

Metro rail sees increase in patronage in last 3 months

Still Daily Avg Ridership 25% of Pre-Covid Numbers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: A larger number of office-goers and domestic fliers are using metro trains for their daily commute, increasing patronage from 3.6 lakh commuters in September to nearly 9 lakh passengers in November.

This has boosted daily average ridership from 12,000 in September to 28,000 in November, but is still only 25% of the pre-Covid-19 numbers when the daily average was 1.16 lakh. In the last three months, since services resumed after the five-month lockdown, 19.2 lakh people have used metro services.

Chennai Metro Rail (Cmrl) officials said they recorded the most footfalls on November 23 when 38,615 people used the services. Earlier this month, Cmrl said a majority of office-goers and airline passengers had begun

IN NUMBERS 19.2 lakh passengers travelled in metro from September 7 to November 30

MONTH-WISE BREAK-UPS OF PATRONAGE

September | **3.6** lakh

October | **7** lakh

November | **8.6** lakh

On November 23 (Monday), **38,615** passengers availed of the service

At present, the average daily ridership is **28,600**, an increase from **12,000** in September

Out of total passengers, **4.7** lakh used travel cards

Pre-Covid daily average patronage was **1.2** LAKH

and **21,579** used QR code tickets to use the service



Representative photo

using metro rail as more companies started calling employees back to office and more domestic flights were being operated from the city since lockdown rules were relaxed in September. During pre-Covid-19 times, a chunk of metro commuters were also college students.

Now, with more fliers using metro services, officials said the metro station at Chennai airport was one of the most crowded with an average of 2,200 passengers boarding trains daily followed by stations at Madras high court, Thirumangalam, Meenambakkam and Alandur with an average of 1200-

1500 commuters daily.

After services resumed in September, Cmrl launched QR-code tickets and travel card readers to enable contactless travel. Still, only 25% of passengers — 4.7 lakh of 19.2 lakh — used travel cards or smartcards, and a mere 1% (21,579 passengers) used QR-code tickets. A Cmrl official said people didn't want to lock their money in a smartcard.

"We cannot refuse tokens when they insist on purchasing one. So we issue tokens that are sanitized after every use." Other metros like Bengaluru and Delhi have stopped issuing tokens since op-

erations started in September post-lockdown due to fear that reuse of tokens could be a potential source of Covid-19 spread.

While QR-code lets passengers purchase tickets through Cmrl's smartphone app and requires them to simply tap the code displayed on their phones against a scanner at the station, a travel card reader allows passengers to recharge smartcards.

With the 9km phase-1 extension from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar likely to be commissioned in January 2021, officials hope the patronage would go up by at least another 30%.

