

Metro rail cuts peak-hour frequency as footfalls way below pre-lockdown level

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Chennai: With an average of 20,000 passengers using metro rail services, which is less than 20% of the daily patronage pre-lockdown, CMRL has reduced its peak hour train frequency from five minutes to seven minutes.

The low patronage, officials said, is due to techies and students who form a major chunk of the footfalls, being absent due to work from home and virtual classes.

CMRL said around 3.6 lakh passengers used the metro trains for daily commute since the service resumed on September 7 after a break of nearly five months. While initially the footfalls doubled from 4,993 on September 7 to 13,980 on

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September 9 when the second corridor from Central to St Thomas Mount resumed operations, it is yet to reach its pre-lockdown levels when daily patronage was at 1.16 lakh. On September 30, a total of 22,065 passengers used the metro service. Hence, officials decided to reduce its train frequency.

“Majority of our passengers are private company employees particularly from IT companies, who are now working from home. A

chunk of our patronage are also school and college students, who now don't travel for classes daily. We hope the numbers will gradually go up as institutions open and people start travelling to office,” an official said.

As a result, many crowd-attracting stations like Thirumangalam and Alandur where IT employees board and alight to reach IT destinations like Porur have seen a drop in daily footfall, officials said.

While the peak hour — 8am to 10am and 4pm to 7pm — frequency has been reduced from five minutes to seven minutes in both the corridors, trains are operated as usual for every 10 minutes during non-peak hours, which has remained unchanged. Every alternative train from Chennai

Central metro will be a direct train to Airport via Koyambedu and Alandur.

QR-code ticketing and travel card readers, which are new facilities among others introduced to encourage contactless travel, are also picking up with 13,044 passengers using QR tickets to commute so far. Around 70,009 passengers tapped smartcards on the travel card readers at the stations to recharge and swipe them to board a train.

While they offer discounts to encourage passengers to use these facilities, officials said they have also opened all the entry points in the 32 stations to enable easy access. Earlier it was decided to keep only two instead of four entry points to be opened in all stations.