

One smartcard to be ticket to ride on all modes of transport

Ticketing Machines Decided On; One Card Can Be Used To Pay For Bus, Train, Metro, Auto

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Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) has finalised its ticketing machines and universal travel card. If things run to plan, a single smartcard can be used to make payments for use of all transport systems—buses, trains, metro and autorickshaws.

The card that will be issued by metro rail will accommodate payments for 32 different agencies—from Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses to autos and even parking and long-distance trains. "But these cards are not open-ended. In Hong Kong, you can use the card in countless ways. The cards are compatible with any machine, just like a credit or a debit card," said an expert working closely with government who did not want to be named.

A senior metro rail official said, "When we drew up the detailed project report, this card was the best option available." Commuters can use the card only in places approved by CMRL. "We will eventually move to an open system, just like other countries," he added.

Metro rail has tied up with State Bank of India (SBI) to integrate bank accounts with metro rail cards. "This will take time. Smartcards, which are integrated with other transport systems, will come into use first," said the official.

Delhi has introduced 'Unifare Card' that can be used in any outlet like a debit or credit card. "We have tied up with a private bank. Those who have an account in the bank can use the same card in ATMs and with 22 million merchants," said an official from Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. Of the 23 lakh trips made in metro rail a day in Delhi, 70% are paid for using smart cards. "It is convenient and there is a 10% discount for those using cards."

In Chennai, things could be different as people are generally averse to investing up front even for convenience, going by the experience and data of the suburban train system. Only 50,000 or 0.5% of the 10 lakh passengers have season tickets, one of the lowest in the country.

Government officials from the state transport authority, MTC, Southern Railway, Centre for Railway Information Systems, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, IRCTC, call taxi operators and representatives of bus ticket booking websites have been discussing the possibility of integrating all systems into one card.

MTC has purchased electronic ticketing machines that are compatible with metro rail smart cards. Railways will have a tough time implementing smartcards as their system is open, unlike metro rail. The government will make new GPS-enabled meters for autorickshaws compatible with smart cards.



ONE WORLD OF TRAVEL

Metro rail will introduce smartcards that can be used across systems



METRO RAIL: The smartcard system can be used with 32 merchants or agencies. SBI has been roped in but integration will happen later. A separate agency will be appointed to distribute the revenue amongst different corporations

MTC: The new electronic ticketing machines bought by the corporation are already compatible to smartcards issued that will be issued by



AUTORICKSHAWS: The state transport authority is planning to make the new GPS-enabled meters compatible with smartcards



SUBURBAN TRAINS: Southern Railway will face the biggest challenge in accommodating the system as it neither has closed entry nor conductors

MRTS: Talks are on for metro rail to run MRTS, which is not likely to have trouble integrating with the system



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SENIOR METRO RAIL OFFICIAL

CUMTA still going round in circles

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Like the traffic in Chennai, the implementation of a solution to decongest the city's roads too seems to move slowly. Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA), which is supposed to be an umbrella body to govern all transport agencies, is yet to take off properly.

Plans have remained on paper. Though the act was passed in 2010, rules are yet to be notified, making the authority a toothless body. CUMTA comes under the state ministry for housing and urban development. However, it has not found a mention in the department's latest budget note.

The last update was around a year ago when it was proposed that a dedicated chief executive officer who is an IAS officer would head the group. This was to be amended as currently the chief planner of Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority heads it.

While the transport minister is the chairman, members of the group include a plethora of top officials including the chief secretary and secretaries from departments like transport, finance, highways and home. "The working group headed by metro rail was meeting once in three months. However, this has not happened in the last six months," said a source.

"Once the act is notified, CUMTA will have the authority to pull up departments and enforce changes," said the source.

AROUND THE WORLD



LONDON, OYSTER CARD: One of the first cities to implement multi-modal travel with one card. An Oyster card can be used to travel in buses, the underground, tram, Docklands Light Railway, London Overground and most National Rail services in London



HONG KONG, OCTOPUS CARD: The smartcard system is open-ended and can be used in any place that accepts a credit card. At 93%, the city clocks among the highest usage of public transport in the world

