



Namma Metro needs a unified, resilient contingency plan

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Bengaluru,

Within three days, Bengaluru's Purple Line witnessed two major service disruptions, causing significant inconvenience to thousands of commuters. There was a temporary service disruption at Cubbon Park station on Thursday after a door failed to close because a commuter's metal chain had become entangled. The repeated break downs raise concerns about the reliability of the city's most popular public transport system. The moot point is: Is enough being done to ensure dependable, high-quality public transportation?

Citizens have been demanding that the system should be backed by robust infrastructure, efficient operations, and long-term planning rather than reactive measures. "BMRC must have a clear Standard Operating Procedure and a tie-up with BMTC or even private bus operators to provide immediate feeder services along the affected stretches. The idea is to bridge the connectivity gap without commuters having to pay extra or face further inconvenience", said Ashish Verma, Professor of Transport Systems Engineering at the IISc, stressing the need for a resilient contingency plan during technical break downs.

He also underscored the importance of a reliable passenger information system that provides timely and accurate updates during service disruptions. Referring to Thursday's door malfunction, he said the lack of clear communication left commuters confused, resulting in panic and overcrowding at several stations. While technical failures are inevitable in any mass transit system, experts said the focus should be on minimising disruption through effective backup arrangements.

The technical disruption on Tuesday triggered widespread chaos, leaving thousands stranded for hours as they struggled to find alternative transport. Ride-hailing services reportedly charged exorbitant fares, exposing the city's dependence on the Metro and highlighting the need for greater BMTC bus frequency to strengthen last-mile connectivity and provide support during emergencies. "The two back-to-back disruptions should serve as a learning opportunity for Namma Metro. BMRCL must realise that it cannot function in isolation.

This is the right time to develop a simulation-based emergency response strategy. Simply operating loop services is not enough. The priority should be to move stranded passengers seamlessly through BMTC buses using a unified ticketing system", said Anil Budur Lulla, writer and policy analyst, advocating closer coordination between BMRCL and BMTC. He added that such integration would strengthen commuter confidence in the Metro, particularly as Metro ridership is expected to rise to nearly 12-13 lakh passengers daily after the truncated Pink Line becomes operational.

"Greater coordination between BMRCL, BMTC and Indian Railways, coupled with regular preparedness drills, will encourage more people to choose public transport", he said. Experts emphasised that with Namma Metro now serving lakhs of commuters every day, BMRCL must take greater accountability, establish clear emergency protocols and ensure effective backup arrangements so that passengers do not bear the brunt whenever technical failures occur.

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