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## **BENGALURU'S FINAL DESTINATION - BIKE TAXI**

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Nidhi M. Patil, Advocate, Karnataka High Court

### **ABSTRACT**

This short essay focuses on Bike taxis being the ultimate solution to Bengaluru's biggest problem- traffic congestion. While being the Tech Capital and housing some of the world's largest Tech Companies, should Bengaluru wait on creation of additional infrastructure and ring roads or access easier and accessible options such as bike taxis to bridge the last mile connectivity? Based on report formulated by KPMG, 2024 and as a common man travelling through the roads of Bengaluru every day, insights are offered as to why the Bike Taxi could be the ultimate solution to the traffic woes.

### **Introduction**

Ranked at No. 03 in 2024 as the most congested city in the World<sup>1</sup>, the average travel time for a Bangalorean to travel 10 Kms is 34 minutes. Crowned as the "Silicon Valley of Asia", it headquarters six of the top IT Companies and is home to more than four hundred global companies including Apple, Meta and Microsoft having their R & D Centers<sup>2</sup> driving innovation and solving global problems. But can the existing civic infrastructure of Bengaluru continue to house these corporations and aid in solving global problems while navigating its own domestic challenges?

Recently, Biocon Chairperson (@kiranshaw) took on to X<sup>3</sup> (formerly called Twitter) to share her experience on how an overseas business visitor expressed concerns over the bad roads and garbage. The striking question? "Doesn't the Govt. want to support investment?". This was not taken lightly by the Deputy CM D. K. Shivakumar, who expressed hurt over such criticism. The Govt. is failing each day to provide better infrastructure and better quality of life to its tax paying citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Tom, <https://www.tomtom.com/traffic-index/ranking/> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> The Scaler, <https://thescalers.com/how-bangalore-became-asias-silicon-valley/> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025)

<sup>3</sup> X, <https://x.com/kiranshaw/status/1977771130896416932> (last visited on Oct, 31, 2025)

Every person is entitled to the right to safe and well-maintained motorable roads, which constitutes as our right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution<sup>4</sup>. In a city where a commuter wastes about 117 hours annually in congestion<sup>5</sup>, we deserve better resources and infrastructure. One such solution to the glaring problem- plying of bike taxis in Bengaluru. Bike taxi is a usually a motorcycle or moped taxi which carries a passenger as a pillion behind the driver<sup>6</sup>. The emergence of bike taxis was due to the lack of adequate public transport in most Asian Countries, due to their terrain. The bikes acted as a medium connecting core area to main cities, and they cater also to the narrow and deep terrains<sup>7</sup>. The bikes are an excellent last mile connectivity source at an affordable price, especially in a concrete and congested jungle like Bengaluru.

### Why Bike Taxis?

The ability of bike taxis to effortlessly and rapidly navigate through traffic is one of their main advantages. India is the second largest two-wheeler market in the world. Two -wheelers are the highest penetrated vehicle segment in the country. Over the last three decades, their penetration has grown at the fastest pace compared to any other mode of transportation<sup>8</sup>. A large sector of the Indian Population would opt for a bike/ moped due to factors such as affordability, fuel efficiency, mobility, maneuverability, last-mile connectivity and unreliable and inefficient public transport<sup>9</sup>. Further, the pleasant climate of Bengaluru makes the bike rides comfortable for commuters and eliminates the need to travel via cars/cabs – a comparatively expensive option.

While there is progress in terms of public transport- introduction of newer metro lines and free bus services for women in Karnataka, Bengaluru is still grappling with issues of traffic jams and congestion. With the gap in the connectivity between the first and last mile, many citizens prefer using their private vehicles or hiring taxi services from aggregators which in turn is

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<sup>4</sup> Umri Pooph Pratappur (UPP) Tollways Pvt. Ltd v. M.P. Road Development Corporation and Anr, 2025 SCC Online SC 1569.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Tom, <https://www.tomtom.com/traffic-index/ranking/> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Thakur, P., A. Jain and A. Harikumar, 2020. Emerging Role of Bike (Motorcycle) Taxis in Urban Mobility. New Delhi: TERI

<sup>7</sup> Id

<sup>8</sup> Niti Bhasin and Dr. Supreet Kaur, *Unlocking the potential of Bike- taxis in India*, kpmg.in, 27.03.2024, <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/in/pdf/2024/03/unlocking-the-potential-of-bike-taxis-in-india.pdf.coredownload.inline.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Id

adding strain to the existing traffic.

The ministry of Road Transport and Highways had constituted a committee to propose Taxi Policy Guidelines to promote Urban Mobility; it was recommended in 2016 that states should promote bike sharing and e-rickshaws for last mile connectivity. The Govt. of Karnataka formulated the Karnataka Electric Bike Taxi Scheme, 2021 on 14.07.2021, wherein it was observed that Bike taxi promotes urban mobility and will act as a first and last mile connectivity solution for citizens which in turn assist people to access the Public Transport and specially for accessing Metro services<sup>10</sup>. The scheme came to be withdrawn on 06.03.2024 for reasons such as lack of protection for women and increasing tension between the Auto-rickshaw association and the bike riders. Similar concerns were shared by other states, by various stakeholders; however, they were successful in incorporating the views of all the stakeholders and allowing the aggregators of Bike Taxi's to operate in their states.

### **Karnataka's Position On The Bike Taxi**

The recent ongoing tussle between the drivers of the Auto rickshaws/ taxis with the riders of the bike taxis, operating for aggregators has created a controversy. *Vide* the communication dated 22.01.2024, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has affirmed that motorcycles fall within the definition of contract carriage and advised the States and Union Territories to accept and process applications for contract carriage permits for motorcycles. The Govt. of Karnataka is reluctant to accept & implement the communication and has categorized it as "merely advisory"<sup>11</sup>.

In a recent plea by the Aggregators seeking a direction to the state to register motorcycles as transport vehicles and grant them the appropriate contract carriage, among other remedies<sup>12</sup>, the High Court of Karnataka dismissed the plea restraining itself from interfering with the State's policy decision. However, the Karnataka High Court observed that:

*"If the circumstances justify a new approach, the State Government should not lag behind and it should be open even to the petitioners, to goad the State Government to such a change. The Court should in this context muse,*

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<sup>10</sup> Government of Karnataka, Transport Department, [https://transport.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Notifications/notification%20\(2\).pdf](https://transport.karnataka.gov.in/storage/pdf-files/Notifications/notification%20(2).pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Uber India Systems Private Limited v State of Karnataka and Ors, 2025 SCC Online Kar 7481

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

*as it is famously said, that an institution which refuses change becomes the architect of decay.”*

The Appeal against the dismissal lies before the division bench of the Hon’ble High Court of Karnataka, wherein the state has been restrained from taking coercive action against individual riders and no explicit order is passed allowing the aggregators to resume operations. On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025 the Karnataka Govt. constituted a high-level committee to examine and submit a comprehensive report on the operation and regulation of bike taxi services in Karnataka<sup>13</sup>.

### **Proposal of the Government**

The “Congestion tax” came in as a worrisome proposal to the tax burden citizens, wherein it was proposed to levy fees on single- occupancy cars entering traffic dense corridors through FASTag systems to discourage solo driving and increase the usage of public transport. However, the Deputy CM dismissed the proposal as a rumor and stressed on increasing existing infrastructure to address the traffic issues<sup>14</sup>. But is the expansion of infrastructure an immediate solution to solve the existing congestion?

The proposed Tunnel project, reported to pass beneath Lalbagh, a 40 acre botanical garden in the heart of Bengaluru, possess a serious risk to the ecosystem, including the three billion year old rock, declared as a National Geological Monument by the Geological Survey of India<sup>15</sup>. The tunneling through this ecosystem, possess a risk to the underground water channels and also threatens the aquatic life and the delicate ecosystem created. The ongoing tussle between the opposition and ruling party on whether to improve means of public transport to carry large number of commuters or improve infrastructure to facilitate movement of more vehicles, fail to provide immediate and feasible solutions.

### **Wisdom of the masses**

While 13 states out of the 28 states in India have found that the solution of Bike Taxi’s is the most obvious and practical way to deal with congestion in their states, the Government of Karnataka,

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<sup>13</sup> The Indian Express, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/karnataka-government-high-level-committee-to-look-into-bike-taxi-services-10245938/> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> The Logical Indian, <https://thelogicalindian.com/deputy-cm-dk-shivakumar-rules-out-congestion-tax-backs-mega-infra-to-ease-bengaluru-traffic/> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> The Hindu, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/tunnel-road-will-take-away-six-acres-of-lalbagh-land-damage-the-ecosystem/article70131047.ece> (last visited Oct. 31, 2025).

contrary to the stand of the other states has placed its conviction on further concretization of our city. The promised expansion of infrastructure and addition of new metro lines and additional ring roads would add pressure of construction which would cause blockages and deviations for a couple of years.

While the government has openly announced that it does not have the financial means to take on new projects due to the freebies distributed towards fulfillment of Electoral promises – how does it plan to fund this mega infrastructure proposal. The commuters are now more stressed because of the proposed ring-road, which could delay their everyday commute by a few hours. The immediate solution lying in plain sight would be to ply the bike taxis. This solution not only is a win – win solution for all stakeholder's, but also the most practical, fastest, cheapest and easiest to implement into our existing eco-system.

In a recent report prepared by KPMG<sup>16</sup>, an attempt was made to explain the relevance and importance of Bike- taxis in India, in the backdrop of the increasing traffic congestion. India is the fourth-largest automotive and second -largest two-wheeler market in the world. It was opined that the introduction of the bike-taxis benefits both the Govt. and the end users as follows:

### **Gig Workers:**

An estimated 1.5 million gig motor vehicle drivers in India are associated with leading aggregator platforms, involved mostly in delivery of goods, e-commerce logistics and local courier pick-up/delivery. By formulating a framework for operations of Bike-taxis, it could open employment opportunities to gig workers. the Bike- taxi industry has the potential to create employment. As per the report, it is estimated that the industry could generate upto 5.4 million jobs by 2030. This will also empower more people economically which will reduce the burden on the state to support these individuals.

### **Convenience & Affordability:**

The Report also examined the different modes of public transport including four -wheeler taxis, auto rickshaws and bike taxis. It was observed that on parameters of affordability, journey time, ease of hailing, doorstep pick up and comfort, Bike- taxis are the most ideal means of commute.

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<sup>16</sup> Niti Bhasin and Dr. Supreet Kaur, *Unlocking the potential of Bike- taxis in India*, kpmg.in, 27.03.2024, <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmgsites/in/pdf/2024/03/unlocking-the-potential-of-bike-taxis-in-india.pdf.coredownload.inline.pdf>.

While these were the identified benefits for the end – users and common man, the report also identified the benefits the Govt. would have in permitting plying of bike taxis in terms of Taxes collected and new employment created for its citizens.

### **Benefits To The Government:**

As mentioned above, the carbon emissions are lesser than other modes of transport. The rising global temperature invites our attention to the fuel combustion and the carbon emissions; as per the Report it was found that the Bike taxis actually emit 12 percent per passenger per km emission as opposed to the Internal Combustion engine and 60 percent per passenger per km emission as opposed to the Diesel three-wheeler<sup>17</sup>.

As on October 27<sup>th</sup> 2025, India's crude imports from the USA reached 540,000 barrels per day, the highest since 2022<sup>18</sup>. By reducing dependency and focusing on shared mobility, Government could reduce the crude import expenditure. The Report also opined that if the framework is done in an organized manner through the Aggregators, the Government could gain from the taxes in form of GST on the services provided.

### **Conclusion**

While thirteen states across India<sup>19</sup> have permitted the plying of Bike Taxis, Karnataka is still deliberating and contemplating. As mentioned above, the state has fortunately taken a positive step by creating the High-Power Committee who could be inspired by the neighboring states and formulate a plan of action towards plying of the Bike taxis and resort to inexpensive means to solve the traffic congestion problem, to an extent. Most definitely the infrastructure and the roads must improve and grow to accommodate the rising numbers of Bengaluru's population. However, to solve the immediate traffic congestion issues, the Bike- taxis offer a solution; one size fits all.

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<sup>17</sup> Id

<sup>18</sup> The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/indias-crude-import-from-us-surges-to-highest-since-2022/articleshow/124851689.cms?from=mdr> (last accessed on 31 Oct, 2025)

<sup>19</sup> The New Indian Express, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2025/Aug/22/bike-taxis-back-on-bengaluru-roads-after-karnataka-hc-hearing#:~:text=The%20court%20noted%20that%20bike,lawful%20trade%2C%20he%20added.> last accessed on 31 Oct, 2025)