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Centre wants Noida airport RRTS link from Sarai Kale Khan, via City Centre

Noida: The Union ministry of housing and urban affairs has objected to National Capital Region Transport Corporation's (NCRTC) proposal to connect Noida International Airport by rapid rail via Ghaziabad. The ministry wants the corridor to be built directly from Sarai Kale Khan, which is the terminal station of the Dehi-Meerut corridor.

It has directed NCRTC to conduct a fresh survey and prepare a new project report for a revised alignment starting from Sarai Kale Khan and terminating at Jewar via Noida City Centre metro station and Surajpur.

The decision followed a review meeting on Wednesday, where it was decided that Noida airport needs stronger long-term connectivity with Delhi, one that the proposed 72km Ghaziabad-Jewar corridor would fail to deliver and would require major technical modifications.

NCRTC had earlier prepared a detailed project report (DPR) for an elevated rapid-rail-cum-metro corridor with 22 stations, split evenly between rapid rail and metro. The alignment ran from Siddharth Vihar to Ecotech-6 via Char Murti, before heading to the airport through YEIDA sectors 17, 18 and 21. Estimated at Rs 20,637 crore, the project had in-principle approval from the state govt before being sent to MoHUA last year.

The ministry, however, returned the DPR with multiple objections, flagging the absence of any Delhi link, the lack of a destination survey, duplication with NMRC's proposed Aqua Line extension, and doubts over whether rapid rail and metro could safely share a single elevated corridor. YEIDA submitted clarifications, but MoHUA maintained that the alignment did not meet airport-connectivity norms.

During the review meeting, officials said the Ghaziabad route would not generate the ridership projected by NCRTC because most airport-bound passengers would originate from Delhi and Noida, areas left unserved by the proposed alignment. As a result, all agencies agreed that the line must begin at Sarai Kale Khan, the terminal point of the Delhi-Meerut RRTS.

The meeting was attended by officials from the UP govt, Noida International Airport Ltd, Yamuna International Airport Pvt Ltd, the Noida Metro Rail Corporation, and NCRTC.

A preliminary alignment now under study would run through the DND Flyway corridor, Noida City Centre, Noida Phase-2 (NSEZ), Surajpur, Knowledge Park-3, Pari Chowk, Ecotech-6, Dankaur and YEIDA sectors 18 and 21 before terminating at the airport. If operational or land-use challenges arise at Sarai Kale Khan, New Ashok Nagar may be evaluated as an alternative

origin point. The final route and station locations will be fixed after NCRTC completes a feasibility study.

Officials added routing the corridor through Greater Noida West would have overlapped with NMRC's proposed Aqua Line extension from Sector 51 to Knowledge Park-5, creating longer travel times for Delhi-bound airport passengers. The revised alignment therefore avoids Greater Noida West and prioritises a direct, high-speed Delhi to Jewar link.

The ministry had earlier rejected plans to integrate metro and rapid rail operations on a shared elevated line between Film City and the airport, noting that mixing semi-high-speed and metro systems could have technical issues. The DPR prepared in mid-2024 attempted to cut costs by integrating a 10km Aqua Line section and linking the corridor to the shelved pod-taxi project, a design the state cleared in 2023, but the Centre sought further technical clarification, slowing approval.

"A decision has been taken to explore the feasibility of developing an RRTS corridor from Sarai Kale Khan to Noida International Airport. NCRTC will prepare the feasibility report, and further action will follow," said Shailendra Bhatia, ACEO, YEIDA.

The original Ghaziabad link, approved by the state in Dec 2023 and tentatively targeted for completion by 2030, will now remain on hold until the ministry clears the revised alignment.