

1L travel on metro trains on March 8

Passenger Nos Inch Closer To Pre-Covid Level Sans Free Rides

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

WELCOME SPIKE

CMRL handles over 1L passengers for the first time since March 2020 without caveats of free rides or bus strike

> No. of metro passengers from Sept 7, 2020 to Feb 28, 2021

65.5L

> Average daily ridership pre-Covid in March 2020

• 1.16L



In February 2021

> Average daily ridership | 73,380

> Average daily ridership on Washermenpet- Wimco Nagar line | 8,760

> Ridership crossed one lakh on February 14 (1,37,957) when CMRL announced free rides after inauguration of the 9km north Chennai line

> 1,15,892 passengers used CMRL services on February 26 during the bus strike

On March 8, 2021

1,00,942

Total no. of passengers

14,236

No. of passengers on Washermenpet-Wimco Nagar line

Back on track: The new line helped boost ridership

on the Washermenpet - Wimco Nagar line. Officials had earlier said the slashing of ticket prices, return of people to office, increase in domestic fliers and opening of the 9km north Chennai line were the reasons behind the steady increase in patronage. The dai-

ly average patronage in March 2020 was at 1.16 lakh.

"We expected to touch pre-Covid levels in a month or two as lockdown restrictions are further relaxed," an official said.

After resuming services on September 7, 2020, daily

patronage steadily increased from 14,798 in September to 44,000 in January 2021. With more than 50% of commuters using trains during peak hours, the rise was evidently caused by people returning to their workplaces. A sizeable chunk also included passen-

gers heading to the airport. After the north Chennai line opened in February, there was a spike in daily average ridership to 73,380 with nearly 12% of passengers seen in the nine newly opened stations.

On February 14 when the new 9km line was opened, CMRL recorded a maximum ridership of 1.37 lakh. But, this increase could be attributed to the free rides offered that day to encourage passengers to use the service. Again, on February 26, when there was a strike called by unions which lead to MTC buses going off roads, metro trains recorded ridership of 1.15 lakh.

An official said CMRL was working on issues like last mile connectivity across all stations, which when resumed would lead to further increase in patronage.