

First underground Metro network by Dec. 2015

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CHENNAI: The first underground Metro Rail network from Egmore to Thirumangalam will be completed by December 2015. The entire 45-km network of the Chennai Metro Rail will be operational by August 2016, according to officials of the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL).

Come December, the tunnelling work along this 9.5-km stretch on Poonaallee High Road will be complete, officials said. "We plan to finish the tunnelling work in four months. After that, we need a year to build cross passages, lay tracks and complete overhead electrical work and trials. The work on remaining stretch will be done by August 2016," a CMRL official said.

Two tunnel boring machines (TBM) have drilled a distance of 948 metres from the Nehru Park to Egmore. Meanwhile, several TBMs are tunnelling the earth at various sites: Pachaippa's college to Nehru Park, Shenoy Nagar and Kilpauk stations, Kilpauk to Shenoy Nagar station and Shenoy Nagar to Thirumangalam. After this, constructing the

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cross passages will begin.

In case of an emergency, commuters can take the walkway — that runs along the length of every tunnel — use the cross passage, built at every 250 metres along the walkway and move to the adjacent tunnel.

The phase I of the Chennai Metro Rail project had to be complete by 2015, but there has been a year's delay in construction so far. "Minor delays are normal in any infrastructure project. Due to economic slowdown, a few contractors have been affected," the official said. Similarly, though the elevated corridor from Koyambedu to Alandur had to be operational by March, the construction of stations made a tardy progress that pushed the commencement of services to October.

Of the 32 stations in the Chennai Metro Rail, 19 will be underground. It takes Rs. 300 crore and Rs. 100 crore to build one km of tunnel and one underground station respectively.