

# Metro rail to rent out 2.8L sqft space at 31 stns to up revenue

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**Chennai:** If everything goes as planned, then passengers could soon shop and hop on a metro train when services resume as Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) is now looking to rent out space in metro stations for retail outlets in yet another effort to boost its revenue at a time when services are shut and patronage has dropped.

It has floated a tender for firms and popular brands to apply for setting up shops in a total 2.8 lakh sqft space across 31 metro stations in the city. This comes less than a week after the agency floated a tender to rent out space left under its elevated viaducts between Ekattuthangal and Ashok Nagar. While the train services are shut at the moment due to the second covid wave induced lockdown, metro rail's ridership was able to achieve only 80% of its pre-covid daily average of 1.16 lakhs, when it earlier resumed service in September. The pre-covid daily average is still much less than its estimated patronage of 7.76 lakh.

According to its new tender, CMRL is renting out space

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in the street and concourse levels of 31 of the total 39 operating stations of the 45km phase-1 and 9km phase-1 corridors and the link bridge attached to Vadapalani metro station. They include stations that attract more footfalls like Vadapalani, Central and Thirumangalam as well as seven stations from phase-1 extension including Tondiarpet, Toll Gate, Kaladipet, Thiruvottiyur and Wimco Nagar, which were opened for train services in February 2021. CMRL officials said the space they will be renting out will be built-up bare shell area where retail outlets, banks and other offices can be set up.

"We want to effectively utilise these spaces and generate revenue out of it. It will also give easy access to people since these shops will be inside the stations," a metro rail official

said. Less than a week ago, CMRL floated a similar tender to rent out 1,919 sqft space lying vacant under the turning of the elevated viaducts between Ekattuthangal and Ashok Nagar stations.

While stations in Alandur, Airport, Koyambedu, Vadapalani and Thirumangalam already have a few brands opening shops, many stations including those along arterial Anna Salai and bigger stations like Central and Shenoy Nagar either had no takers since they started operating or retail brands had vacated after setting up shop for a few months. Poor patronage in the stations was cited as one of the reasons for the poor response for taking up these spaces. Transport experts said that metro rail networks in the country including Chennai may take at least a year to get back its pre-covid ridership when they resume services.

A CMRL official said, "We achieved 80% of our pre-covid numbers within six months before the second covid wave lockdown. The ticket prices have also been reduced. We will follow all measures to ensure safety for our passengers."