

Chennai, Thursday, May 31, 2018

6.4 lakh people used Metro since May 25

CHENNAI: Nearly 6.4 lakh people have travelled via the Chennai Metro rail since its services were extended from Nehru Park to Chennai Central, and from Saidpaet to DMS.

Speaking with the media, the director of CMRL, Narasim Prasad, said that

about 6,40,000 people used the Metro between May 25 and 29. CMRL had offered free rides during the five days since the inauguration. But, the actual patronage will be known only on Thursday morning when CMRL will get the details of the fare collected on Wednesday.

During an embedded tour from

Little Mount to DMS, where Prasad demonstrated the safety arrangements in CMRL, he said that each train would be manned by two policemen and two others would be deployed in every station for passenger safety. Apart from this, "the footage from CCTV cameras will be monitored from the control centre in Koyambedu

and any distress for passengers will be attended to immediately," said the director of CMRL. Passengers would also be able to interact with the train pilot using the onboard emergency communication system, he added.

Refusing to speak on the possibility of slashing the fares, Prasad said that the decision ought to be made

by the government. CMRL chief general manager V K Singh, who also accompanied the reporters, said that the Metro connectivity to Washermanpet from the airport would be established by the end of the year and the extension up to Wimco Nagar would be completed by March 2020.

DT Next reporter K Karthikeyan decided to try out the ride from the airport to Chennai Central, carrying a heavy suitcase. Here's a detailed account of his commute

Till last week, every time I touched down at Kamarajar Domestic Airport Terminal, I always had three questions on my mind.

Would I have to wait to hire one of the app-based cabs? Or would I have to approach the signature black and yellow airport taxi known for their infamous pricing policy? Or, should I drag my luggage all the way across GST Road to Tirusulam suburban train station for the cheapest ride to home by EMU? Not to mention the dreadful thought of lugging my suitcase all the way to MTC buses that ply a few paces away from the station.

Answering these questions had always been more strenuous than the journey I undertook. But, the ride back home has become the least of my concerns for a week now.

A bold new neon-lamp-lit sign which reads "Way to Airport Metro Station" beamed down at the domestic terminal on Friday. As I took a few steps out through the new exit gate on the first floor, a travolator — right above the entry/exit road outside the terminal, decorated with couplets of saint poet Thiruvalluvar and a handful of flower pots on either side of the long passage — welcomed me. The place was safe from all the din created by taxi drivers and passengers on the ground floor.

Even before I could complete comprehending the first couplet, despite the translation available in English, while gliding over the 200-metre-long travolator with my suitcase, a wide passage branched out on my left which led to an escalator at the entrance of Airport Metro Station. Midway on the escalator, two sign boards — "Trains towards Chennai Central Station" and "Trains towards Little Mount and AG-DMS" — flashed as the ticket counter ahead slowly began to emerge. I was on platform 1 where a train to Chennai Central was ready to leave. It took me all of four minutes to board the train after getting out of the airport.

I did not have to lift my luggage even once as I changed my mode of transport. Even on the station plat-

'A 45-minute experience to remember'



form, the train and platform were on the same height, allowing me to slide the suitcase into the train without testing my weight lifting skills — something that would have been compulsory had I taken a suburban train from Trisulam station.

Inside the Metro train, an automated female voice played the details of the departure and arrival of stations as I enjoyed the panoramic view of the airport runway and golf course of Officer's Training Academy and the city skyline all the way up to Koyambedu from where the train dived underground.

This made me turn my attention to a few enthusiastic children, who attempted to look through a window when the train whizzed past stations in the dark tunnels for a few minutes. Soon, the female voice was heard again: "The next station is Chennai Central. Doors will open on your right".

The ride, that lasted little over 45 minutes inside a cozy air-conditioned French-built train, transformed my commute from airport to Chennai Central. It became an experience I would like to recount, erasing traces of the agony I felt when I had to take cabs or trains from the airport.

FARE CHART

Meenambakkam	₹10
Nanganallur Road	₹20
Alandur	₹30
Ekkattuthangal, Guindy, Vadapalani and Arumbakkam	₹40
CMBT, Koyambedu, Thirumangalam, Anna Nagar Tower and Anna Nagar East	₹50
Shenoy Nagar, Pachaiyappa's College, Kilpauk, Nehru Park, Egmore	₹60
Chennai Central	₹70

■ The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) considering extending the feeder services, as has been demanded by Chennai Metro Rail Limited. Senior MTC officials said that CMRL wants them to provide 61 small buses to provide connectivity to all the Metro stations



Commuters try out the newly unveiled stretch of the city's underground Metro service from Nehru Park to Chennai Central, and from Saidpaet to DMS, on Wednesday

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