

Delhi's Outcome Budget Shows DTC in Poor Health

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The government transporter is suffering from a depleting fleet and diminishing earnings, showed the outcome budget released on June 8 by Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi Manish Sisodia. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia released the outcome budget of the Delhi government on Friday, June 8. According to the budget, Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) is in a poor state, with a depleting fleet and diminishing earnings. However, the department's cluster buses, run under the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System (DIMTS), showed growth in earnings.

The operating cost per km of DTC buses in 2018-19 was targeted at ₹88 but it stood at ₹97.12. The corporation would try to bring it down to ₹95.99 per km in 2019-20. The earning per km was targeted at ₹31.10 in 2018-19 but it stood at ₹30.32. The new target for 2019-20 is ₹31.36. Also, the earning per bus per day was ₹5,898 as against the target of ₹5,931 in 2018-19. It is targeted to be ₹6,100 per bus per day in 2019-20. The average fleet utilisation of DTC dipped from targeted 87% to 84.63 % in 2018-19. The target for 2019-20 is 90% fleet utilisation. In case of DIMTS cluster buses, average fleet utilisation was 98.6% against the target of 97%. Earning per km was targeted at ₹20.55 but it was a much higher ₹30.39 in 2018-19. Earning per bus per day rose to ₹6,400 against the target of ₹6,039 in the same period. The number of operational DTC buses was 3,974 in the year 2017-18. The target set by the Delhi government was to raise the number up to 4,176 by 2018-2019. However, the number remained stagnant at 3,897. According to the outcome budget, the number of DIMTS cluster system had been targeted to be raised to 2,758 in 2018-2019, however, the current number of operating cluster buses is 1,679. During the years 2018-2019, the average daily ridership of DTC improved slightly, standing at 33 lakh commuters every day, against the targeted 32.93 lakh. The target for the year 2019-2020 has been set at 33.50 lakh. The average ridership of DIMTS buses was at 12 lakh, against the target of 12.24 lakh in 2018-2019. Abhishek Kumar, Delhi state secretary of All India Central Council of Trade Unions, told NewsClick, "How can the DTC survive if the employees are not happy? They employees, the drivers and conductors are constantly facing an uncertainty about their livelihoods. They do not have enough buses, the employees are not being made permanent, they are not receiving fair wages." According to DTC employees' unions, majority of the employees of the transporter work on contract basis. Kumar said, "The government does not want to talk to the unions. They do not want to hear what the employees want." He said that the unions had written a letter to Gopal Rai, Delhi's Minister for Development, Labour & Employment, General Administration, seeking his intervention in the matter. The letter finally reached the Labour Commissioner, who urged the Chairman, the Managing Director, and other officials to discuss the issues with the workers' unions. "But they just do not want to talk to us about any of our issues," added Kumar. Talking to NewsClick, Rajesh Kumar, a DTC employee said, "Everyone is talking about the increase in DIMTS's earnings. However, what no one knows is that the employees of DIMTS have to cover a fixed number of kilometres everyday. They are not paid their salaries until they cover the pre-decided distance.

Which is why the the buses are driven rashly by the employees. They just want to cover the distance and get their salaries. They stop at the crowded bus stands, but do not stop at the bus stands with fewer number of passengers, because they get incentives on the basis of the number of tickets sold.” Recently, CM Arvind Kejriwal announced that public transportation in Delhi would be made free for women. The announcement has been met with varied reactions from people across different classes. Abhishek Kumar said, “We welcome this move to make public transportation free for women. However, we cannot understand how this scheme will be implemented, because Delhi government does not have enough buses in the first place. There will be no government buses left in the city in a year.” According to the outcome budget, the number of bus marshals deployed for safety of passengers in buses was 3,153 in DTC buses in 2017-2018. The number was raised to 4,280 in 2018-2019, but only 3,041 marshals were available in the buses. The government aims to deploy marshals in all DTC and cluster buses during the current financial year. The outcome budget also showed that no progress could be achieved in installing CCTV cameras in buses even after successive bids for it were conducted in December 2018 and January 2019. However, Arvind Kejriwal has claimed that the process of installation of CCTV cameras in all DTC buses will start in June 2019 and will be completed by November 2019. Kumar added, “Everyone knows that the scheme will not be implemented in Delhi Metro. Central Government has an equal equity participation in DMRC, they will not let this happen.” The Delhi Metro comes under Delhi government as well as under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Hardeep Singh Puri, the minister for the department, had said soon after Kejriwal’s announcement that it was not feasible to make Metro rides free for women. He called the scheme a Jumla, and said that the CM has no definite plan in mind. Kumar added, “The scheme could have been feasible to implement in the DTC buses. But how will those who need it benefit from the scheme, if the number of DTC buses is not increased?”

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