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Pandemic had a serious impact on the project; contractors are asking for compensation due to high prices: NCRTC MD, Vinay Kumar Singh

In an exclusive conversation with ET Infra, Vinay Kumar Singh Managing Director, NCRTC (National Capital Region Transport Corporation) shares with us the details about the Regional Rapid Transit System between Delhi and Meerut, the challenges the project faced during the pandemic and the impact of a robust urban transport on major cities.

Megha Manchanda • ETInfra • Updated: February 28, 2023, 20:20 IST



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and Meerut, the challenges the project faced during the pandemic and the impact of a robust urban transport on major cities.

What will the [RRTS](#) system do for Delhi and NCR?

We are trying to create access to people living in NCR, to which they don't have access today and even if they have it is not that safe. RRTS is something which will integrate NCR. It will change the way people travel.

Primarily there is an effort to provide mobility to people in this region through a green mode of transport. The project is to decongest Delhi.

The traffic has increased much more than it was anticipated at the time of conceptualisation of this RRTS project and is expected to grow further by the time the project is fully operational in June 2025. How has that been factored in by NCRTC?

Once the system comes into play, there will be a lot of induced traffic. It will democratise mobility; few people who had cars or access to taxis were able to travel faster to Delhi but a majority of the public could not. These kinds of demands are not seen but once the system is in place it will be induced. The projections can easily be met out by the systems we have designed. As of today the capacity of the system is 40,000- 60,000 passengers in one direction every hour. Initially, there will be one train every three minutes and with time and improvement in technology the frequency of the trains can be improved.

The timeline for the completion of the Delhi-Meerut RRTS is June 2025, will the system also achieve full integration by that time?

As we commission the system it will be simultaneously integrated with other modes of transport. However, the interoperability of the Delhi-Meerut corridor with the two other proposed corridors -- Delhi-Alwar and [Delhi-Panipat](#) -- will come once these corridors are commissioned.

What kind of impact did the pandemic have on the project, in terms of delays, escalation in raw material cost, clearances etc.?

Pandemic had a serious impact on the project. RRTS is a high technology assignment and most of the technologies that are used in the railways system are being used for the first time and we wanted those designers and engineers, but a pandemic had put restrictions on this and we were able to mitigate only some of these risks. There was a serious problem of supply chains getting disturbed all across the world. In many cases the components

got delayed and in some cases the shipping lines were disturbed completely. It was taking two months to ship some assignments which otherwise would have taken a fortnight.

There has been a sharp increase in inflation post pandemic, what kind of impact has it had on the RRTS project?

It had serious problems as far as steel prices were concerned, supply chains were disturbed and the raw material was not available for many months and when it was available it was very expensive as it was not factored in the contract, therefore the contractors had serious issues with us.

Was there any revision in those contracts?

Normally in public contracts it is not done unless the government comes out with a policy that all contracts on board will see change in contracts. In individual public procurement contracts we do not do that.

The contractors did face some heat in terms of cost escalation, were there any demands from them to revise the contracts?

They have made representation to the government and also to us, we are still dealing with them and if there is any change in government policy during that time certainly we will give that kind of relief.

What are these contractors asking from NCRTC or the government?

Generally contractors are asking for compensation due to high steel prices and in many cases the idling of machinery and labour.

As per the contract, the coaches for RRTS have to be locally made. By when will we see 100% locally made rolling stock?

Currently, all trains are made here but there are some components that we need to import. More than 80% of the components are manufactured locally but 100% of the rolling stock is assembled in India.