

Bengaluru's upcoming elevated corridors, double-decker roads to be tolled

The new approach is being considered as the government aims to launch new projects worth over Rs 1 lakh crore in one go, including 40 km of tunnel roads, 38 km of double-decker corridors, and a mix of flyovers and underpasses totalling about 124 km.

 **Naveen Menezes** | DHNS

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Bengaluru roads Credit: DH Photo/Pushkar V

Bengaluru: Karnataka is planning to introduce toll charges on future elevated corridors and double-decker roads in Bengaluru, marking a shift in how upcoming infrastructure will be funded.

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The new approach, not applicable to existing or under-construction projects, is being considered as the government aims to launch new projects worth over Rs 1 lakh crore in one go, including 40 km of tunnel roads, 38 km of double-decker corridors, and a mix of flyovers and underpasses totalling about 124 km.

While the government has agreed to double its funding to bear a part of the project cost, the balance will either be borne by the private concessionaire under the build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) model or raised through loans.

Since Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE), which will be undertaking these projects, does not have its own revenue source, the Finance Department has suggested a tolling mechanism to repay loan commitments.

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Confirming this, B-SMILE Technical Director BS Prahallad said the agency was exploring various funding models.

"We are doubling capacity on 200 km of high-density corridors, keeping in mind the traffic congestion and increase in vehicle population. Since the government is partly funding the projects, tolling is the best way to raise resources. It is also equivalent to congestion charges," he said.

B-SMILE has already proposed a toll of Rs 19 per km for the 16.5-km Hebbal-Silk Board tunnel road, which is in an advanced stage of implementation. When complete, commuters could pay over Rs 600 for a round trip. Tolling rates for the elevated corridors and double-decker roads are yet to be finalised.

While the 124-km projects comprising stretches such as Yeshwantpur-KR Puram, Nagawara-Bagalur, Ragigudda-Kanakapura Main Road etc. are still in the conceptual stage, with consultants preparing detailed project reports, the double-decker proposal recently received state cabinet approval.

As per the plan, the state will contribute Rs 3,880 crore and the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) is expected to chip in Rs 970 crore. B-SMILE will raise half the project cost through loans and clear the dues by levying toll charges.

Government officials argue the city has little choice, pointing to peak-hour speeds that have dropped to 17 kmph and a vehicle population that has nearly doubled in the past decade.

Plans not too grand: Experts

Mobility experts are not happy with the grand plans.

"With metro and suburban rail projects on the backburner, Bengaluru will see a bleak future in terms of livability. Building car-centric projects, including flyovers, is outdated. Even a well-paid professional will think 100 times before spending Rs 20,000 a month as toll charges on the tunnel road. The government's ultimate focus should be to reduce the usage of private vehicles," said Ashish Verma, professor of Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.