

A Brief Encapsulation of the Karnataka's Legislative Assembly's proposed solution to Bengaluru's traffic woes

Over the last decade or two, Bengaluru's road infrastructure has evolved from the being 'needs development' to 'utterly inadequate'. The lack of access to public transport coupled with limited connectivity leaves no option but this inadequate road infrastructure. In this backdrop, it is no surprise that Bangalore found itself at tenth spot amongst the most congested cities in the world according to the TomTom Traffic Index in 2021.

One key limitation to change is improper planning, scheduling and coordination amongst different government agencies.

In this context, the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Act, 2022, passed by the Legislative assembly on 27 December 2022 is extremely significant. The law provides for constitution of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority to regulate, develop, operate, maintain and monitor urban mobility within the 'Urban Mobility Region' of Bangalore.

It is encouraging that the Bill directly seeks to address the concern arising from involvement of multiple agencies (the BDA, BMTC, BBMP, BMRCL *etcetera*) and the resulting overlap of functionality, by designating the BMLTA as the nodal agency for coordination amongst these institutions. The law also seeks addresses the objective of the National Urban Transport Policy of 2014 by attempting to harmonize and integrate urban transportation planning and the functions of various institutions.

The BMLTA is to comprise of 33 members, including the Chief Minister of Karnataka, the Minister in charge of Bengaluru Development, Minister in charge of transport, the Commissioner of Police, the Mayor and high-level members of the BBMP, BDA, KSPCB, BMRCL, BMTC, *etcetera*. The Bill also provides for the constitution of an Executive Committee headed by the Chief Secretary to the State Government to assist the BMLTA in discharging its functions. The BMLTA's primary duties are to prepare or cause to prepare a Comprehensive Mobility Plan, review and approve the City Mobility Investment Program and to also put in place frameworks, regulations and guidelines that promote seamless mobility of urban transport. Each of these duties and functions of the Authority are more elaborately delved upon in the text of the Bill. The law also endeavours to give the authority 'bite' - BMLTA is empowered to impose fines and penalties not only on individuals and companies, but also on State Government agencies or departments that do not comply with the BMLTA's directions.

Whilst, ultimately, change will turn on proper and meaningful implementation of the law it is certainly a step in the right direction To truly gauge the implications of the BMLTA Act, each and every chapter of its bare text warrants scrutiny and analysis and the manner in which the BMLTA performs its function, once it comes into being.

