

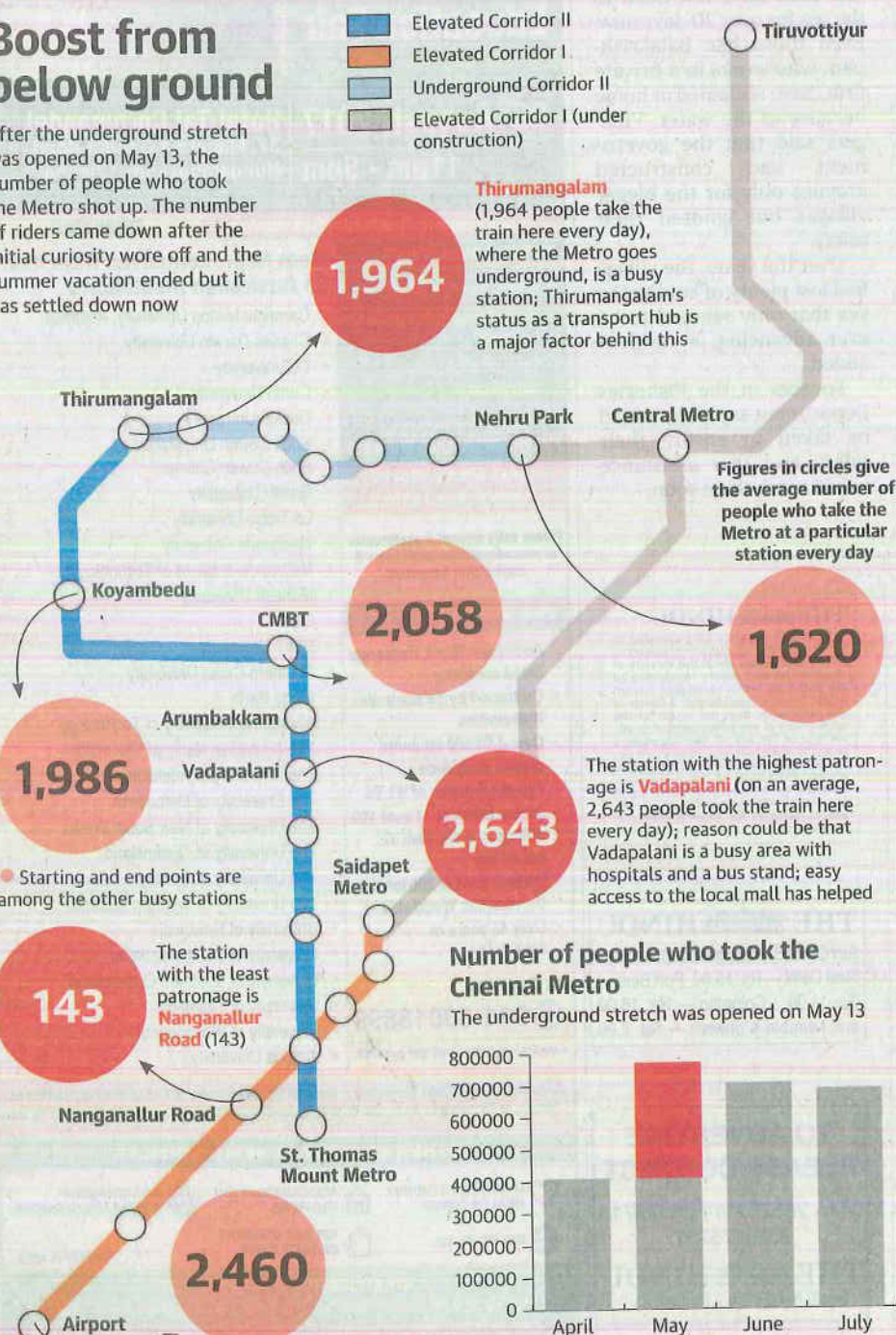
<p>95.87 lakh</p> <p>Number of people who have travelled since Metro rail became operational</p>	<p>23 lakh</p> <p>Number of people who have travelled after the launch of underground section from May till August</p>	<p>12,000 14,000</p> <p>Average number of people taking the Chennai Metro (before opening of underground stretch)</p>	<p>24,000</p> <p>Average number of people taking the Chennai Metro (after opening of underground stretch)</p>	<p>₹35.6 crore</p> <p>Total revenue earned since June 2015 when it was launched</p>	<p>₹9 crore</p> <p>Total revenue earned from May 13, when the underground network was launched, till August</p>
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With underground stretch, Metro patronage doubles

Officials say increase has come in part from a surge in commuters switching to the service; Thirumangalam, where the Metro goes underground, is a busy station

Boost from below ground

After the underground stretch was opened on May 13, the number of people who took the Metro shot up. The number of riders came down after the initial curiosity wore off and the summer vacation ended but it has settled down now



SUNITHA SEKAR
CHENNAI

Two years after its launch, Chennai Metro Rail has witnessed an overall jump in the number of people travelling through it, especially after the opening of the first underground stretch in May this year. The average number of people taking the Chennai Metro Rail every day before May was around 12,000 and it ballooned to 24,000 in August.

According to officials of the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), the most popular route so far has been from Nehru Park to Chennai airport, a distance of 17 km, and it costs a passenger ₹60. "Since May was a holiday season, there were hordes of people taking a joy ride. The sharp spike in the number of

people travelling continued in the following months too; though there has been a slight dip in the following months after the initial excitement, it is still substantially high," an official said.

Regular users

Officials also say that the increase has come from a surge in regular users. This would mean that with more stations opening, the Metro is becoming an attractive travel option for the commuting population.

Chennai airport, Nehru Park, CMBT, Vadapalani and Thirumangalam are the favourite destinations and saw the maximum number of people travelling through. "Chennai airport and Nehru Park are terminating stations and hence the

traffic is high. In the case of Thirumangalam, people travelling to Ambattur, Padi and other locations beyond it get off at this station and, therefore, footfalls are high," an official said.

With proximity to a private hospital and a mall, Vadapalani too is among the most used stations of Chennai Metro Rail. Alandur station saw an increase as it serves as a junction linking the two corridors – Nehru Park to Chennai airport and Little Mount to Chennai airport – where people change trains.

The least-used stations include Arumbakkam, Shenoy Nagar, Pachaiyappa's College, Meenambakkam and Nanganallur Road. "We are unable to find out why these stations have a low turnout," he added.

Meenambakkam and Nanganallur Road have no escalators and first-time users may find it very hard to spot the lift in these stations.

Steady progress

When the Chennai Metro Rail's first service started in June 2015, the average number of people who travelled between the seven stations, from Koyambedu to Alandur, used to be around 8,000-10,000. With the opening of the second stretch from Little Mount to Chennai airport, it grew marginally to about 12,000.

But only after the opening of the third stretch of Chennai Metro Rail, the first underground stretch, it rose to about 24,000 in the last three months.

