

City's transport picks up pace but yet to shift gears

Pics: A Prathap

Metro Rail's Ridership Increases 50% In Oct; Footfalls High At Stns In Airport, Court, Alandur

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Resumption of limited number of trains, inter-city buses and 100% attendance in offices and a small percentage of people preferring metro instead of other public transport like MTC buses, auto rickshaws or cabs may have boosted metro rail's daily average patronage which has grown by nearly 53% since resuming service in September.

From an average daily patronage of 14,798 in September 2020, the ridership has gone up to an average 22,685, though the present daily average patronage is only 25% of the pre-Covid ridership when it was at 1.16 lakh.

A metro rail official said stations like Chennai Airport, High Court, Thirumangalam, Meenambakkam and Alandur are now the top five crowded stations where they see anywhere between 1,200 and 2,100 passengers a day. The average peak hour footfall is at 17,883.

"I either use suburban trains to travel between St Thomas Mount and Meenambakkam or MTC buses if I am travelling within city limits. Though MTC buses are available, I fear the buses may be crowded. So I opt to travel in metro as it is the only service available through the day though I cannot afford to use metro trains every day," said S Raju, a resident of Alandur.

While Chennai Airport station has more fliers, stations like Thirumangalam and Alandur have private company and airport employees, and the High Court station caters to shoppers from Broadway who do not find MTC buses.

"We are not sure if MTC passengers are using our service, but we notice most of our commuters are office-goers and people travelling outstation through buses and domestic flights," an official said. "Majority of the crowds we see during peak hours are office goers and people who travel for business. Also we do not operate on suburban or MRTS routes, so we cannot say we are getting those passengers," the official said.

But there are many one-time travellers who take metro trains if their origin and destination are closer to the stations. Between September 7 and October 15, out of the total 6.78 lakh passengers, around 4.9 lakh passengers used smartcards, who may be either regular or one-time users and around 1.5 lakh, who may be one-time users, opted for tokens because they do not want to block their money in a smartcard. Metro rail launched a smartcard reader for commuters to tap and validate their smartcards recharged online, to provide contactless travel. QR-code ticketing which also allows commuters to walk straight to the platform without waiting in ticket counters are also gaining popularity with an average 632 commuters using the service daily.

ON A SLOW TRACK

After resuming in September, patronage of metro rail and MTC buses has increased but it is way below the pre-Covid level



METRO RAIL

LINES OPERATIONAL

- Washermenpet to Airport
- Central Metro to St Thomas Mount

DAILY AVERAGE PATRONAGE

Sept 2020	14,798
Oct 2020	22,685

Daily average patronage pre-Covid
1.16 lakh

FREQUENCY (WEEKDAYS)

Trains operated between 7am to 9pm

PEAK HOURS	8am to 10am
	4pm to 7pm

35 trains operated during peak hours
25 run during non-peak hours

Washermenpet to Airport:

10 minutes (non-peak hours),
7 minutes (peak hours)

Chennai Central to St Thomas Mount:
20 minutes (non-peak),
14 minutes (peak)

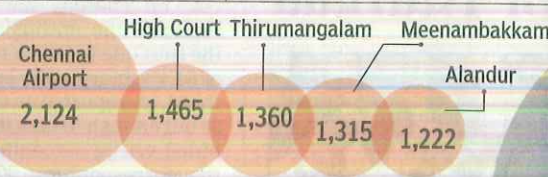
14 minutes (peak)

Chennai Central to Airport via Egmore, CMBT and Alandur:
20 minutes (non-peak),
14 minutes (peak)

Weekends:
No peak-hour frequency

TOP-5 STATIONS NOW

No. of passengers (daily average)



MTC

▲ Pre-Covid ▲ Now

Buses operated — 3,300 (Pre-Covid) — 2,100 (Now)

Earnings per km — ₹30.06 (Pre-Covid) — ₹29.64 (Now)

Daily ticket sales — ₹2.5cr (Pre-Covid) — ₹1.6cr (Now)

Daily footfall — 33L-36L (Pre-Covid) — 14L-17L (Now)

Passengers per bus per day — 950-1,030 (Pre-Covid) — 730-800 (Now)



WHY PATRONAGE HAS FALLEN

- Unreliable in terms of timing
- Some routes are overcrowded
- People avoid buses due to fear of contracting coronavirus
- Unannounced route changes
- No A/C buses on road



OTHER TRANSPORT

Cabs in Chennai	28,000
Trips per day	15,000
Registered autos	94,000
Income of cab and autorickshaw drivers	has halved

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S RAJU | ALANDUR RESIDENT

