

After 5th mishap in 5 days, Nagar route BRTS in the line of fire

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Activists demand that the route be put on hold at once, PMC says not yet

A 14-YEAR-OLD girl was seriously injured when a police van entered a BRTS lane at Ramwadi on Nagar Road and knocked her down.

This was the fifth accident on seven-km Yerawada-Wagholi BRTS route on Nagar Road in five days, triggering howls of protests from civic activists who demanded that the route be immediately put on hold.

The route was started on April 28.

The girl, identified as Akansha Dhanvij, was critically injured after she was hit by a speeding police car on BRTS lane on Wednesday morning. Police said when Akansha was crossing the road in front of Nagar Road ward office, she was hit by the speeding police car around 9.30 am. Akansha, who was on her way to meet her grandmother, was rushed to a nearby hospital, where she is now being treated in the Intensive Care Unit.

A case of accident was registered at the Yerawada police station later in the day.

Police said the vehicle was issued to the senior police inspector of Alankar police station and the police driver, Sandesh Waghmare, was on the way to pick him up from home. Police said that though the BRTS lane is reserved for buses, ambulances and police vehicles can use them in emergency situations. "Picking up a police inspector from home was certainly not an emergency. This case will be treated as any other accident case," said an officer from Yerawada police station.

Senior inspector S A Patil of the police station said, "We are conducting a preliminary probe into the incident and an offence of rash driving and causing injuries due to negligence will be registered after it."

Sensing the "seriousness" of the situation, Municipal Commissioner Kunal Kumar held an urgent meeting with PMPWL staff, traffic police, civic officials and civic activists. The activists argued that they had warned



The police jeep after the accident. Express Photo

PMC and PMPWL to get their act together before starting the Nagar Road route, yet they went ahead with it.

Demanding that Nagar Road BRTS be put on hold, Ganeen Sukhrani of the Nagari Chetna Manch and Prashant Inamdar of Pedestrians First said, "The accident-prone Nagar Road BRTS should be immediately put on hold until proper steps are taken to make it safe."

However, the civic chief said that as of now, they were not suspending it but taking all necessary steps to put safety measures in place. "We are open about it... if required, we will also suspend it," Kunal Kumar told this paper after the meeting.

Civic activists said the PMC should discourage all on-street parking on BRTS corridor's side margins and footpaths. "There is an urgent need for strict continuous action against all illegal parking all along Nagar Road by radio cabs, heavy vehicles, jeeps illegally ferrying passengers, luxury coaches, vehicle dealers, garages, vendors, hawkers,

six-seater and three-seater autos," said Sukhrani. She said PMC should create footpaths where there are none to let commuters cross to the median from a safe place.

"Sealing of all gaps and intersections that are not in design is needed to reduce accidents." Activists also said PMC and PMPWL should improve facilities which are primitive at bus shelters such as cracked, either open or closed doors, and drinking water facilities.

The activists also called for installing basic facilities such as toilet and drinking water at the bus terminal, enhancing poor intensity of street lighting, installing of raised pedestrian crossing with down-lighters working on solar panels for assisting commuters to the median at night ensuring visibility of signages and information boards especially at entry/exit of segregated BRT lanes, synchronising traffic signals properly so that current confusion is removed and removing dead signals to avoid confusion on part of motorists.

Corporators raise heat over BRTS mishap

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THE GENERAL body meeting of the Pune Municipal Corporation on Wednesday saw corporators cutting across party lines condemning the inauguration of the Pune-Ahmednagar stretch of the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS).

In an accident on Wednesday, a 14-year-old girl was critically injured by a police van which had entered the BRT lane in front of the Nagar Road Ward office.

As soon as the meeting commenced, corporators from BJP, Shiv Sena and Congress stormed into the well of the House, many of them carrying banners blaming the civic administration for the accidents in the route. Raising slogans, some of them alleged that the route was hastily inaugurated without proper studies. During the course of discussion, corporators demanded that the BRT route be scrapped and a proper safety audit of the route be undertaken.

Since its inauguration, the BRTS stretch on the Pune-Ahmednagar route has seen a number of accidents.

On Wednesday, Ganeen Sukhrani, secretary of the Nagrik Chetana Manch, sent out a press release asking for immediate suspension of the project.

This was one of the first projects that was inaugurated after Prashant Jagtap was elected as the Mayor of the city. During the GB meeting, Jagtap said PMPWL MD Abhishek Krishna would make a statement before the House on Thursday.