



An Appraisal of Quality of SRTUs Services

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Every passenger who travels in a bus desires to reach his destination quite safe and secure within the expected time. The safety and security in a bus service are judged by the frequency of accidents and breakdowns while the punctuality of service is determined by the arrival and departure of buses on time without any possibility of cancellation of the scheduled trips. In recent years another determinant of quality of bus services has also been developed. It is the provision of amenities and facilities to make the journey of passengers comfortable. Gone are the days when amenities and facilities for passengers were advocated on humanitarian and compassionate ground. Social, political and economic conditions have changed now and better amenities and facilities are demanded as a matter of right by the passenger. Thus, the evaluation of the quality of bus services from the passenger's point of view can be done with the help of the following determinants:

1. Rate of accidents indicating safety and security of passengers.
2. Rate of breakdowns indicating reliability of services.
3. Operation of scheduled trips indicating regularity of services.
4. Amenities to passengers indicating the level of comfort, and
5. Rate of public complaints indicating the level of efficiency of the SRTUs.



In the light of above background, an effort has been made in the article to evaluate the services of State Road Transport Undertakings (SRTUs) in India.

ACCIDENTS: Accident is an unexpected and undesirable occurrence or happening, causing physical injuries, disabilities and even death. Whenever there is some movement accidental collisions are liable to occur. Therefore, they are in no way surprising. The worrying thing is the continuous increase in number of road accidents and resulting colossal loss of human life and property.

India's motor vehicle population is hardly one percent of the world's total vehicle population yet her share in road accidents is six percent. 4,67,044 accidents took place in the country during the year 2018 in which 1,51,417 persons were killed and 4,69,144 were injured. The largest number of accidents was in Tamilnadu (63,920) followed by Madhya Pradesh (51,397), Uttar Pradesh (42,568), Karnataka (41707), Kerala (40,181) and Maharashtra (35,717). These figures are based on reported and recorded cases. There are many hit and run cases unrecorded. If those are also taken into account the actual number could be even larger.

The frequency of accidents can be said to be the basic factor to judge the safety and security in the bus services because these accidents do not only cause the loss of human life and property but also cause a heavy loss to the transport undertaking and the State as well. If the frequency of accidents is very high, the efficiency of the transport undertaking is negatively affected and vice versa. During the period of 10 years the total number of accidents in SRTUs came down from 25,258 in 2008-09 to 15,659 in 2017-18. As regards fatal accidents, their number also reduced from 4,904 (2008-09) to 3,510 (2017-18). It is worthwhile to mention that total number of accidents does not present the true picture. No doubt that though



decrease in the total number increases the safety and security of traveling passengers, its real impact should be measured keeping in mind the scope and mileage of bus services. The point at which we should concentrate is the rate of accidents per lakh kms. run by the buses. Table-1 clearly shows that the rate of accidents in SRTUs has reduced from 0.18 in 2008-09 to 0.10 per lakh kms. in 2017-18. There are a number of SRTCs in which the rate of accidents per lakh kms. was much lower than the national average (0.10). they are: Himachal RTC (0.02); ST Haryana, Uttar Pradesh SRTC and Gujrat SRTC (0.06); and Andhra Pradesh SRTC and Rajasthan SRTC (0.08).

Accident is an industrial hazard and despite best efforts safety devices it could not be completely eliminated, particularly in transport sector. Therefore, we have to create an atmosphere where there are fewer chances of accidents. As regards the cause of accidents, the most common are rash and negligent driving, mechanical defects in buses, poor road conditions and fault of pedestrians. Various accident analysis have proved that 70 per cent of the accidents are caused due to driver's fault. When fatal or major accidents occur in air or rail a hue and cry is made and full inquiries and investigations are held to go into the root of the accidents. But such inquiries or investigations are not usual, in any case not thorough, in the case of bus accidents. Therefore, there is every need to make enquiry when a bus-accident takes place and responsible party should be punished.

Following steps have played significant role in bringing down the number and the rate of accidents in SRTUs:

1. Strict instructions have been given to drivers against over speeding.



2. All new drivers are trained in SRTUs Driving Training Schools before they are allowed to drive.

3. Refresher courses for drivers and for driver instructors are conducted.

4. Drivers above the age of 40 years are subjected to yearly medical check-up including visual test.

5. Award are given to drivers who have accidentfree record.

6. Drivers are encouraged to point out defects, if any, in a vehicle before it is taken out.

7. Safety weeks are organized periodically and special appeals are made to drivers from various levels to avoid accident at all costs. Exhibition of posters and film shows on safe driving are arranged to inculcate the habit of safe driving in the drivers.

8. The Central Government has made several amendments in the Motor Vehicle Act, such as stricter procedures relating to grant of driving licences and validity period thereof, laying down standards for the components and parts of the vehicles and provision for issuing fitness certificates for vehicles.

BREAKDOWNS: A breakdown means the stoppage of vehicle on road due to mechanical defects or other failures rendering the vehicle immobile or unfit for continuation of the revenue earning trip. Whenever a vehicle meets with a breakdown enroute, it causes vexation amongst passengers. It causes a lot of inconvenience to them and sometimes they have to incur an additional expenditure, also thereby increasing the travel cost. The reliability of service is measured by one of the parameters called as breakdown rate per 10,000 kms.



The average rate of breakdowns in SRTUs has marginally reduced and came down from 0.20 in 2008-09 to 0.18 in 2017-18. Uttar Pradesh SRTC and Karnataka SRTC (0.02), Andhra Pradesh SRTC and Gujarat SRTC (0.04) and ST Haryana (0.11) are such undertakings in which average rate of breakdowns in much lower than national average (0.18).

The causes of breakdowns may be grouped under the two categories –

(i) Breakdowns due to mechanical failures in which vehicles stop on road due to mechanical failures. Break failure, power failure, transmission failure etc., are a few example of such types of breakdowns which arise due to inefficiency of the mechanical/engineering department of the undertaking.

(ii) Breakdowns due to non-mechanical failures: Engine oil shortage, fuel shortage, tyre puncture or burst etc., rendering the vehicle immobile can be considered as breakdowns due to non-mechanical failures.

An analysis of causes of breakdowns in SRTUs indicated that about $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the total breakdowns are caused to tyre punctures, $\frac{1}{4}$ th on account of engine system and the rest $\frac{1}{2}$ are mostly from transmission, break and suspension systems. In the past, the breakdowns due to tyre punctures were considered to be beyond control. But now many SRTUs are able to reduce its quantum by taking appropriate measures for tyre maintenance. Similar to this, even for other systems, they can be controlled if timely managerial control is exercised. It is pertinent to note that now STRUs are trying to achieve Zero Defect situation.



Table - 1

Rates of Accidents and Breakdowns in SRTUs

Year	Accident Rate (Per Lakh Kms)	Breakdown Rate (Per 10,000 Kms)
2008-09	0.18	0.20
2009-10	0.16	0.20
2010-11	0.16	0.21
2011-12	0.15	0.22
2012-13	0.13	0.24
2013-14	0.14	0.24
2014-15	0.13	0.26
2015-16	0.12	0.21
2016-17	0.11	0.20
2017-18	0.10	0.18

(Source – STUs – Profile & Performance 2017-18)

REGULARITY OF SERVICES: The services rendered by a SRTU are considered regular if they run without cancellation of the scheduled trips. Regularity of operation is the percentage of scheduled trips actually operated to the total trips to be operated. Irregularity is more serious if the passengers, who are to board the bus, are told that their bus is cancelled. Cancellation of scheduled trips results not only in economic loss to the undertaking but also adversely affects its goodwill. The common causes for cancellation of the scheduled trips are: non-availability of reasonable number of passengers, non-availability of buses, accidents met by the scheduled buses, mechanical failure of the buses, non-arrival of the scheduled buses at the bus stations;etc.



Among the all SRTUs Karnataka SRTC should the best performance with regularity i.e 99.58 in 2017-18. In other words, only 0.42 percent of the total scheduled trips were cancelled in 2017-18. The position of regularity in some selected SRTUs has been presented in Table – 2. Though the cancellation of trips upto 5 percent is natural because of sudden failure of buses or accidents. However, it can be minimized by ensuring the mechanical fitness and improved maintenance services of buses.

Table – 2

Regularity of services in selected SRTUs (2017-18)

Name of SRTU	Tripstobeoperate d(Lakhs)	ActualTrips operated(Lakhs)	Regularity (Percentage)
1.Gujarat SRTC	162.72	136.70	84.01
2.Odisha SRTC	00.81	00.70	86.42
3.Rajasthan SRTC	43.45	38.69	89.04
4.Maharashtra SRTC	185.00	166.70	90.11
5.AndhraPradesh SRTC	232.02	218.46	94.16
6.Telangana SRTC	289.57	283.95	98.06
7.Karnataka SRTC	156.54	155.88	99.58

(Source – STUs – Profile & Performance 2017-18)

AMENITIES TO THE PASSENGERS:

(i) Amenities and Facilities at Bus Stations: Almost all the SRTUs have got constructed bus stations at all big and important cities and towns in their respective states. A brief description of facilities at bus stations is as follows:(a) Benches and chairs have been provided at bus stations so that passengers can sit



comfortably.(b)Stations have been equipped with drinking water facilities and with cold water in Summer.(c)Bus stations have equipped with booking windows for issuing tickets. At some stations, such provisions for ladies and gents have been made separately.(d)Separate urinals and lavatories for ladies and gents have been constructed. The facility of ‘SulabhSauchalaya’ has also been made available at bus stations.(e)Enquiry booths have been established at bus stations from where the passengers can have information about the operation of buses.(f)Departure and arrival timings of buses and fare schedules are displayed by the side of booking windows.(g)Arrangement of the announcement about the arrival and departure of buses has also been made at some stations so that the passengers may conveniently board the bus for their respective destination.(h)Licensed coolies/porters at reasonable charges are available at big bus stations for loading and unloading the luggage of passengers. (i)Cloak room facilities on the pattern of Railways have been commenced by some SRTUs.

(ii) Amenities and Facilities in the Buses: (a)No over loading is permitted. (b)Cushioned seats in the buses are provided to make the journey comfortable. (c)Every effort is made to have the safety of luggage and protection from sun and shower while bus is in operation.

(iii) Other Amenities: (a)Online reservations are provided by the different SRTUs. (b)Hi-tech services are provided on longroutes. (c)India is a country of fairs and festivals. A large number of fairs and functions take place every year in different parts of the country. Therefore, SRTUs provide special services on such occasions in their respective states. (d)SRTUs try to keep full record of the luggage left behind at bus stations or in buses by the passengers and make every effort to



handover the same to the concerned owners, wherever possible. (e)SRTUs provide concessions and issue seasonal passes and free passes to the different section of the traveling public.

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS: PublicComplaints are recorded in the complaint book at the bus station or with the conductors. The passengers can also send their complaints to the concerned State Transport Authority for any inconvenience caused while traveling. The operator should not only entertain the public/passengers by receiving complaints against its performance but also solve them quickly to the full satisfaction of the complaints. The complaints generally relate to the rudeness and misbehaviour of the staff, lack of punctuality and regularity of services, refusal to pay balance amount, theft of passengers' luggage, over loading, resumption of suspended services etc. These also relate sanitary blocks, sheds and stands and amenities provided at the bus stands etc.

If the rate of complaints decreases it will be a sign of efficient management because by way of management it gives minimum chances to the passengers for making complaints against its working and vice-versa. On national level, the average rate of public complaints in SRTUs has been decreasing. It came down from 0.14 in 2008-09 to 0.09 per lakh passengers in 2017-18. Causewise analysis shows that maximum complaints were related to the misbehaviour and incivility of the staff, particularly drivers and conductors.

Complaints related to the public amenities, refund claims, theft of luggage and compensation claims occupied second, third, fourth and fifth place respectively. It is worthwhile to note that a complete absence of public complaints is neither possible nor it is in the interest of the undertaking, because some of the complaints



received imply very good suggestions and can make bus services more efficient and economical, if implemented. Therefore, passengers should be motivated to make concrete suggestions in the interest of the undertaking as well as travelling public.

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