

<https://indianinfrastructure.com/2026/09/10/interview-with-shalabh-goel-ncrtc-provides-new-age-infrastructure-with-a-commuter-first-mindset/>

Interview with Shalabh Goel: “NCRTC provides new-age infrastructure with a commuter-first mindset”



The Namo-Bharat regional rapid transit system (RRTS), implemented by the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), marks a major step forward in India's urban transport infrastructure. Designed to meet the growing mobility needs of the National Capital Region, it provides fast, dependable and sustainable connectivity between Delhi and neighbouring cities. By offering an efficient alternative to road travel, the system seeks to improve regional accessibility, shorten journeys, ease congestion and promote sustainable economic development. In an interview with *Indian Infrastructure*, Shalabh Goel, Managing Director, NCRTC, shared his perspective on the progress of the Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor, its integration with other modes of transportation, technological advancements, sustainability initiatives, challenges faced and the organisation's focus areas going forward. Edited excerpts...

How has been the response so far to the Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor? What measures are being taken to increase the ridership?

The Hon'ble Prime Minister dedicated the entire Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor to the nation on February 22, 2026 and, at present, about 100,000 people are travelling on it daily. Also, the corridor recently crossed the milestone of more than 40 million commuter trips.

This serves as tangible proof of the growing public confidence and reliance on this new kind of regional mobility solution.

The NCRTC's approach from the start has been to provide new-age infrastructure with a commuter-first mindset. Sustained ridership growth is closely linked to how well we integrate the system into people's daily lives. For this, the NCRTC is making consistent efforts to enhance the passenger experience by offering a wide range of amenities, from food and beverage outlets and banking services to Aadhaar centres and smart lockers for secure luggage storage. A modern co-working space is also operational at the Ghaziabad Namo Bharat station. Furthermore, electric vehicle charging facilities are now available at nine Namo Bharat stations on the corridor.

We are working on both physical and digital integration; this includes seamless integration of the stations with other existing modes of public transit and digital ticketing integration with the mobile applications of Namo Bharat, the Delhi Metro and the IRCTC. Further, National Common Mobility Cards are available from day one of operation. At stations such as New Ashok Nagar, commuters moving between the Delhi Metro and Namo Bharat have to undergo security frisking just once, thereby providing a seamless and time-saving experience.

The goal is not just to increase footfalls but also to enable a sustained shift towards public transport, and that happens when commuters find value in choosing Namo Bharat over private vehicles, not just occasionally, but every day. The NCRTC is committed to making it a reliable, sustainable and rewarding choice.

How are you approaching integration with other modes of transportation?

Multimodal integration has been one of the guiding principles of the Namo Bharat project. The stations have been designed in a way to be seamlessly integrated with other existing modes of public transit such as the metro, railways and bus networks, wherever possible. For example, at Sarai Kale Khan, the NCRTC has commissioned a foot-overbridge (FOB) equipped with travellers, enabling seamless integration with the Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station; this initiative has provided a safe, efficient and long-term solution to the congestion and overcrowding problem at this transit hub.

Similarly, seamless integration through FOBs has been provided with metro stations at New Ashok Nagar and Ghaziabad, while an FOB is being planned at Anand Vihar, which will offer convenient interchange with the railway station, ISBT, metro and city bus services. We are also working towards strengthening first- and last-mile connectivity. Seamless integration with the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation buses, the Delhi Metro, DTC bus services and e-autos is encouraging commuters to make the switch from private vehicles to public transit.

What role is technology playing in project planning and execution?

From conception to operations, technology has helped shape the development of India's first Namo Bharat corridor, not as an isolated layer, but as an integral part of project execution and system design. This approach has ensured timely and efficient project completion, well within costs, while avoiding conflicts and minimising risks.

The NCRTC has used building information modelling (BIM) to bring together civil, structural, architectural and system-related designs into a single integrated digital model. The common data environment was used as a cloud-based platform for managing drawings, design changes and approvals. Supporting this precision-driven approach was the continuous operating reference station network, which provided real-time, accurate coordinates of any point within the geographical limits of the network.

Project monitoring was further supported by Systematic Program Evaluation for Efficient Delivery of Project (SPEED), an in-house solution developed by the NCRTC. For the signalling system, the NCRTC adopted European Train Control System Level 2 (Hybrid Level 3) over Long-Term Evolution with a combination of the latest interlocking and platform screen door. A global first deployment, this has positioned India at the forefront of contemporary rail technologies. The NCRTC has also deployed, for the first time in the country, the precast ballast-less track to support a design speed of 180 kmph.

As the entire Namo Bharat corridor has now been commissioned, technology continues to play a central role in ensuring system reliability and sustained performance. Asset management is being carried out through iDREAMS, the integrated real-time enterprise asset management system. iDREAMS brings together real-time data from multiple platforms and subsystems, including BIM, the geographic information system, internet of things, operation control centre, supervisory control and data acquisition and the building management system, to monitor asset health, predict maintenance requirements and prevent downtime. The NCRTC is also using AI and other technologies for the maintenance and upkeep of the corridor. One example is a drone-based system with acoustic sensors to detect cable cutting.

What measures are being taken in the areas of sustainability and energy efficiency?

Namo Bharat is a rail-based transit system with trains driven by electric traction and significantly lesser energy consumption than traditional road vehicles. The Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor is expected to increase the share of public transportation usage along the route, from 37 per cent to 63 per cent. This corridor will help over 100,000 private vehicles from the roads, leading to an estimated reduction of approximately 250,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Further, a state-of-the-art regenerative braking system is integrated into the Namo Bharat rolling stock. This technology captures the train's kinetic energy and converts it into electrical energy, achieving an energy saving of up to 30 per cent.

In alignment with the National Solar Mission, the NCRTC aims to generate approximately 15 MW of peak solar power from rooftops of stations, depots and other buildings, primarily for non-traction purposes. To date, solar power plants with a capacity of 7.4 MW have been commissioned. We have also implemented an innovative "Solar on Track" project at the Namo Bharat Depot in Duhai, where solar panels have been installed on the tracks. Additionally, we are going to develop a 110 MW captive solar power plant in Uttar Pradesh. It is expected to meet nearly 60 per cent of the Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor's electricity requirement.

What do you see as the biggest challenges? How can these be addressed?

Large-scale urban mobility projects inevitably involve significant challenges, such as land availability, utility shifting and multi-agency coordination. However, the first Namo Bharat corridor has been successfully completed within the stipulated timeline and approved financial framework, despite the havoc wreaked by a global pandemic and the challenges of construction in dense urban areas with existing infrastructure. It was made possible with meticulous planning, extensive preparatory work along with unprecedented support from the government.

I believe planning, leveraging cutting-edge technologies, the adoption of advanced construction methodologies and the establishment of balanced contractual frameworks, combined with seamless coordination among local communities, government bodies, contractors, funding agencies, local authorities and other stakeholders, are key to addressing similar challenges in future infrastructure projects.

However, long-term sustainability of such capital-intensive projects is a major challenge globally. To overcome it, the NCRTC is exploring various opportunities for alternative revenue services and non-fare box revenue such as semi-naming rights and co-branding, indoor and outdoor advertising on Namo Bharat trains and stations, leasing out retail spaces, and transit-oriented development (TOD) around the corridor.

Going forward, what will be the NCRTC's focus areas for the next two years?

With the successful commissioning of India's first semi-high-speed RRTS between Delhi, Ghaziabad and Meerut, the immediate priority is to further strengthen the system through continuous improvements in service delivery, operational efficiency, multimodal integration, first- and last-mile connectivity, and overall commuter experience.

The other two Phase I Namo Bharat corridors – Delhi-Panipat-Karnal and Delhi-Shahjahanpur-Neemrana-Behror (SNB)-Alwar – are also at advanced stages of consideration. Meanwhile, several preparatory activities, including geotechnical investigations, utility mapping and shifting or modification of utilities, such as electrical heat tracing lines and water pipelines, have already been initiated for these corridors. This groundwork will help us facilitate faster execution once the requisite approvals are received.

Furthermore, detailed project reports are being prepared for the Ghaziabad-Jewar (Noida Airport) and Noida-Faridabad-Gurugram corridors. In addition, several other states are exploring the feasibility of similar RRTS to address growing urbanisation and regional mobility requirements. In fact, the latest Economic Survey of India mentions the potential development of nearly 2,900 km of Namo Bharat corridors across the country.