

5,000 e-buses next fiscal, 50K in 5 years

Brajendra K Parashar

bkparashar@hindustantimes.com

LUCKNOW: Aiming to give a big push to eco-friendly transportation on highways in the state, Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) looks to induct more than 5,000 electric buses into its fleet during the upcoming financial year 2024-25, and a total of 50,000 over the next five years.

The corporation has already invited bids from private companies/operators for the operation of both air-conditioned (AC) and non-AC e-buses on existing nationalised routes in the state. Also, the corporation is reportedly in advanced stages of buying 100 e-buses with its own resources. These buses will be operated on routes in Ghaziabad, Agra and Ayodhya regions.

"As desired by the chief minister, we aim to induct 50,000 electric buses into the UPSRTC fleet over the next five years and phase out around 12,000 diesel buses to promote greener means of transport in the state," and UPSRTC chairman and principal secretary of transport L Venkateshwarlu said.

"Around 5,000 of them will be inducted in 2024-25 only and necessary action in this regard is being," he added.

Under the first model, UPSRTC will enter into an agreement with private players permitting them to operate electric buses on any of the existing inter-district routes where the corporation already operates, on a revenue sharing basis.

Routes decided for 100 e-buses

- **Agra region:** Agra-Delhi via Mathura (10 buses), Agra-Farrukhabad-via Mainpuri (8), Agra-Aligarh-Bulandshahr (10) and Agra-Kasganj-Badaun (10)
- **Ghaziabad region:** Anand Vihar-Moradabad (8 buses), Anand Vihar-Muzaffarnagar (8), Kashmiri Gate-Nazibabad (6), Anand Vihar-Kasganj (8) and Anand Vihar-Mathura (8)
- **Ayodhya region:** Ayodhya Dhan-Varanasi via Sultanpur (8 buses), Ayodhya Dham-Prayagraj (4), Ayodhya Dham-Gorakhpur (4), Ayodhya Dham-Lucknow (4) and Ayodhya Dham-Bahraich (4)

The bids are scheduled to be opened on March 28 after a pre-bid conference on March 18.

"As per the action plan, UPSRTC will provide revenue collection facilities, online ticket booking facilities space for maintenance and electric connection for the charging of batteries of the e-buses," UPSRTC chief general manager Rajiv Anand said.

UPSRTC, according to him, would deduct only administrative charges and share the rest of the revenue with the private

operators. Administrative charges, another official hinted, might be around Rs 9 per km. Bids have been invited for administrative charges only, the official noted.

Also, UPSRTC is all set to acquire 100 electric buses for their operation on specified routes soon.

"The UPSRTC board of directors had approved the proposal for the purchase 3,000 buses in 2024-25 but for now, we are buying only 100 of them from our own resources in view of the subsequent decision to induct 5,000 electric buses on contractual basis," said another senior UPSRTC official RN Verma. "The plan to buy the 100 buses is in a very advanced stage," he added.

"Out of the 100 buses, 38 each will be allotted to Ghaziabad and Agra regions and 24 to Ayodhya," UPSRTC general manager Satya Narayan, who's looking after the project, said.

However, while this novel bid signifies UP's dedication to combating climate change by reducing carbon emissions, there are many who question the viability of the electric bus project at the current fare structure.

"A 12-meter AC electric bus costs around Rs 1.5 crore against Rs 60 lakh for a diesel bus. Besides, the cost of replacement of battery of the electric bus is also very high. Given this, the UPSRTC will have to keep the fare for electric buses much higher to make the project viable," a retired UPSRTC official pointed out.