

Suburban trains lose 18L commuters in Apr

Many May Have Shifted To Metro Rail

Siddharth.Prabhakar
@timesgroup.com

Chennai: In what is likely to interest officials of Chennai metro rail, Southern Railway statistics show a drop of around 18 lakh commuters in April 2019, or 60,000 commuters a day, on the city's suburban rail network compared to April 2018. The number of commuters of the suburban network, which was 32 million in April 2018, fell to 30.8 million in April 2019. The figures are 34.3 million and 33.2 million for March 2019 and March 2018.

This, a section of railway officials told TOI, could be because of the migration of well-to-do suburban train commuters to the metro rail network that now has a patronage of around 90,000 commuters everyday, translating to around 30 lakh commuters every month. This was after the underground section of the Airport-Washermentpet line, which runs parallel to the Chennai Beach-Tambaram suburban line, was inaugurated in February.

PATRONAGE PATTERNS



A significant number of passengers who travel to central government offices, business establishments and the Madras high court take the suburban trains. For people living in Anna Nagar and nearby areas who had to take an auto or cab to the nearest railway station, the metro has turned into a more feasible option as it lies within walking distance of their homes.

Not only is travel by metro trains twice as fast as those on the suburban network, the air-conditioned coaches and stations provide a more comfortable and hassle-free transport. "This could be a possible reason for many commuter shift," said a senior railway official.

Statistics show that the number of first class season ticket holders has reduced by

around 40,000 while the regular first-class travellers has gone down by 1,000 commuters. This are the travellers who pay around five to 10 times the regular fare and are likely to have migrated to the metro, say officials.

Another section of railway officials say some commuters would have migrated but that the trend could not be immediately attributed to metro rail. A serious analysis would be done after checking out the figures for May and June, they said. This is because educational institutions will reopen in June which will drive up the suburban train ridership. Another reason for the drop in the number of passengers is also attributed the cancellation of hundreds of services during weekends for maintenance work.