

Now, ride from Washermanpet to airport takes just 40 minutes

PM inaugurates the last leg of Metro Rail Phase I; maximum fare cut, frequency of services increased

SUNITHA SEKAR
CHENNAI

After putting up with traffic congestion and restricted road space for nearly seven years, commuters can look forward to traversing the entire 45 km stretch of Phase I of Chennai Metro Rail.

A decade after it was announced, the Phase I of the project was completed on Sunday with the opening of the 10 km stretch from AG-DMS to Washermanpet. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami launched the stretch from Tirupur via videoconferencing.

The opening of this stretch will substantially reduce the travel time for a commuter going all the way from Washermanpet to the airport. While it may take about an hour and 15 minutes by road, it will be only 40 minutes by Metro Rail.

The travel time from Chennai Central to the airport via Government Estate will only be about 30 minutes by Metro, while it may take up to an hour by road during peak hours.

With the opening of this stretch, the maximum fare has been reduced by ₹10; the minimum fare is ₹10 and the maximum is ₹60. The frequency of trains has gone up now.

There will be a train every five minutes during peak hours (8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.) and one every seven minutes during non-peak hours (6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m., 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. to 10 p.m.). CMRL sources said at present trains are operated between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., but there is a plan to extend the timings very soon.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Housing and Urban Affairs Har-

On a roll

The entire 45-km stretch of Chennai Metro's Phase I is now open to the public

June 2009: Chennai Metro Rail launched at a cost estimate of ₹14,600 crore

June 2015: The first service of Chennai Metro Rail from Koyambedu to Alandur takes off

This was followed by the opening of other stretches:

Sept. 2016: Little Mount to Chennai Airport

Oct. 2016: Alandur to St. Thomas Mount

May 2017: Koyambedu to Nehru Park

May 2018: Nehru Park to Chennai Central

May 2018: Little Mount to AG-DMS



Well on track: A view of the Chennai Central Metro station; right, workers cheering after the inauguration of the Chennai Central to Washermanpet stretch. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM



Total distance covered by Chennai Metro Rail:
45 km



Fares:
₹10-60



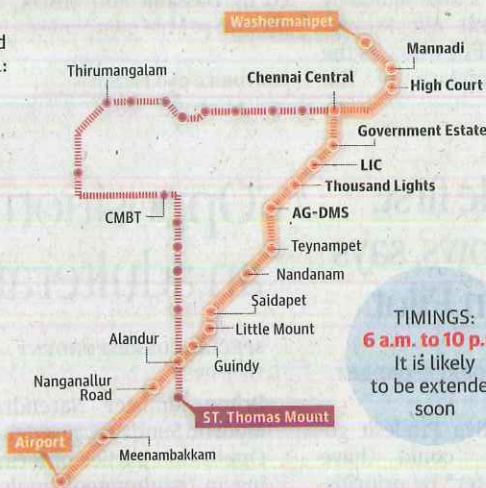
Passenger capacity of each train:
1,200



Average speed of train:
35 kmph



Frequency has now increased:
There will be a train every five minutes during peak hours and every seven minutes during non-peak hours



TIMINGS:
6 a.m. to 10 p.m.
It is likely to be extended soon



This is a surreal moment for me. It has been my dream to drive Metro train and now to be in control of the wheels for an inaugural ceremony feels like icing on the cake

L. SHRUTHI, loco pilot

deep Singh Puri, who came down to Chennai for the inauguration, said, "With the completion of Phase I, ridership [number of people travelling] will go up considerably. We expect 2 lakh people

to use the Metro every day."

Women take control

On Sunday, two 20-year-old women - L. Shruthi and Reena Arunachalam - drove the trains from Chennai Central

to Washermanpet. Reena Arunachalam said, "It is pure joy to go around the city, in full control of a train with thousands of passengers."

Two women A. Preethi and G. Jayashree drove the

first service of Metro Phase I four years ago.

Chennai Metro Rail will offer free rides for commuters across the entire 45 km till Monday night, sources said.

CM pushes for Central funding for Metro phase II

Writes to Modi seeking 50:50 joint venture partnership, which will cost the Centre ₹11,100 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi came down to launch the final stretch of Phase I of Chennai Metro, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami used the opportunity to push for Central funding for Phase II as well.

At Tirupur, he briefed Mr. Modi about Phase II and sought 50:50 joint venture partnership, which would cost the Centre ₹11,100 crore over six years, sources said.

Later, an official release was issued giving details of the letter he submitted to the Prime Minister.

In the letter, the Chief Minister said that the State government had approved Phase II and sought the Centre's approval in April, 2017.

After the introduction of New Metro Rail Policy by the Centre, the State revised the Detailed Project Report (DPR) by updating the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) and alternative analysis for mode of transport for a length of 118.9 km. This was sent to the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs for consideration under the 50:50 joint venture partnership on January 11, 2019, he said.

Out of the total project cost of ₹69,180 crore, the land cost and State taxes amounting to ₹13,723 crore would be met by the State



Another phase: Chief Minister has asked the PM to direct the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to sanction Phase II as was done for Phase I. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

government and the balance ₹55,457 crore has to be provided by the Centre, (20%), State (20%) and the funding agencies (60%) respectively.

Hence, the Centre may have to provide ₹11,100 crore spread over six years, the Chief Minister said.

Loan approved

Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) has already approved a loan of ₹20,196 crore and the agreement for the first

tranche of loan has been signed. The Department of Economic Affairs has also recommended funding for this project to the tune of ₹10,351 crore from ADB, AIIB, NDB and World Bank, he said.

Mr. Palaniswami asked the Prime Minister to direct the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to sanction Phase II under 50:50 joint venture partnership between the Centre and the State as was done for Phase I.