

Metro footfalls up, but still 38% of pre-Covid numbers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

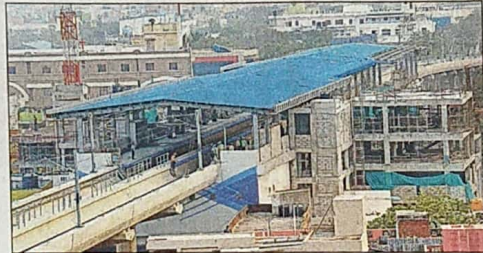
Chennai: Ridership on the 45km metro rail corridor has nearly doubled to 13.43 lakh passengers in January from an average of 7.8 lakh passengers a month between September and December last year.

Office-goers and domestic fliers have helped increase the daily average ridership from 14,798 in September to around 44,000 in January but it is still only 38% of the pre-Covid daily average of 1.16 lakh. Nearly half of the passengers who used metro trains in the last five months bought tokens for their commute instead of opt-

ing for contactless travel.

Metro rail officials said that since services resumed on September 7, after nearly five months of lockdown, 45 lakh people have travelled by metro trains. On January 27 this year, 63,999 passengers boarded trains on the two corridors of phase-1. An official said employees returning to work from office and operation of 125 domestic flights a day in January have boosted ridership. Airport metro station is one of the busiest along with Thirumangalam and Alandur.

The rise in numbers come at a time when a 9km metro



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rail line with eight stations from Washermenpet to Wimco Nagar is getting its finish-

ing touches and is expected to open on February 14. "We hope the numbers will go up

steadily on our existing lines and there will be a 10%-30% increase in patronage when the north Chennai line opens," an official said.

In the last five months, around 26 lakh people opted for contactless travel either through purchase of QR-code tickets through smart phones or by swiping their smartcard on a travel card reader to top up. The rest purchased tokens, which are otherwise discouraged to prevent spread of infection. CMRL converted first class coaches to women-only coaches to encourage more commuters to use train service while also maintaining

social distancing. But many office-goers complained that the trains are nearly crowded during peak hours and wanted CMRL to increase peak hour frequency.