

Audit report points to issues with City Buses

City bus and taxi services are the dominant mode of public transport in urban areas besides the use of private cars. However, there is a major shortage of city buses in cities like Thimphu and also Phuentsholing and even the services that are available have several issues.

Having public transport service has various advantages, wherein an efficient and reliable public transport service reduces the number of private cars on the roads, and thus, improves traffic congestion.

It will also reduce the carbon footprint, minimizes noise pollution, and most importantly lead to cost savings for people, and the country as a whole, from reduced import of fossil fuel and spare parts.

However, the Performance Audit report on Safe and Sustainable Road Transport, May 2022 has revealed that the efficiency, in terms of reliability and availability of public transport, is lacking in the current situation.

The report stated, "Though, the Road and Safety Transport Authority (RSTA) have approved private buses to cater services from city to outside boundaries of the Thimphu, the private buses have failed to depart for destination on time unless there are adequate numbers of passengers."

Further, the report states that, travel time and convenience to access the public transport services have been the major challenges as of now. Development of dedicated bus stops and bus bays require commitment and investment.

The report pointed out the poor management of the designated bus stops because they are either unsigned or poorly marked, and the reliability are limited for both passenger buses and city buses due to low frequency.

"The City Bus Service under Thimphu Thromde integrated smart card system, however, paying through a mobile Apps and QR Code using banking apps is still unavailable, this creates inconvenience to people who don't have cash in hand," stated the report.

Physical comfort during the trip is one of the key considerations for people choosing between using public and private transport, shared the report, adding that during the peak hours, the city buses are crowded and uncomfortable, especially for the elderly people and small children, wherein they have to stand and travel during this hour

As of now, City Bus is unable to bring ease and efficiency, comfort, safety, accessibility and convenience to the commuters. Therefore, the report recommended the need of seamless public transport connectivity which is integrated so commuter would have a choice of public transport.

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