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ARTICLE

Gurugram: repurposing public transport in times of need

Although the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has presented new challenges to the transport sector, Indian bus operator Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus Limited (GMCBL) has adapted to offer new services to those in need during India's ongoing lockdown restrictions.

By Gurugram
Metropolitan City
Bus Limited
(GMCBL)

27 April 2020

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Gurugram City Bus Service commenced service in Gurugram Metropolitan area in September 2018 under the name 'Gurugaman'. Today, it has a fleet of 154 eco-friendly buses managed at two depots, operating on 18 routes (before lockdown).

Following the outbreak of the novel [coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) and the national lockdown, a number of activities are being carried out by [Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus Limited \(GMCBL\)](#) in Gurugram under the guidance of the CEO, Smt. Sonal Goel IAS. The CEO, realising great possibilities can happen through public transport, is leading the unique initiatives each day to serve the local community.

Repurposing a public transport bus as a utility bus

In an initiative integrating innovation and utility, the CEO led the GMCBL team to rise to the need of the hour in extending its support to the District Administration team. In order to tackle the challenges and priorities of residents, it offered its buses to be used purposefully to serve the needs of residents in the lockdown period.

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Societies/ Public Places to fulfil the needs of the residential communities. As *The Better India* magazine commented on Twitter to the GMCBL CEO, it is "important to ensure that citizens have safe access to essentials."

GMCBL buses are thus becoming a saviour in many ways, first as a public transport lifeline and, during lockdown, as a new mobile grocery store catering to the essential needs of the residents.

The buses are reaching out to residents in various areas as per their demand and guidance from the District Administration. With the Municipal Corporation Gurugram starting home delivery services, RWAs send their requirements through mail. And now, GMCBL buses are also providing delivery service of fruits and vegetables to residents' doorsteps and connecting and establishing a bond with citizens in this time of need.

Reaching out to those in need



Another initiative was promoting cleanliness and personal hygiene amongst those living in the Gurugram slums. In a drive led by the

CEO, along with the GMCBL team, sanitation items, masks and food were distributed among those in need and using sanitation products to keep the body and hands clean was promoted and emphasised.

The hygiene items included soap for washing clothes, toothbrushes and toothpaste for maintaining oral hygiene,

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hygiene with regard to the threat of coronavirus.

More than 1,500 sanitation packet kits have been distributed to date. The CEO also led the team to distribute food packets/ essential food items to people in need residing near Basai Talaab. More than 200 packets of ration comprising dal, rice, sugar, salt and atta were distributed among them.

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Helping migrants to reach relief centres/shelter camps and destinations

In another initiative, the team helped stranded homeless migrant workers by extending its support to the Gurugram Police by providing buses for transportation of the migrant workers who were left high and dry on the roads due to the lockdown. GMCBL buses helped in the movement of people intra-city by facilitating them to reach relief camps, shelter

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An appeal was issued by the CEO GMCBL on 2 April 2020 through a special video message posted on social media platforms to all Gurugram residents to Stay Home and to follow the lockdown order for the safety of all.

Extending solidarity and help to the government in a time of crisis

Extending solidarity and help to the government in this difficult time, the CEO GMCBL led by example by donating her one month's salary to the Haryana COVID Relief Fund, inspiring her entire team and partner organisations to contribute. The Chief Minister Haryana, Shri Manohar Lal acknowledged and thanked the team's support in the fight against COVID-19 on Twitter, stating that every contribution is a precious one.

Ensuring proper disinfection of buses

Preventive measures were taken under directions of the CEO and authorities to provide utmost safety to passengers and staff before lockdown. Even after lockdown, since the buses are being used for various purposes, disinfection of entire buses is carried on daily basis, and care is being taken to sanitise all touch points, including handrails, bars, seats and doors. Public Health Awareness posters have been displayed inside buses on Dos and Don'ts to advise passengers on appropriate conduct.

Transporting mobile health teams/patients to and from hospitals

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affected containment areas, and for transporting quarantine patients to hospitals and moving recovered patients after their quarantine period/discharge to drop off destinations.

Serving as a mobile bus for conducting COVID-19 tests

Adding valuable contribution in the fight against COVID-19, GMCBL's latest initiative started on 21 April 2020, the start of a Drive-Thru

Collection for COVID-19 samples for testing in

Gurugram. One Gurugaman

bus has been modified to be the Mobile Bus for Collecting Samples for Conducting COVID-19 Tests as a drive to instill confidence among people to fight the pandemic.



Credit: Gurugram Metropolitan City Bus Limited (GMCBL)

The Gurugaman bus is equipped with testing facilities with Technicians/Phlebotomists of Pathkind Diagnostics team moving in defined areas in Gurugram during the day on fixed hour basis. The bus may move in Containment zones, and aims to contribute to the national cause and help in reducing chances of community transmission.

By not being merely restricted to be the traditional public transport system that it was originally intended to be, Gurugram City Bus service is emerging as a 'saviour' and has redefined its relevance in times of this national emergency.