

# Metro rail plans to ply a train every 2.5 mins

Sandhya Soman | TNN

**Chennai:** A gleaming stainless steel train will roll into a station every four-and-a-half minutes when the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) project is inaugurated in a couple of years. But officials are hoping to up the frequency to one train every two minutes 30 seconds once footfalls reach six lakh passengers a day.

“Initially, we will operate four-car trains every four minutes 30 seconds during peak hours along the Washermanpet-Chennai airport and Chennai Central-St Thomas Mount stretches,” said a senior metro official. Peak hour frequency will be raised once patronage picks up, hopefully in the next ten years.

By then, Chennai would catch up with Delhi Metro Rail in terms of frequency of services. CMRL will also try to match Delhi on carriage capacity.

Delhi metro carries an average 1,500 passengers in a four-car standard gauge train while Chennai is hoping to accommodate 1,276 commuters on a similar train. Bangalore Metro Rail currently transports nearly 1,000 passengers in a three-car train.

The first set of these locally made coaches for Chennai Metro will be ready by January 2014 at French multinational Alstom's plant at Sri City in Andhra Pradesh, 55 kms from Chennai. The plant will be commissioned by September this year, said Henri Poupart-Lafarge, president of Alstom Transport. “We decided to build a plant because we wanted to be close to our client. Also, it would serve our

## ON TRACK

**Delhi Metro Rail** | 1,500 passengers in a four-car train

**Bangalore Metro Rail** | 1,000 passengers in a three-car train

**Chennai Metro Rail** | 1,276 passengers in a four-car train

## COACH FACTS

▶ Airconditioned with automatic sliding doors, **space for wheelchairs, route maps in English and Tamil**



▶ Special class coaches with **cushioned seats and reserved class for women passengers**

▶ Emergency passenger exits, **passenger-driver communication system, closed circuit television**

▶ Platform **screen door for underground stations**

other clients in Asia,” said Lafarge.

Alstom is slated to supply 168 stainless steel coaches to Chennai Metro, with which it had signed a Rs 1471.3 crore contract. The first set of coaches, that were made at the company's plant in Brazil will reach Chennai by March 2013, said a CMRL official.

The stainless steel coaches for Chennai will be air-conditioned and have automatic sliding doors.

“The coaches are similar to Delhi Metro with a unique feature of platform screen door for underground stations which is not there in other metros,” said Jojo Alexander, managing director of Alstom Transport, India. It will also have special class coaches with cushioned seats and reserved class for women passengers. Space for wheelchairs, emergency passenger exits, passenger-driver communication system, closed circuit television, route maps in English and Tamil and reduced noise levels are some of the other features.

The consortium of Alstom and Larsen & Toubro has also started on the track work for CMRL. The first stage of track installation work will be completed in 2013 and will become operational in early 2014. “Alstom's Coimbatore manufacturing Unit will be providing the traction elements for Chennai,” said Alexander.

The company will invest 30 million euros to develop the Sri City plant, which will eventually become the hub for their business in India and Asia. The Sri City plant, spread over 150 acres, is part of the transport giant's expansion plan in the growing rail market in India and Asia.

“When we were awarded the CMRL contract, we knew our factory wouldn't be ready with the first set of trains. That is why we are getting them from our Brazil plant that uses the same technology,” said Thibault Desteract, vice-president, commercial, Alstom Transport.

(The writer was in Paris on invitation from Alstom)