

Elevated rail, metro rail 'collide' at seminar

Bangalore, Nov 28: Does Bangalore City need an elevated mass transit system or an underground rail system?

Experts presented contending points of view on the issue at a seminar on "Status of Infrastructure in Karnataka—A Year After".

Ironically, the discussion was not pursued to its logical end as advocates of both schools said, "we need a separate seminar to discuss this."

While Bangalore Mass Rapid Transit Limited (BMRTL) Executive Director B S C Rao justified the need for an elevated light rail system for Bangalore, Consulting Engineer Winston D'Souza, who spoke on "Urban Mass Transit Systems", said an underground rail system was most suited for the City.

Proposing that the road length could be split into two, he said the rail could go below the existing roads. Observing that Bangalore's terrain was flat, he said the rail could be "just below the surface", something

that would cut down costs considerably. D'Souza held that the elevated rail system could carry only 400 people at a time.

Noting that Moscow and Kiev were pioneers in underground rail systems, he said that Bangalore could use the expertise of any of the countries in the fragmented Soviet Union (Commonwealth of Independent States) to set up a underground system. "Bangalore could pay back in terms of goods that we have in abundance, such as coffee, shirts or rice," he suggested.

When a participant said that metro rail would cost two-and-a-half times more than an elevated rail system, Rao held that the elevated rail would cost 3-4 times more than estimated.

The concession agreement between the State Government and UB Consortium, which will execute the project, was expected to be signed in mid-1999, Rao said. The 25 Km Phase I will begin soon after financial closure in late 1999, he added. **ENS**

Ring Road by 2002, Town Hall flyover will be late by 11 months

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Nov 28: The Outer Ring Road (ORR) project taken up by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) will be completed by 2002, according to BDA Commissioner Lakshmi Venkatachalam.

However, the Sirsi Circle-Town Hall flyover would be delayed by about 11 months, BCC Chief Engineer Rame Gowda said. The project was slated for completion by Jan 1999.

They were speaking at a panel discussion on the 'Aspects of Infrastructure in Bangalore' at a seminar on 'Status of Infrastructure in Karnataka—A Year After' organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies on Saturday.

Making a presentation on the Ring Road project, Lakshmi said that with the decision of the Government to avail loan assistance from Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), the BDA had decided to complete the

project in two phases.

Under the first phase of the project, completion of the ORR between Tumkur Road and Hosur Road had been taken up. It would cost Rs 110 crore and cover a distance of about 37 kms, she said and added it would be completed by 2000-2001.

Lakshmi said the BDA would take up the completion of ORR between Mysore Road and Tumkur Road, under the second phase of the project, for which works would begin from 1999-2000. She said financial constraints and problems associated with availability of land had hampered the implementation of the project.

Lakshmi said though the BDA had examined the possibility of private sector participation, the six industries which had evinced interest in the project backed out prompted by the slump in real estate market. The Government finally decided to seek loan assistance from HUDCO to expedite the

project, she said.

In response to a suggestion, Lakshmi said the BDA was considering the idea of setting up 'toll stations' to collect taxes from vehicles passing through the ORR to generate finances. The BDA was also contemplating collecting betterment charges to generate revenue for the project, she said.

METRO BUS: The State Government has not yet accorded permission to the Swedish International Development Agency to conduct a study on the feasibility of introduction of a new technology bus, the Metro Bus, according to Bipin Gopalkrishna, Director (Security and Vigilance), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation.

He said BMTC had appealed to Government to reduce Motor Vehicles Tax from five per cent to two per cent and revise the fare structure to remove the 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75 paise denomination of tickets to improve the Corporation.