

Metro starts counting footfalls

Study Says 88,000 Passengers Are Expected To Use 11km Koyambedu-Alandur Stretch When It Opens In March 2015

Pics: B A Raju

Metro rail has estimated that its trains will attract around 88,000 commuters during peak hours every day on the Koyambedu-Alandur line, which will be commissioned early next year. The 11km line is scheduled to be opened in March 2015. Studies conducted by metro rail to ascertain the kind of services to offer and for fixing of fares showed that Vadapalani, Ashok Nagar and Alandur will see a large number of commuters taking the trains. Officials believe that much more commuters than estimated might use the services initially due to enthusiasm. The elevated line is not only expected to decongest roads but also would remain a showpiece of the city's metro project.

"More people may use the trains because the number of people who travel from Vadapalani, Ashok Nagar and Koyambedu towards Alandur, located on GST Road, using buses and private vehicles is high. It is this crowd which is expected to shift to metro rail because it cuts down the travel time from more than an hour to just 25 minutes for the entire route," a metro rail official said.

Vadapalani station is expected to see 23,000 commuters taking trains, the highest for the stretch, because it is closer to a bus depot where people from Porur, Valasarajakkam and Virumbakkam converge to board buses to different parts of the city. The Ashok Nagar station, which is located in a residential area away from the 100 Feet Road, is expected to cater to 16,200 commuters during peak hours. Ashok Nagar and KK Nagar areas have developed tremendously in the last three years.

"Our studies talk about genuine commuters who travel for work and education from one point to another. This does not include one-time travellers, including tourists. Metro rail systems also attract a lot of tourists," said an official. Commuter patronage is bound to increase in phases as more portions of the 45km network is opened for service. The number of genuine commuters may be less initially because the first line is just 11km-long. Patronage will go up when the line is linked to St Thomas Mount station because commuters who use suburban trains on Tambaram-Beach route will be able to access metro rail to travel to Koyambedu.

The Koyambedu-Alandur line was supposed to be opened by July 2013 but got delayed because a contract failed and station works could not be completed on time. After new contracts were given, interior work at stations is nearing completion at most of the stations. Equipment needed for managing passenger flow, ticket counters and others are being installed.

An official of metro rail said: "We are using outreach programmes to promote metro rail in schools and colleges. Officials are also going to neighbourhoods to encourage residents to use the trains."

GETTING READY TO ROLL

Chennai metro rail's showpiece stretch, Koyambedu-Alandur elevated line, is expected to be open for passenger traffic in March next year. The line was supposed to be ready by July 2013 but got delayed because station works could not be completed on time. After new contracts were given, interior work at stations is nearing completion.

THE STRETCH: KOYAMBEDU TO ALANDUR

TOTAL LENGTH	NO. OF STATIONS	FREQUENCY: Every 6 minutes during peak hours and every 15 minutes during lean hrs	SERVICE TIMINGS: 5am to 12 midnight	NO. OF TRAINS (All 4-Car)	PASSENGER CAPACITY
11km	7			9	1,000

THE STATIONS

- KOYAMBEDU | 7,500** (Estimated passengers during peak hours per day) It's here that underground and elevated stretches of the Central-St Thomas Mount line merge. Number of passengers is expected to increase once the project is complete.
- ARUMBAKKAM | 11,000** Station is located near residential areas and just outside the bus terminus.
- VADAPALANI | 23,000** Expected to be a busy station as it is located near Vadapalani bus terminus. Commuters will be able to drive up to the station as the flyover being built on the main road will be linked to it.
- ASHOK NAGAR | 16,000** Located in a densely populated area. Metro will help residents who now have to come to 100 Feet Road to board public transport. Metro rail plans to build a commercial complex housing malls and offices.
- EKATTUTHANGAL | 9,900** Will cater to people who work in the Guindy industrial estate and information technology companies in the area.
- ALANDUR | 15,000** It's where the two Metro corridors - Washernanpet-Airport line and Central-St Thomas Mount line - converge. People will be able to park their vehicles as space is going to be provided under Kathipara grade separator. A bus bay is also planned near the station.

Passenger figures are for peak hours: 7am to 10 am & 5pm to 8pm



Chennai Metro Rail



ALANDUR METRO STATION

COMMUTING BY BUS DURING RAIN AND EXTREME HEAT IS AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE. I LOOK FORWARD TO TRAVELLING BY AIRCONDITIONED METRO COACHES
K Raghu | A MEDICAL SHOP EMPLOYEE

THE METRO WILL ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE TO MAKE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT. THE METRO WILL BOOST THE MORALE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY
Raj Cheralal | URBAN PLANNER AND DIRECTOR OF CHENNAI CITY CONNECT



TRANSPORT LINKS

- Share autos to ply to and fro from stations will be arranged
- Mini-buses to take commuters between stations and from nearby neighbourhoods
- Improving access and building skywalks at stations like Ashok Nagar
- Outreach programmes: Officials have been making presentations about the project to residents, schools and colleges
- 300 feeder buses to ply on Koyambedu-Alandur route and beyond



ASHOK NAGAR METRO STATION



KOYAMBEDU METRO STATION

From office-goer to shopkeeper, everyone's waiting

Come March 2015, more than two lakh people who travel on the Koyambedu-Alandur route will have the option of using Chennai's first metro rail service. From office-goers to traders to travellers headed to Koyambedu and airport, a large number of people travelling on 100 Feet Road which runs parallel to the metro line will be tempted to step into the jazzy metro coaches.

"Commuting by bus during rain and extreme heat is an unpleasant experience. I look forward to travelling by metro coaches," said K Raghu, who works in a medical shop and commutes by MTC's D70 bus from Velachery to Koyambedu every day. Daily commuters said they have been inconvenienced by road diversions due to the metro construction and other traffic bottlenecks and are eager to make use of the new transport service.

Raj Cheralal, urban planner and director of Chennai City Connect, said, "The metro will attract more people to make use of public transport. With its efficiency and speed, the metro will boost the morale of the people of the city." Currently, about 300 MTC buses ply on the route between Koyambedu and Alandur. During peak hours, each bus ferries 150-200 passengers.

The opening up of the metro service will decongest traffic along the stretch and in surrounding areas, say bus drivers and conductors. S Kannan, a commuter at Koyambedu bus terminus, said accessibility of stations will decide patronage for the metro. "There are many MRTS stations that do not get many passengers as they are difficult to reach." The Koyambedu-Alandur

elevated line that runs mostly along the middle of the main road has seven stations, and two of them will have skywalks to help people access them. A skywalk will link Bohini theatre to Koyambedu station, while another at Ashok Nagar will connect the station with Udhayam theatre. V Hariharan, a manager at Udhayam, said, "We are excited about the crowds that will throng the Ashok Nagar metro station. We are hoping the new station will bring in more peo-

ple to our movie halls." Businesses along the Koyambedu-Alandur stretch are set to get a boost. While Alandur is home to a 200-year-old grocery market, Koyambedu houses more than 3,000 vegetable and fruit shops. Businessman V Karthikeyan, a regular visitor to Koyambedu, said, "Small and medium-sized enterprises will benefit greatly. Traffic jams on road during peak hours cause long delays and end up costing these small businesses."