

# Metro plans low-cost feeder services to chug into hearts of travelling populace

*With Phase-1 Metro, which had a target of seven lakh daily commuters, enjoying only 1.20 lakh ridership, the CMRL hopes to give its Phase-2 project a push by providing feeder services for first and last-mile connectivity*

■ G JAGANNATH

The Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) — which has floated bids for its Phase-2 project — plans to operate 122 feeder buses and 809 bicycles to provide last-mile connectivity when the first part of the 118-km network becomes operational in 2025.

The Metro has invited tender for the construction of a 21-km-long tunnel from Madhavaram to Taramani as part of the Corridor 3 of the Phase-2. Bids have been invited separately for a 9-km stretch from Venugopal Nagar at Madhavaram to Kellys and 12-km stretch from Kellys to Taramani Road Junction.

Feeder services for the proposed Metro network will be essential to provide convenient and quick transfer of passengers from one mode of transport to another, said a Metro official. As all commuters will not be living within walking distance of the proposed network, proper planning for feeder services — taking into consideration passenger requirements and preferences — will be necessary. Different modes of transportation like feeder buses, autorickshaws, taxis and bicycles can provide the first mile as well as last-mile connectivity other than walking to the metro station.

The CMRL estimates a daily intake of 19.2 lakh commuters in 2025 when the first part of the Phase-2 commences operation. "Parking provisions along with pedestrian-friendly foot over-bridges (FOBs), and feeder bus services will motivate more commuters to use the Metro system. The commuters would be able to take their vehicle to the nearest Metro station, park it safely there and take the FOB to the station. Similarly, they can rely on feeder connectivity, which again will be hassle-free," said the Metro official.

The Metro's focus last year, in improving the last-mile connectivity in the 32 stations that are part of Phase-1, following the full operation of the 45-km network, has yielded results, with the number of commuters using Metro showing a steady increase. At present, of the 32 stations, MTC operates over 40 small bus services in 18 routes, connecting as many stations including CMBT, Guindy, LIC, Washermenpet and AG-DMS.

Apart from the feeder services by MTC, CMRL operates share-autos, share-taxi, metro cab and Tempo Traveller services from various stations to provide last-mile connectivity to the passengers. In January, a total of 43,745 passengers have utilised the share auto and share taxi facilities which ply on a designated feeder route with a flat tariff of Rs 5 and Rs 10 respectively. As many as 29,425 passengers made use of the Metro cab services while 14,531 passengers used the Tempo Traveller facility.

K Lakshmi, a resident of Purasaiwalkam, said she started using the Metro after the metro cab service was introduced. "I take the metro cab from Purasaiwalkam Tank to reach the Nehru Park Station, from where I take Metro to Ekkattuthangal Station. Earlier, I used to travel by the suburban train from Egmore to Guindy Station. Now the feeder service helps reduce the travel time a lot," she said.

Sivasubramanian Jayaraman, manager, Transport Systems, at Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) said that to lure more people to use Metro services, the CMRL will be operating various feeder services at a minimal fare of Rs 5 or 10, wherein a commuter will be picked and dropped as per their convenience.

However, the total number of those using Metro services has not gone up as expected. Though it was supposed to serve seven lakh people a day once the entire Phase-1 network becomes opera-

## FEEDER SERVICE AVAILABLE AT METRO STATIONS

### Share Auto @ Rs 5

- Guindy
- Truamangalam
- Alandur
- Little Mount
- Ekkathangal
- Koyambedu
- St Thomas Mount

### Share Taxi @ ₹ 10

- Anna Nagar East
- Koyambedu
- Alandur
- Vadapalani
- Tirumangalam



In January, a total of 43,745 passengers have utilised the share auto/taxi facilities which ply on a designated feeder route at a flat tariff of Rs 5 and Rs 10 respectively



### Metro cab services @ ₹ 10

(Plies on a fixed route)

- Nandanam
- AG DMS
- Thousand Lights
- LIC
- Government Estate
- Airport
- Shenoy Nagar
- Washermenpet
- Teyanpet
- Nanganallur
- Guindy
- Saidapet
- Kilpauk
- Nehru Park

By taking a Metro cab from Purasaiwalkam Tank to Nehru Park Station, I manage to save a lot of energy and travel time

**K Lakshmi**, resident of Purasaiwalkam

Metro Phase-2 feeder services			
Feeder services	2025	2035	2045
Mini buses	122	164	222
Bicycles	809	994	1,205



Tempo Traveller facility

- Little Mount
- Airport
- Alandur

tional, it has crossed only 1.20 lakh as of now. "The operational cost of the Metro remains the same, be it fewer commuters at the current fare or more commuters at a reduced fare. So, the Metro should give priority to serving more by slashing the current fare. The CMRL should try to achieve the daily target of seven lakh commuters," he said.

Adding that CMRL should assess whether the feeder services are helping to add on to the passenger volume, he said: "Connectivity and fare are two important factors in the ridership. Until the two factors work out, the Metro has to try different mechanisms to attract people. Buses are one important mode to bring commuters to the Metro. But they will be trying to sustain their operation, as both Metro and MTC cater to different segments of travelling population," he said.

Pointing out that Metro will be able to serve a larger society only if the fare is integrated, Jayaraman cited the example of Singapore, where the commuter pays the same fare, whether he or she travels by bus or train. "In Singapore, the commuter will be charged for the

destination, not for the mode of transport," he said.

Similarly, the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA) plays a vital role in the integration of various modes of transport, including fare. "If the CUMTA is directly under the control of the Chief Minister or someone like that, all the departments would come in line. The empowerment of the CUMTA is a must," he said.

A senior CMRL official said the Metro ridership increased steadily last year after the opening of the AG-DMS-Washermenpet stretch of the Phase-1. "We took various initiatives including the introduction of share cars, an extension of last-mile connectivity to IT companies and most importantly, increasing the frequency of services during peak hours from seven to five minutes," the official said, adding that they wanted the ridership to touch the two-lakh mark soon. "To achieve that, we have to improve the last-mile connectivity, including making available share cars at all stations, and increase the frequency to help officegoers and others reach their destination," the official said.