

# Metro rail to rent out space below viaduct to boost revenue

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**Chennai:** At a time when footfalls have dropped in metro stations or services are shut due to the pandemic, Chennai Metro Rail Limited has started to rent out all available space outside its stations to boost revenue. It has floated tender to look for firms that can take a license and use nearly 1,919sqft of its space vacant below the viaducts of the phase-1 corridor between Ekkattuthangal and Ashok Nagar and set up retail shops. This is in addition to the 12-storey mini-mall that is under construction at Ekkattuthangal that will be ready in 2022.

A metro rail official said they want to rent out small



plots they own below the viaducts. These plots, which give engineers access to the viaducts for maintenance, are otherwise empty and at risk of being encroached or misused.

## RESOURCEFUL PLAN

CMRL has floated tender for licensing 1,919sqft spread over two floors to be built between Ekkattuthangal and Ashok Nagar stations. These are spaces under the elevated viaduct, acquired before the construction of the line

► The spaces, which give engineers access to the viaduct for maintenance, are otherwise empty

► CMRL is now utilising the space to boost revenue at a time when footfalls have dropped due to the pandemic and services were halted due to lockdown

► The move could also prevent encroachments under the viaducts

Now, the tender is likely to turn the spaces into food and other retail outlets.

“Whenever the elevated viaduct takes a turn, it usually goes off the centre of the road.

► Licensing of the space is in addition to the 12-storey commercial complex under construction near Ekkattuthangal metro station. The complex, being built at ₹73 crore cost, is expected to be ready in 18 months and will be spread over 41,861sqft. It will have retail space in the lower floors & office space in the upper levels

In such locations, we have empty land which we use during maintenance of the undercarriage of the viaduct. These spaces are mostly fenced off to prevent misuse. We want to ef-

fectively utilise the space and generate revenue out of it,” an official said. “The spaces are also close to the metro stations and very accessible,” he added.

The effort comes at a time when metro rail has seen a significant drop in ridership and ticketing revenue after it shut services due to Covid-19.

Nearly 21km of the 45km phase-1 and 6.6km of the 9km phase-1 extension line is elevated. While most of them are built on the centre of arterial roads, these lines go off the road when they take a turn. Between the 2.5km distance from Ekkattuthangal to Ashok Nagar metro station, CMRL has identified a few locations where the viaduct

turns and is off the centre of the road, including space near ESI hospital and riverbeds. “We also identified similar empty spots on other stretches, but they are too close to the tunnels and construction work cannot be done,” the official said.

Construction of the commercial complex near Ekkattuthangal metro station started early this year. The complex is being built on 41,861sqft space at a cost of ₹73crore. It is expected to have retail space in the lower floors and office space in the upper levels. “The commercial complex is a bigger property where we have already licensed space and have started the construction,” the official said.