

# Free Wi-Fi for Metro users to make calls

## Now, Phones Go Dead On Underground Section

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** The 24km underground section of the metro in the heart of the city is a dead zone for mobile phones. But commuters can make free internet calls in a few months as Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) is installing wireless network connectivity in trains and stations. Metro rail has floated tenders to install and commission Wi-Fi services across the 45km network of phase-1 and on the fleet of 42 trains. The service will also be extended to the 10km phase-1 extension from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar and 10 new trains when operations begin in North Chennai.

"It will be unlimited, uninter-



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rupted and free access to Internet in both stations and trains. But commuters will be able to access only after they enter the paid area of a station, which is after they

swipe their smart cards," a metro rail official said. "The facility is similar to those provided at airports. Chennai metro may be the only metro rail facility to give free Internet access."

An official said as tenders are floated, it may take at least 10 months to install and provide Internet service. "We already have fibre optic cables installed across the corridors. That will save installation time. We may have to install access points in the stations, tunnels and in the trains to integrate them," said an official.

Commuters now travel without mobile network connectivity in underground stations, though it has been nearly two years since the first underground line from Nehru Park to Koyambedu opened. Though contracts to install and commission the service in stations and trains were awarded three years ago, officials said an issue with tying up with network providers is causing the delay in providing the service.

Now that the entire 45km network is operational, CMRL has decided to provide an alternative option for commuters.

Mobile network services from Jio and Airtel are, at present, available in stations between Thirumangalam and Egmore. "We hope to get network services from other providers soon. Internet services too will be available," the official said.

CMRL is also installing electronic boards on trains to display routes and landmarks around every metro station for the convenience of passengers. At present, metro trains have station indicators above the train doors and announcements on every stop are also being made. But the trains have been built with systems only for the phase-1 corridors from Washermenpet to Airport and Chennai Central to St Thomas Mount and have not been programmed to include stations in phase-1 extension. Electronic display boards will include information of all stations in phase-1 and phase-1 extension.

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