

Washermenpet-Wimco Nagar Metro line to be opened in Jan

OMJASVIN M D @ Chennai

THE Phase-1 extension of the Chennai Metro Rail is expected to help commuters in North Chennai by cutting down travel time and reducing traffic congestion.

The nine-km extension line, which runs from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar, covers a majority of the congested areas in North Chennai. Trial runs are being conducted and the stretch is expected to be opened to the public by January.

According to estimates from Google Maps, it takes 30-45 minutes to cover this stretch by road during peak hours. The average speed of vehicles on roads here is 30-40 kmph. However, the Metro, which runs at an average speed of 80 kmph and halts for less than a minute at stations, is expected to cover the stretch within 15 minutes.



Passengers from North Chennai may also use the Metro to reach the airport within an hour, compared to at least two-and-a-half hours by MTC buses and one-and-a-half or two hours by private transport.

About 6.6 km of the 9-km stretch will be elevated, while the rest will be underground.

CMRL officials said average daily estimates of vehicular traffic on the Thiruvottriyur High Road, where the Metro corridor also runs, could be 1.5 to 2 lakh vehicles a day. "The road is just a two-lane highway and lorries and buses cause traffic congestion, snarls and delays. We expect many commuters to opt for the Metro," said the official.

According to CMRL's field surveys on traffic demands, in 2011, about 3.18 lakh people travelled from Washermenpet to the airport, while in 2016, the

number rose to 4.03 lakh. By 2026, the number is predicted to touch 5.42 lakh.

Officials said many people in the working sector live in North Chennai, and it was found that they often visit Burma Bazaar, Koyambedu Market, Parrys and the airport.

Apart from connecting Wimco Nagar, an extreme part of North Chennai, officials said CMRL feeder services will take the Metro's access to places further away such as Minjur, Manali, Ennore, Ernavoor and Kargil Nagar.

"The Phase 1 stretch also has a lot of schools along the Metro line. Many students will use the Metro once schools reopen," said another official.

Officials are hopeful there will be a large number of commuters once the line is opened, but did not comment on the monthly ridership targets in North Chennai, in view of the pandemic.