

PM inaugurates Washermenpet to AG-DMS stns metro rail line

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Chennai: Nearly a decade after construction began for the 45km phase-1, the last stretch of the Metro rail network, from Washermenpet to AG-DMS covering 10km, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through videoconferencing from Tirupur on Sunday. The launch signalled the completion of the phase and the Centre's willingness to take the 118.9km phase-2 project forward.

"With completion of phase-1, patronage must go up by two lakh commuters a day. I'm sure we will approach phase-2 in a fully cooperative manner between the central and the state governments," said Hardeep Singh Puri, Union minister for housing and urban affairs. Work for 45km phase-1 began in June 2009 and operations on the first line between Koyambedu and Alandur commenced in June 2015.

Phase 1 over, focus shifts to phase 2

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Train operators Shruthi and Reena operated the first train from Central Metro to Washermenpet and back to AG-DMS, which was flagged off by Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and state minister D Jayakumar, V Saroja and MC Sampath. The stretch from Washermenpet to AG-DMS, with eight underground stations, was the missing link that would now take commuters from Central Metro to Airport. It is the shortest route between the two stations at 45 minutes for a ticket price of Rs 60.

CMRL will operate trains from Central Metro to Airport via Poonamallee High Road and 100 Feet Road. Though it is a circuitous route, commuters boarding trains from Egmore Metro to Ekkattuthangal stations do not have to shift corridors in the transit hubs Central Metro or Alandur. Taking the long route to airport from Central would also cost the commuter Rs 60 per head, as the automatic fare collection gates where the metro smartcards are swiped would deduct fare only for the shortest route.

"As of now, we would be operating trains every seven minutes. The frequency would be increased depending on the footfall," a metro official said.

With phase-1 now complete, the focus for both the state government and CMRL has now shifted to phase-2 project, as the chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami has written to the Prime Minister requesting 50:50 joint venture funding for the upcoming phase.

While the land cost and the state taxes of about Rs 13,723 crore would be met by the state government, the balance amount of Rs 55,457 crore has to be funded by the Centre (20%), TN (20%) and the funding agencies (60%).