

Watch before you enter: CMRL for new contactless ticketing

Metro Rail To Begin Trying Out Smartwatches In Two Months

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Sometime in early 2021, passengers would be boarding a metro train just by flashing their wrist watch at the automatic ticketing gates. Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) will begin testing smartwatches at its stations in two months before planning for a launch.

These watches, fitted with a radio-frequency identification chip, would work like the existing travel smart cards used by metro rail passengers. CMRL officials are now looking for an alternative way to top-up these watches, instead of letting passengers do it at the ticket counter, to enable contactless travel.

A metro rail official said they

LIMITING CONTACT

▶ CMRL will be testing pre-production smart watches in their stations in another two months

▶ These watches, fitted with RFID chips, will work like smart cards

▶ Passengers wearing a smartwatch can flash it at the automatic fare collection gates before heading to the platform to board trains

▶ CMRL is looking for an alternative option for passengers to top-up these watches instead of giving it to a ticket counter

held discussions with watch manufacturers Titan and tested wrist watches fitted with the chip in their stations a year ago and were planning to launch it this year. But the plan was delayed due to the pandemic that forced metro rail facility to be shut for nearly five months.

“We tested some prototypes earlier and were supposed to test pre-production devices this year, but it was delayed due to Covid. We should be getting the devices

Imaging: Shinod Akkaraparambil



staff to enable contactless travel

▶ One of the options they are looking at is if they could use the newly-launched travel card readers on which the watch can be tapped for top-up

soon and begin testing, may be in a couple of months,” an official said. “Except for the form factor, the watch would work just like a smart card that would work with our existing scanners in the station,” the official said.

With the chip installed in the wrist watch, CMRL officials said, passengers could use it like their smart card which they top-up and flash it at the automatic fare collection gates. But unlike smart cards, which passengers could

top-up either through the CMRL mobile app or at the ticket vending machine at the stations, the watches must be handed over to a ticket counter staff for recharge. “We don’t know how many passengers would be comfortable to give their watch at the counter because we are adding touch points. So that’s a challenge. Instead now we will have to see if we can use the newly launched travel card readers to top-up the watches as well,” an official said.

On September 7, when metro services resumed, CMRL launched travel card readers where passengers could tap their smart card behind the reader for top-up. This is to save time and avoid contact with staff at the station.

The reader will let passengers recharge their smart card, check their balance and travel history, without touching the device. In addition, there is QR-code ticketing facility, which lets passengers purchase tickets through the CMRL app and displaying a QR-code, which appears upon buying a ticket, on a scanner at the ticketing gates.