

Metro patronage up 400% since lockdown was lifted

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AMID the gradual relaxation of the lockdown since September, the Chennai Metro Rail has witnessed an increase in passengers. This is a boon for the Metro, which is likely to inaugurate the brand new nine-km Phase-1 extension from Old Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar in North Chennai.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, officials earlier refrained from commenting on the patronage expected in the North Chennai section. Meanwhile, data from the CMRL shows that as the lockdown was being relaxed, its patronage quadrupled since it reopened in September.

About 3.60 lakh passengers used the Metro in September, while the number rose to 12.30 lakh in December. A total of 31.52 lakh passengers travelled in the Metro since the lockdown was relaxed.

CMRL officials said the increase in patronage gives hope of a rousing welcome to the North Chennai line.

“Since it will connect important stretches such as Beach Station, Parrys, Koyambedu and the airport, it is likely to receive a good response,” said officials.

The monthly patronage touched 7.03 lakh in October and 8.58 lakh in November. On December 21, a high of 47,214 passengers used the Metro services, while a total of 83,813 people used the QR code ticketing services since September. As many as 18,49,944 people used the travel card ticketing system from September.

Reacting to this increase in patronage, public health experts and officials say it is a sign that normalcy is returning after the lockdown. “Perhaps people feel the Metro is safer than other modes of transport, which may be overcrowded,” Health Secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan said.

Former director of public health Dr K Kolandasamy said, “More than people not fearing to use public transport, the rise in patronage indicates normalcy is returning to the city.”

