

# 9-km North Chennai metro line may open by June 2020

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**PILLARS OF STRENGTH:** Metro rail work under way near Thiruvottiyur

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**Chennai:** By this time next year, commuters can travel from Wimco Nagar to Airport, covering nearly 31km, on a direct train in a matter of just an hour, as Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) is expediting construction work between Washerment and Wimco Nagar to throw open the line for public by June 2020.

The line, which links a portion of North Chennai with the rest of the city, is part of the 9km phase-1 extension corridor.

A metro rail official said work is under way in full swing to complete the remaining 200m portion of the elevated corridor on the stretch. Soon, laying of tracks in the elevated corridor will begin. "We have to lay viaducts over the columns on a 200m stretch, which is likely to be completed in the coming weeks. That will complete a major portion of the line," he said.

The extension line includes a 1.8km underground stretch linked through three stations — Washerment, Theagaraya College and Korukkupet. The rest of the stretch is elevated with six stations — Tondiarpet, Tollgate, Thangal, Gowri Ashram, Tiruvottiyur and Wimco Nagar.

Officials said work is being carried out simultaneously in various places to complete the construction of

both underground and elevated stations. "You can see the outer walls of some of the stations. It would be ready for a mid-2020 opening," an official said.

The extension line is also a precursor to a number of changes that CMRL is planning to introduce on a larger scale for the 118.9km phase-2 project.

It includes cantilever elevated structures where the stations are almost hanging in the middle of the road over a row of pillars and stations that are 25% smaller than those built in phase-1. The length of the stations has been reduced from 230m to 180m in the North Chennai line.

After construction for the extension line began in July 2016, work to build two tunnels from Washerment to Korukkupet were completed by 2017-end and early 2018, at least five months ahead of the deadline.

The construction of the underground stations and laying of tracks were also completed.

The tunnels crossed nearly 480 buildings in congested areas. While building tunnels takes more time than elevated corridors, CMRL officials said favourable soil for construction, like sand and clayey strata, and intensive instrumentation and monitoring of the stability of structures helped them complete the construction faster.