

Thanks to free rides, over four lakh people travel on Metro Rail

Real test will be to see if numbers sustain after introduction of fares, say officials

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Nearly four lakh commuters have travelled on the Chennai Metro Rail system after the new stretch was inaugurated on Sunday. The high footfall is largely due to free rides.

The Metro Rail has had to employ additional staff to clean the stations and trains, as there was considerable littering; in some stations, there were a number of instances of spitting, official sources said. Also, on Monday, there were complaints from commuters that men entered and occupied seats in the ladies' compartments in trains, sources said.

Sources said that four lakh people had used the system since the inauguration of the new stretch from AG-DMS to Washermanpet. Usually, about 55,000 people travel on the Chennai Metro Rail.

Officials confident

"The real test will be to see if the number of people of travelling through this system goes up significantly after the opening of the new stretch, when fares are levied as usual from passengers. In a week, we will be able to calculate the average



Thrilling experience: Many passengers were first-time users keen to get a glimpse of the Chennai Metro. ■ R. RAGU

of how many people are regularly taking the system," a source said.

Sources said they expected a significant increase in the number of people of travelling on the Chennai Metro Rail, as it now has stations connecting LIC, Thousand Lights and Government Estate, and thus likely to be used by many office-goers.

Many passengers who took the ride on Monday

said they were first-time users and keen to get a glimpse of this system. Ezhumalai S., a resident of Washermanpet, took a ride all the way to Alandur and returned. "I usually take the bus to Alandur but today, since they gave free rides, I decided to use it. I quite liked it; but I'm not sure if I can afford to use it on a daily basis," he said.

But many office-goers did not like the idea of giving free rides, as they com-

plained that this led to trains being excessively crowded. Radhika Achyuth, a resident of Anna Nagar, said, "I take a train to AG-DMS on a daily basis and usually have a comfortable ride. For two days now, there is no place even to stand. It is certainly not a great idea to give free rides for days together."

The Chennai Metro Rail has announced that free rides will continue on Wednesday too.