

Metro rail planning 20-storey bldg above Wimco Nagar depot

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Picture this. It is 2030 and an elevator takes a visitor to a sea-view apartment on the 23rd floor at Wimco Nagar near Thiruvottiyur. The same elevator will bring the visitor to level five where he/she can enter the platform and board a metro train to the airport.

In a bid to integrate real estate and transport and generate non-ticketing revenue, Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) is planning to build a 20-storey structure above the elevated depot cum station at Wimco Nagar, now a calm locality near Thiruvottiyur and 600m away from the beach. Besides the tower, there will be a four-level parking space below the stabling lines. The depot is likely to be ready by December 2020.

"It could either be a residential or an office space depending on the demand after the extension line is opened and the area develops. But it's going to be like a satellite city. We don't have a design for the structure yet, but we are laying the foundation for the structure now for future development," a metro rail official said. "Right now, Koyembedu depot can handle all our 52 trains. We will need this second depot only when the trains get older and require frequent maintenance," the official said.

CMRL plans to build the highrise above the elevated depot as there is a need to generate additional revenue. Similar structures are planned in the elevated depots to come up at Madhavaram and Poonamallee as part of the 118.9km three-corridor phase-2.

Wimco Nagar depot is part of the phase-1 extension line from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar with nine stations. It is likely to open in mid-2020. Since it is an extension of the phase-1 corridor Washermenpet to Airport via Anna Salai, commuters could travel from Wimco Nagar all the way up to airport in one go without a break in journey.

"People think it's far away and don't like settling in these localities because of the lack of access through a proper transport system. With metro, we are going to give a comfortable and a faster access. We are sure the area will develop rapidly," an official said.

The elevated depot, with 16 lines and spread over 15,500sqm is taking shape at a height of 12m. It rests on 1,161 foundation pile columns built underground and connected with a 1.8-metre-thick concrete raft above which 324 columns of varying thickness have been constructed. Provisions have been made in these columns to build four level car parking space below the depot.

"It was a challenge building the foundation as the water table was as high as 2m. We had to drain it out," an official at the construction site said. "The foundation can hold a 60m tall structure, which is about 15 to 20 floors. We are also constructing other facilities that can be used in the future when the high-rise is built," said an official.

At the depot level, there will be a small station, training facility and other amenities for the depot staff and

train operators. The station, which is separate from the Wimco Nagar elevated station less than a kilometre away, could also be used by the occupants in the property developed in the future.

The 16 lines at the depot, including one line for the station, are linked to the mainline proceeding towards Wimco Nagar elevated station through a 600m link corridor. A 7.5m wide internal road around the depot, storm water drains and a water tank with a capacity of six lakh litres will also be built. Another 10,000sqm area near the depot will be used to build amenities such as parking space depending on the requirement. This apart, a 1,055sqm auto coach washing plant will have three-levels for property development.

"We will require funds to develop these facilities. May be in the future, we will construct them on a PPP-mode as the demand goes up. We will generate revenue in the form of rents," an official said.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Metro rail says it expects Wimco Nagar to develop once the services become operational



TAKING SHAPE: The elevated depot at Wimco Nagar is likely to open by December



Illustration: Shinod Akkaraparambil

IT COULD EITHER BE A RESIDENTIAL OR AN OFFICE SPACE DEPENDING ON THE DEMAND AFTER THE EXTENSION LINE IS OPENED AND THE AREA DEVELOPS

METRO RAIL OFFICIAL

75%

work complete

STATUS

Track-laying underway

Depot to be ready by December 2020

WHAT ELSE

Foundation laid to hold a 60m (20-storey building) tall structure above the depot

The building could be office space or an apartment with a sea view for 4,000 families

Depot to have a small station for depot staff and residents of to-be built property

Provisions for 10 elevators, staircases

10,000sqm space left open near depot for future development

Storm water drain

6 lakh litres capacity tank