

With 10,700 regular riders, 10,617 trip cards sold, metro rail picks up speed

CMRL Pushes Services With Offers, Keeps Tab On Nos.

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Chennai: Metro rail is on a roll. It may have started its first service less than three years ago and widening its presence in the city is an ongoing process, but the transit system has gathered a loyal, and expanding, customer base.

Data till February 2018 shows around 10,700 commuters, who use the metro as a regular mode of commute, have taken more than 7.3 lakh trips.

Chennai Metro Rail Ltd (CMRL) has sold 10,617 trip cards for commuters who regularly travel between two points

TRAVEL ON THE CARDS

▶ With trip cards gaining popularity, metro rail plans to promote trip cards by offering **20% discounts**

▶ No. of trip cards sold between June 2015 and February 2018 | **10,617**

▶ No. of trips by commuters between June 2015 and February 2018 | **7,38,507**

▶ No. of contactless smart cards sold between June 2015 and February 2018 | **10,70,323**

▶ No. of smart cards in circulation as on March 2 | **8,49,647**



A FEW TYPES OF TRAVEL CARDS

Contactless smart token | For single journey between two stations for a day

Contactless smart card | For multiple trips and can be recharged. Valid for 5 years. Comes with 10% discount

Trip card | Specific no. of trips for 30, 90 or 180 days. Comes with 20% discount

Tourist ticket | Card for unlimited travel only for a day

in the past three years. "We are promoting trip cards by offering 20% discounts," said an official.

Metro rail introduced six types of travel cards — for regular commuters, tourists, groups and other passengers — when they opened the first line between Koyambedu and Alandur in June 2015. In the first seven months, CMRL sold only 287 trip cards and commuters took 6,972 trips.

In 2016, the sale of trip cards rose to 1,375 and commuters made 96,639 trips. And then, in 2017, the sale of these cards zoomed by five times with the opening of the underground line between Thirumangalam and Nehru Park. Metro sold more than 6,890 trip cards and people made nearly 4.8lakh trips.

Around the same time the sale of smart cards for those who do not take frequent rides also grew — from 14,204 contact-

less smart cards sold in 2016 to 7.4lakh cards in 2017.

So far 10.7lakh smart cards have been sold, of which 8.5lakh are in use.

"We keep track of the cards in circulation by using a unique number on them. When a commuter swipes a card, the unique number is registered in our systems," an official said.

CMRL floated tenders in November 2017 to procure 20lakh smart cards.

"On an average, we issue 6,000 smart cards at our stations daily. The cards are convenient for commuters too," said another official.

While the opening of the underground section that connects residential localities of Shenoy Nagar and Anna Nagar attracted more people to metro trains, the number of smart card sale also jumped because CMRL made them mandatory for every commuter instead of plastic tokens.

A rise in smart card numbers may not necessarily mean a rise in ridership, as a commuter may have more than one smart card. All the same, metro's average ridership is now up from 25,000 to 35,000 on weekends and 30,000 on weekdays.

When the metro service began, travel cards were not as popular as plastic tokens, officials said. But commuters would often lose these tokens and metro rail had to procure fresh ones for a cost.