

Residents rejoice as Metro Rail starts Washermenpet-Wimco Nagar service

CHENNAI R Santhosh, a resident of Kaladipet, has been waiting for the past several months to take the Metro Rail to reach his office in Saidapet and put an end to his stressful commute by two-wheeler. His wish finally came true when Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the final 9-km stretch between Washermenpet and Wimco Nagar in the presence of Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Sunday.

Now, the entire 54-km first phase of the Metro Rail along with 9-km extension is up and running. A passenger can now take a ride from Wimco Nagar



Officials ride on the first trip on Sunday

to Chennai Airport (31 km) in about 60 minutes as against twice the time and more than triple the cost it would take to go by road.

The fare matrix shows that a commuter boarding at Wimco Nagar should pay Rs 70 for a trip to Guindy and beyond. North Chennai People's Rights

Federation (NCPRF) of office bearers, who distributed sweets and roses to Metro Rail officials following the inauguration, urged them to extend the 50 per cent discount provided on Sunday to other days as well.

"More people will travel on Metro if the ticket fare is reduced. Poor and daily wagers should also be able to make use of the service," said Earnest Paul, convener of the federation. He also demanded that one of the stations should be named after Dr S Jayachandran, popularly known as 'Rs 5 doctor' who had spearheaded the movement for Metro extension till Wimco Nagar.

The stations on the new line

were brimming with activity on Sunday afternoon. "I wanted to board the first train," said K Aravind, a young executive.

The North Chennai line was opened even though work on one of the stations - Theradi - has not yet been completed. Officials said trains would skip Theradi station until the construction works are over. The elevated stations of Tollgate and Tiruvotiyur have been integrated with the MTC terminus, with provision for parking and footpaths.

"About two lakh people are expected to commute every day in this stretch," an official said, adding that trains would be operated in five minutes frequency during peak hours.

Woman operator at the helm of 1st train

CHENNAI When Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the service from Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium on Sunday, the first train in the phase-I extension line was operated by Reena Arumugam. She is one of the three women train operators in the Chennai Metro. In fact, the first-ever Metro train operated in the city was driven by a female operator, A Preethi, on June 29, 2015. She steered the train between Alandur and Koyambedu when the first segment was commissioned.