

# HOUSE PANEL CALLS FOR A UNIFIED METRO RAIL LAW

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Railways

Fast commute: A file photo of commuters waiting to board a Metro train in New Delhi. PTI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs on Tuesday flagged the need for a single and comprehensive law for all the Metro rail networks in the country as opposed to the existing three Central Acts, and also raised the concern about the low ridership in all Metros apart from Delhi and Mumbai.

The panel, chaired by Jagdambika Pal, presented its report on the “implementation of Metro rail projects” to the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The report said that there were three Acts governing Metro rail networks in the country and there was “a need for a single and comprehensive legislation”.

The committee was informed that the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry was in the process of drafting the Metro Rail (Construction, Operation, Maintenance and Administration) Bill, 2021, which would replace the three existing Acts.

The report said barring Delhi and Mumbai Line 1, many operational Metro railways, including in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Chennai, Kolkata and Kochi, had low ridership that was leading to a delay in the projects attaining break-even point.

“The dismal performance of the majority of the metro rail networks in terms of carrying passengers enough to break even even after six to seven years of continuous operations shows that (i) faulty DPRs, (ii) lack of proper planning to provide first and last mile connectivity, (iii) provision of parking at metro rail stations, (iv) need for increasing catchment area, etc,” the report stated.

## Low ridership

The panel also recommended the use of the less capital-intensive MetroNeo and MetroLite networks in small cities with low ridership instead of the conventional Metro systems.

The committee recommended that the Kochi Water Metro project should be included under the FAME II scheme of the Ministry of Heavy Industries as it would be a “pollution-free” mode of transport using battery-operated boats.

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