

Metro patronage sees slow, steady growth after services resume

In the three months since operations restarted following lockdown relaxations, the average number of commuters per day has touched about 28,600

SUNITHA SEKAR
CHENNAI

On November 23, as many as 38,000 passengers used the Metro, one of the highest numbers recorded since operations resumed in September following lockdown relaxations.

Two months ago, when services restarted, the trains wore a nearly deserted look initially and by the end of September, there were about 15,000 passengers a day, a mere 8% of the crowd they carried during pre-COVID-19 times.

37% increase in footfall

By the end of October, more commuters, especially those travelling to Anna Salai, took the trains and the footfalls grew to 22,500 a day. Now, there has been a 37% increase compared to October, and the average number of commuters travelling per day has touched about 28,600.

According to the officials of Chennai Metro Rail Ltd.

On track to recovery

On weekdays, the Metro gets 33,000-35,000 commuters while during weekends and holidays, the number drops to 20,000-25,000



■ S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

(CMRL), in the last few weeks, owing to intermittent rain, more commuters began



travelling by Metro Rail again. "Initially, many of our regular commuters went to their workplaces on two-wheelers to avoid travelling by public transport. But now, gradually, after seeing how the trains are cleaned and physical distancing is main-

Average number of passengers a day

SEPTEMBER 15,000

OCTOBER 22,500

NOVEMBER 28,600

tained, many have resumed travelling as usual. As it began raining, more felt encouraged to give up travelling by bikes and took the trains," an official said.

During weekdays, the Metro usually got 33,000-35,000 commuters while during weekends and holidays, the number dropped to 20,000-25,000, officials said.

A gap between the current and pre-COVID-19 ridership figures primarily exists because IT professionals are still working from home.



Major contributors: A gap between the current and pre-COVID-19 ridership figures exists primarily because IT professionals are still working from home. ■ M. KARUNAKARAN

"Thousands of IT employees used to take the Metro to Alandur or Guindy or Ekkattuthangal. From there, they would reach their workplaces using company transport. These people will continue working from home for the next several months. Hence, until they return to their offices, we may not see trains running at full capacity,"

another official said.

The stretch from the Chennai airport till Washermenpet carries the maximum number of passengers now, with the airport, as usual, witnessing the highest footfall with an average of about 3,000 passengers a day. "In the weekends, the patronage is dismal. What little we see is only because of

people travelling to the airport and the CMBT," the official added.

After the airport, the High Court has seen some marginal increase in footfalls and nearly 2,500 passengers travel through this station, officials said. Thirumangalam, Meenambakkam and Alandur get about 1,500 passengers a day.