

Making a strong case to take the Metro on Sundays

Rebate, extended hours of operation see ridership spike

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For years, passengers had urged Chennai Metro to reduce fares. Finally, in October, it was decided to provide a 50% discount in fares on Sundays and public holidays, and this month, it was also decided to increase hours of operation on Sundays.

This decision was taken primarily because the number of people travelling on Sundays and public holidays dips to nearly half. For instance, on a weekday, nearly 1.18 lakh to 1.20 lakh use the Chennai Metro. This number plummets to 55,000-60,000 on Sundays and public holidays.

Officials claim that this is because Chennai Metro is largely used by working professionals across the city, who take the network to travel to work and back.

So, did the discount and extended timings translate into more people using this system? It did and the Sunday ridership spiked by nearly 35-40%, officials said.

Take, for instance, the last



Sop success: CMRL cut fares on Sundays and holidays and extended service timings in a bid to boost flagging ridership. ■ FILE PHOTO

two Sundays – November 3 and November 10. About 80,000 and 85,000 people used the Chennai Metro Rail on the two Sundays, clearly showing a significant increase from the regular Sunday ridership.

The Big Three

This spike in ridership comes largely from three important stations – Chennai Airport, Chennai Central and Vadapalani. Chennai



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METRO OFFICIALS

Airport and Chennai Central Metro stations each saw nearly 8,000 people using them, as against the usual Sunday average of 4,000-

4,500. Similarly, in Vadapalani, on a Sunday, only 3,000-3,500 people walk in, but the last two Sundays have seen nearly 7,500 using it.

"We found that many who wanted to take an early morning flight or a train took the Chennai Metro. In Vadapalani, the thousands who throng Forum Mall have come by train for two weeks now," an official said.

Officials said that the in-

crease in ridership can be attributed to both the reduction in fares and increase in hours of operation.

Awareness needed

Chennai Metro links Forum Mall (through Vadapalani station), VR Mall and Marina beach through feeder services from Thirumangalam and Government Estate Metro stations respectively.

Many who go to malls on Sundays can use this mass



rapid transit mode, though many remain unaware that Chennai Metro connect these malls or the beach through last-mile feeder services.

"On Sundays, we are heavily dependent on travellers who go to malls or take a flight or trains. We have realised that a large section of people is not aware that we offer discount on Sundays and public holidays and that our stations connect these malls and the beach, which shows that we need to indulge in some aggressive promotion. We are in the process of advertising to let people know about it," the official added.

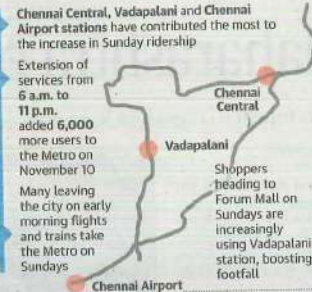
Weekend boost

A combination of 50% discount on Sundays and public holidays and an increase in timings of operations from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. has contributed to 35-40% jump in ridership on Sundays. From a meagre 55,000-60,000, the number of people using the Metro has ballooned to as much as 85,000 after these two steps were rolled out

Chennai Central, Vadapalani and Chennai Airport stations have contributed the most to the increase in Sunday ridership

Extension of services from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. added 6,000 more users to the Metro on November 10

Many leaving the city on early morning flights and trains take the Metro on Sundays



Shoppers heading to Forum Mall on Sundays are increasingly using Vadapalani station, boosting footfall

Before the discount and extension of service timings on Sundays, the ridership in these stations was:

Vadapalani | 3,000-3,500
Chennai Central | 4,000-4,500
Chennai Airport | 4,000-4,500

After implementation of these steps, the ridership was:

Vadapalani | 7,500
Chennai Central | 8,000
Chennai Airport | 8,000

No. of passengers travelling on Sundays and public holidays

Date	No. of passengers
October 13	66,500
October 20	85,300
October 27	84,100
October 28	88,157
November 3	80,000
November 10	85,000

Incidentally, nearly 40% of passengers still use tokens on Sundays, which indicates that they may be one-time users – taking the Metro to either leave the city or visit malls like VR Mall and Forum Mall that Chennai Metro connects

