

After a slow start, Metro sees steady uptick in ridership

Initiatives like feeder services, discounted fares and extended services help attract commuters

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When the Chennai Metro finally finished its 45 km network of phase I in February this year, expectations soared high, and many thought it would be instantaneously popular. But the average ridership was only 73,825. Today, an average of 1,15,695 use this system to travel to different parts of the city.

The Hindu looks at the graph of its growth over the last nine months to see what measures led to this rise and what more needs to be done.

The ridership increase was rather steady. During July and August the rise was pretty sharp. For instance, from 78,919 to 90,878 in August.

According to officials of Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), they noticed a shift in July wherein several people who travelled by cabs or drove to work in four-wheelers or two-wheelers gradually switched to Chennai Metro.

“We couldn’t find a single categorical reason for the



Bridging the gap: Connectivity to all four of Chennai’s major transport hubs also helped bring in passengers. —K. PICHUMANI

surge in ridership in July. But when we spoke to many passengers, we realised many parked their vehicles in the nearest station and took the train as it was convenient and saved time. It was also the time, when many of the working professionals on Anna Salai too slowly started trying our system,” an official said.

But in August, thanks to a few initiatives of CMRL, ridership significantly ballooned to touch 1,05,056 – introduction of share cars,

extension of last mile connectivity to IT companies and most importantly, increasing the frequency of services during peak hours from seven to five minutes, they said.

“Even then, the number of people travelling by Metro during holidays or Sundays was extremely poor. But when we began offering 50% discount and extended services (from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.), the overall average ridership rose in November,” he added.

Also, connectivity to all four transport hubs – CMBT, Chennai airport, Chennai

Growing patronage



Central and Chennai Egmore – systemically added one-time travellers during Monday and Friday, with those entering and leaving towns taking this system.

Busiest station

Thirumangalam continues to be the busiest station with an average footfall of nearly 10,000 a day, with people from areas like Mogappair, Retteri, Kolathur and Ambattur coming to this station and taking a train to one of the transport hubs or to their work places on Anna Salai. Besides, Chennai Central and Chennai airport stations,

each have nearly 9,500 and 9,000 passengers travelling on a day respectively, officials said.

“But this isn’t enough; we want the ridership to increase further and touch the two-lakh mark soon. For that, one of the things we need to do is provide more share cars in all stations and operate it with such a frequency that, as soon as people get off the stations, there will be one to take them to their destination. This apart, there are some more issues during the ticketing process which needs to be resolved as well,” another official said.


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