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## Mini buses for city in just two months

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In about two months, the city may finally have another means of public transport — 200 mini buses that will seat 27 each are set to be rolled out.

Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) sources said the mini buses will begin operations by the end of May or the first week of June. “These buses will ply mainly in the extended areas of the city. Apart from providing residents with a mode of transport, they will also ensure that share autorickshaws do not eat into MTC’s revenue in these areas,” an MTC official said.

As of now, two companies have been selected to make the buses. “Initially, there was a delay as there was confusion over the rates quoted by the firms. Now all that has been settled,” said the official.

The Corporation has also requested the selected companies to ensure the mini buses have a smaller chassis with a lower footboard. "This is to ensure that passengers do not find it difficult to board the bus," the official said.

The two firms will prepare the chassis only after MTC officials inspect it and give the go ahead, and only after the inspection will the process to build the body's bus begin.

While commuters are enthusiastic about MTC's initiative to provide more transportation, they say the buses should be equipped with emergency exits.

"All the buses should also be user friendly for those with disabilities. Most people who have disabilities are forced to travel either by autorickshaw or by private vehicles, as neither buses nor trains are accessible to them mainly due to the height of the footboards. The government should ensure that this problem is dealt with in the mini buses," said S. Thanigainayagam, a resident of Velachery.

The mini buses project is long pending. In May last year, State

minister for transport Senthil Balaji had announced in the assembly that these buses would be rolled out. The facility is meant to integrate various modes of transport and also help people living in interior areas reach bus stops and railway stations easily.