

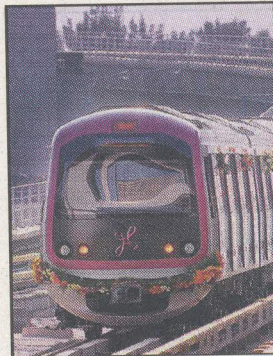
Chennai Metro Rail to be a power saver on wheels

Vivek Narayanan | TNN

Chennai: Metro rail will consume less power than some of the housing colonies coming up in the suburbs, Tamil Nadu Electricity Board calculations show. However, the board could feel the pinch if power is supplied to Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) at the rate given to Southern Railway.

CMRL has asked for 50MW a day between 2012 and 2015 for running services in the first phase, TNEB officials said. "This is one-fourth of what some upcoming housing colonies in the suburbs have sought. Metro rail will use various energy-saving technologies like regenerative braking, where power is generated from braking friction and sent back to the grid," said a TNEB official.

Chennai's daily consumption is 2,500MW of which "metro rail's demand is just 2%. We can easily supply that although we believe the actual consumption will be even lesser," he said. The lion's share of the power will be for stations and air-conditioning, not for running trains. The metro rail in Bangalore consumes, for the first 7 km from Byappanahalli to



MG Road, just 2MW a day.

Here, the major component of power is traction requirements and auxiliary services for the underground section. Energy consumption is only one-fifth when compared to road traffic. The estimated requirement for phase 1 of the project is less than 50MW a day, just 2% of the total requirement.

However, in monetary terms, it could be a burden for the TNEB. CMRL is expecting a tariff between ₹2.75 to ₹3 a unit, similar to that given for Southern Railway. TNEB officials said the cost of generation was around ₹5. "But if we sell it at ₹2.75 or ₹3, our loss will be around ₹60,000 every month," said an official.

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Such a loss will be huge for the power utility that owes crores to various national power generation plants and traders. "Already banks are refusing to pay us due to the debts we are facing. As it is a public-private partnership, the CMRL can pay us a reasonably higher tariff," said a senior official.

Power managers feel an increased tariff will not be allotted to CMRL as power is a vital aspect for its functioning. "Usually, power constitutes 25-35% of the total annual working cost of the metro rail and it is the key element for the financial viability of the project. Hence they would feel, that power tariff should be at minimum in order to contain operation and maintenance," he said.