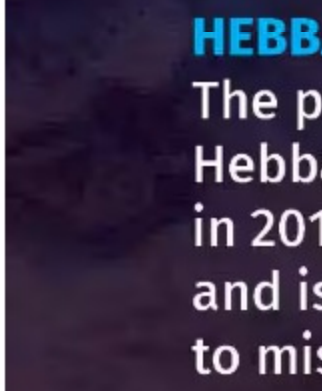
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BENGALURU'S STALLED INFRA PROJECTS

PERIPHERAL RING ROAD (PRR)

The 74-km, eight-lane expressway linking Tumakuru Road to Hosur Road, proposed in 2007, has ballooned from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 28,000 crore due to land and legal issues. But the project remains on paper

EJIPURA FLYOVER

A 2.5 km flyover project from Kendriya Sadan Junction to Ejipura Junction, stalled since 2017, resumed in July 2024 with an 18-month completion target, but progress is slow

PANATHUR S-CROSS ROAD

A 4-metre-wide road for those travelling between Whitefield and Outer Ring Road is set to be widened to 12 metre, but land acquisition delays persist



RR NAGAR FLYOVER

Linking Kenchanahalli Road and Mysuru Road, this project started in 2022 and missed its July 2024 deadline due to land acquisition issues

YELAHANKA FLYOVER

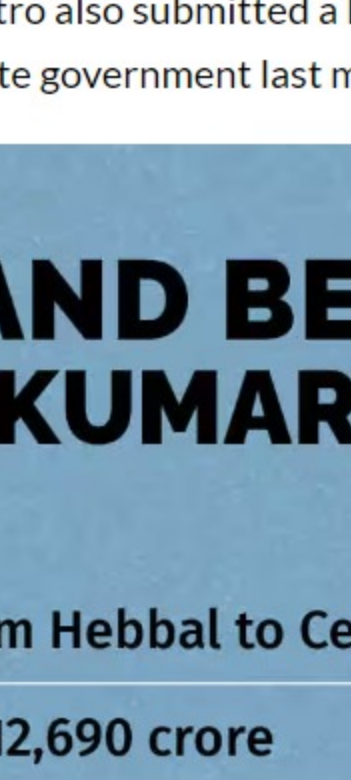
A 1.8 km flyover, started in January 2022, was to be completed by July 2023, but progress is sluggish

EAST AIRPORT CORRIDOR

SH-35 widening and Dommasandra flyover construction started in 2020 to connect Anekal to Kempegowda International Airport, but the December 2024 deadline is unlikely to be met

HEBBAL FLYOVER

The project to add two lanes to Hebbal flyover, conceptualised in 2015, began in 2023 and is expected to miss the December deadline



KEREKODI JUNCTION FLYOVER

A 360-metre flyover on ORR near PES University started in 2020 and was supposed to be completed in 15 months but faces delays



RAIL-LEVEL CROSSINGS

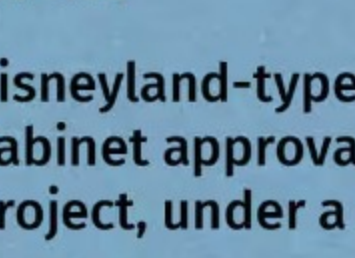
26 manual railway level crossings to be replaced with road over bridges and rail under bridges (ROB/RUBs). South Western Railway started work in places like Carmelaram and Jakkur but is delayed due to BBMP's failure to hand over land



ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT ROAD

The toll-free road connecting Bengaluru to KIA via Bagalur and Begur is dotted with potholes and poor lighting

Source: BBMP, BDA, Karnataka Road Development Corporation (KRDCL), SWR



In June 2023, Shivakumar sought suggestions and feedback from the public, receiving around 70,000 responses. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Ramaiah Institute of Management were academic partners of the Brand Bengaluru initiative, which analysed public feedback and conducted a stakeholders' consultation meeting.

Also, read: [Brand Bengaluru: 70,000 suggestions from citizens: ball in Karnataka govt's court](#)

However, Shivakumar has been pushing for his vanity projects such as tunnel roads, Skydeck, double-decker (Metro-cum-Road) flyovers, elevated corridors, Metro extension to the outskirts of the city, and an amusement park near the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam in Mandya to left behind a legacy.

This contrasts with IISc's stance. In its study, IISC observed that people tend to use tunnel roads in an attempt to travel at faster speeds, which eventually leads to congestion. "Across all dimensions of Quality of Life (QOL), a greater positive effect is observed with the expansion of the operational metro network by 2031. Prioritising and completing the proposed metro network on time, without delays, should be a top priority," the IISC study said.

Also, read: [Bengaluru traffic: IISc bats for Inner Ring underground Metro over DKS' tunnel road plan](#)

The state cabinet on August 22 approved the construction of an 18.5 km twin-tube tunnel road between Hebbal Flyover (Esteem Mall) and Silk Board Junction Flyover for Rs 12,690 crore. It also approved the building of a 250 m-high Skydeck near NICE Road at Hemmigeppura, with an estimated project cost of Rs 500 crore. However, detailed project reports (DPRs) for the tunnel road and Skydeck are yet to be prepared. Though Bengaluru Metro also submitted a DPR for the [37-km metro corridor](#) — connecting Hebbal and Sarjapur — to the state government last month, it is yet to be approved by the government.

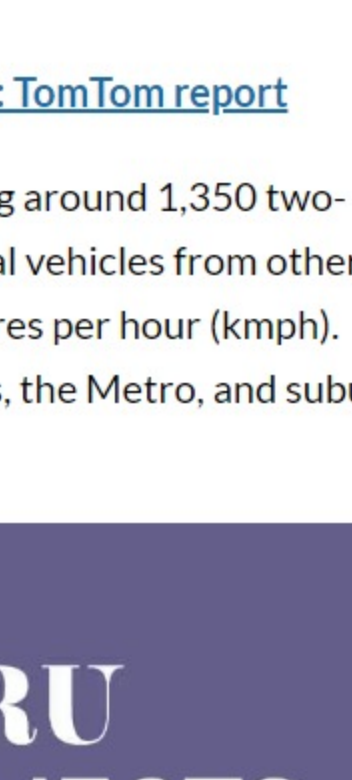
BRAND BENGALURU DK SHIVAKUMAR'S PET PROJECTS

TUNNEL ROAD

Project: 18.5 km from Hebbal to Central Silk Board

Estimated cost: Rs 12,690 crore

Status: State cabinet approval; DPR pending



SKYDECK

Project: A 250-metre-high structure is being planned in Hemmigeppura near NICE Road

Estimated cost: Rs 500 crore

Status: State cabinet approval; DPR pending

17 ELEVATED CORRIDORS

Project: 100 km of 17 elevated corridors across the city

Estimated cost: Rs 12,000 crore

Status: N/A

DOUBLE-DECKER FLYOVERS (METRO-CUM-ROAD FLYOVERS)

Project: Metro-cum-road flyovers along JP Nagar-Hebbal, Hosahalli-Kadabagere, Sarjapur - Ibbalur and Agara - Koramangala 3rd Block

Estimated cost: N/A

Status: Feasibility reports are being prepared



METRO TO OUTSKIRTS

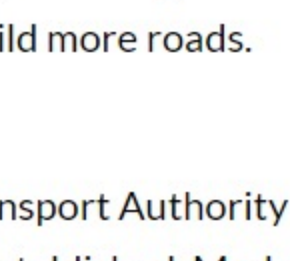
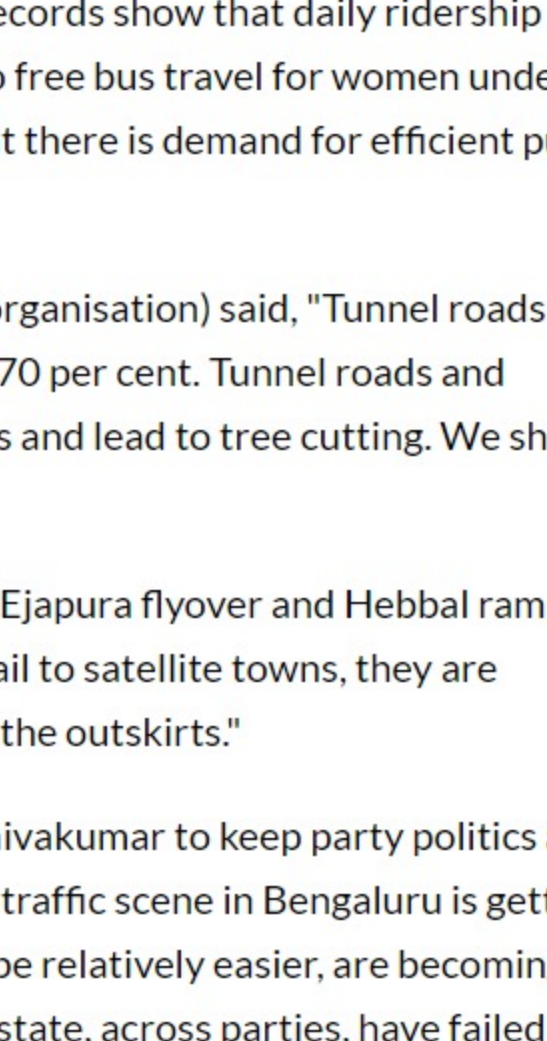
Project: Bengaluru Metro is being extended to the city's outskirts including Bidadi, Attibele, Harohalli, Jigani, Tumakuru, and Devanahalli

Estimated cost: N/A

Status: Feasibility studies are being prepared

OTHERS

- Disneyland-type park near KRS in Mandya. Cabinet approval for Rs 2,633 crore project, under a PPP model
- Ramanagara district renamed Bengaluru South
- Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah says the city's long-term infrastructure plan under Brand Bengaluru is in the works for Rs 48,686 crore
- Deputy CM DK Shivakumar met PM Narendra Modi and seeks Rs 36,950 crore for two tunnel roads and two elevated corridors, as well as approval for the Rs 27,000 crore Peripheral Ring Road



Tunnel vision

Ashish Verma, professor and Convenor, IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab, told Moneycontrol: "Projects like tunnel roads only reflect the 'tunnel vision' of decision-makers. These projects will not build Brand Bengaluru; they'll destroy it".

Last year, Shivakumar said he would not bow to public pressure. "Many give me suggestions of building tunnels and flyovers. In the previous Siddaramaiah regime, the government wanted to build a steel bridge [Basaveswara Circle and Hebbal, 6.7 km], but there was a huge uproar and outrage over it. Siddaramaiah and KJ George [former Bengaluru development minister] got scared. If I were in their positions, I wouldn't have budged and would have gone ahead with it," Shivakumar said.

Also, read: [Bengaluru's traffic conundrum: Metro rail to the outskirts, suburban rail confined to city limits, and tunnel vision](#)

Verma said these projects traffic problems don't address greenhouse gas emissions and are a drain on resources. He said: "Cities like Paris and London, with similar populations, have over 250 km of Metro network, while Bengaluru has just 73 km. 'Brand Bengaluru' should aim to be a 'Sustainable and Livable Bengaluru', with clear development goals, measurable targets, and a focus on public transport and quality of life. Transportation planning should go beyond reducing congestion and volume/capacity ratios to include reducing vehicle kilometers traveled and dependence on fossil fuels."

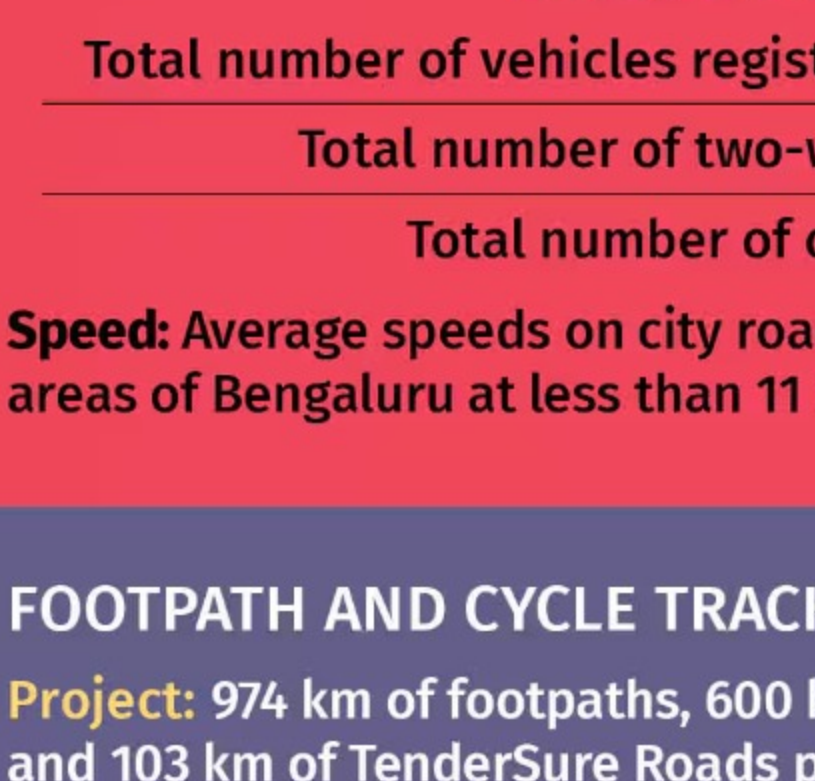
Bursting at the seams

Bengaluru's road network spans 14,000 km, with major roads comprising less than 20 per cent of the total. As of July, the city has a total vehicle population of 1.18 crore, including 79.27 lakh two-wheelers and 24.26 lakh cars. In 2013-2014, Bengaluru had 58.9 lakh vehicles, including 37.8 and 13.1 lakh two-wheelers and cars, respectively.

Also, read: [Tech hub Bengaluru ranks 6th most congested city globally in 2023: TomTom report](#)

On an average, around 2,000 vehicles are registered daily in Bengaluru, including around 1,350 two-wheelers and about 350 cars. With 1.18 crore registered vehicles, plus additional vehicles from other districts and states, the average speed during peak hours is less than 10 kilometres per hour (kmph). Experts have been urging the strengthening of mass transit modes such as buses, the Metro, and suburban rail.

BRAND BENGALURU PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS IN REVERSE GEAR



SARJAPUR-HEBBAL METRO CORRIDOR

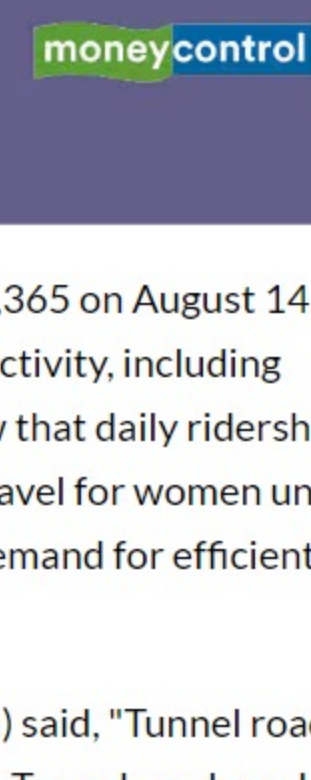
Project: A 37-km Metro corridor from Hebbal to Sarjapur is estimated to cost Rs 28,405 crore

Status: DPR was submitted in July; state government approval is pending. In contrast, tunnel road and Skydeck projects were approved before DPRs

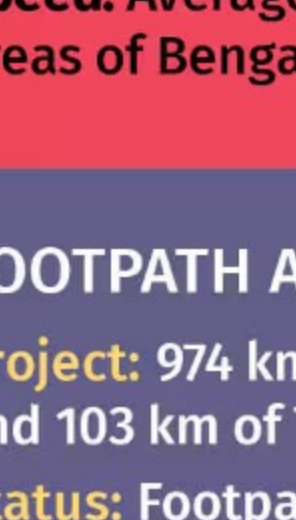
317-KM METRO BY 2031?

Project: The Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) prepared by state government in 2020 proposed a fully underground 34 km Inner Ring Metro, 16 km Whitefield-Domlur, and 17 km Katamanallur Gate-Sarjapur Road Metro corridors

Status: BMRL is yet to prepare DPRs for these corridors

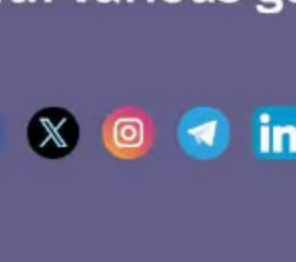


CMP PROPOSES 803 KM PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK BY 2031



METRO

Proposed 317 km



SUBURBAN RAIL

Proposed 177 km



PRIORITY BUS CORRIDORS

Proposed 202 km



BRTS/ METROLITE

Proposed 107 km

Operational 73 km

Operational 0 km

Operational 0 km

Operational 0 km

BMTC BUS FLEET

Proposed: 13,000 buses by 2025 and 16,582 by 2031

Operational: 6,027 buses (5,637 schedules)

BENGALURU'S VEHICLES

Total number of vehicles registered till July 2024: 1.18 crore

Total number of two-wheelers: 79.27 lakh

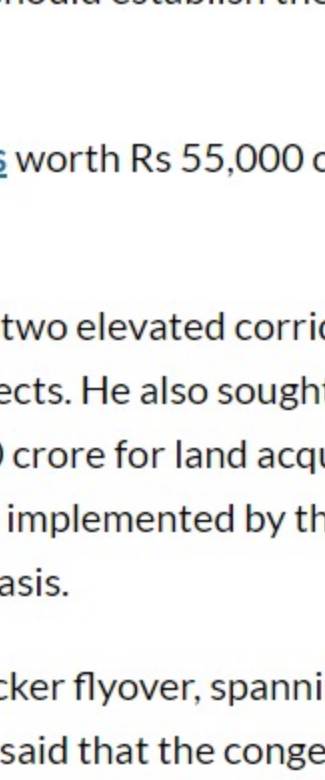
Total number of cars: 24.26 lakh

Speed: Average speeds on city roads are under 20 kmph, with core areas of Bengaluru at less than 11 kmph during peak hours

FOOTPATH AND CYCLE TRACK PROJECTS

Project: 974 km of footpaths, 600 km of cycle tracks, and 103 km of TenderSure Roads proposed

Status: Footpaths cover only 47% of roads; most roads lack footpaths and cycle tracks



UNIFIED TRANSPORT BODY

Status: Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) bill was passed in December 2022; Act notified in January 2023. Modelled after London and Singapore, BMLTA will coordinate with various government agencies but is not yet established

Bengaluru Metro, which operates 73 km, achieved a [record daily ridership](#) of 917,365 on August 14, despite overcrowded coaches due to a shortage of trains and poor last-mile connectivity, including inadequate feeder buses and a lack of shared auto-rickshaws. BMTC records show that daily ridership increased from 35 lakh in 2018-2019 to 38.4 lakh in 2023-2024 due to free bus travel for women under the Shakti scheme and the resumption of WFH facilities. This indicates that there is demand for efficient public transport.

Rajkumar Dugar of Citizens for Citizens, an NGO (non-governmental organisation) said, "Tunnel roads contradict the government's goal to boost public transport from 30 to 70 per cent. Tunnel roads and skydecks shouldn't be Bengaluru's priority. They require land for ramps and lead to tree cutting. We should focus on more sustainable options."

Dugar also urged the government to complete stalled projects like the Ejapura flyover and Hebbal ramp before turning its focus on skydecks. "Instead of extending suburban rail to satellite towns, they are planning to expand the Metro, which is designed for core city areas, to the outskirts."

Bengaluru South's member of Parliament (MP), Tejasvi Surya, urged Shivakumar to keep party politics aside and help improve the civic amenities of the urban agglomeration. "The traffic scene in Bengaluru is getting more distressing with every passing day. Even Sundays, which used to be relatively easier, are becoming as nightmarish as weekdays," said Surya. "Successive governments in the state, across parties, have failed to provide our wonderful city with the vision and leadership it deserves. The city's roads, including small lanes in residential areas, are far beyond their carrying capacity, and there is no space to build more roads. Besides, more roads mean more private vehicles," Surya added.

In January 2023, the state government notified the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) Act after receiving the governor's assent. However, the BMLTA is yet to be established. Modelled after unified transport bodies in cities like New York, London, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Dubai, the BMLTA was envisioned as an umbrella organisation responsible for coordinating various agencies and formulating a comprehensive mobility plan.

Also, read: [Six months on, London-like transport authority to ease Bengaluru's traffic chaos remains on paper](#)

Satya Arikutharam, an independent consultant, said: "Projects like tunnel roads are neither mentioned in the Comprehensive Mobility Plan nor approved by the BMLTA. The government should establish the BMLTA without further delays."

It is also unclear how the government, which is implementing [five poll guarantees](#) worth Rs 55,000 crore a year, plans to fund these projects.

Last month, Shivakumar met [PM Narendra Modi](#) and said two urban tunnels and two elevated corridors to decongest Bengaluru would cost Rs 36,950 crore. He sought funds for these projects. He also sought approval for the Rs 27,000 crore Peripheral Ring Road (PRR), including Rs 21,000 crore for land acquisition and Rs 6,000 crore for civil construction costs. The 73 km eight-lane PRR is being implemented by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) on a private-public partnership (PPP) basis.

On July 17, Shivakumar took the wheel to launch the Bengaluru's first double-decker flyover, spanning from Ragigudda to Central Silk Board, measuring 3.3km. However, regular commuters said that the congestion that used to pile up at the Silk Board junction has now shifted to HSR Layout, where one of the ramps exits.

Also, read: [Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar takes test drive on Bengaluru's 1st double-decker flyover](#)

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TAGS: #Bengaluru #dk #Infra #projects #shivakumar #Tunnel

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