

Daily commuters have plenty of reasons to cheer

Faster, more comfortable ride to IT hub a big blessing

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At 4 p.m. on Wednesday, when the metro train from Nagole streaked into the Ameerpet station, the staff and the first commuters waiting on the platform broke into cheers and clapped. And for the first time, the train instead of terminating at Ameerpet station travelled towards HiTec City.

"It will save me travel in shared autorickshaws", "it will save me time", "I can travel without choking on pollution" were some of the reasons offered by travellers who hopped on the train for the regular commuter service between Ameerpet and HiTec City. The newest stretch adds to the breadth of the city covered by metro rail, as the trains will now travel from HiTec City in the west to Nagole in the eastern fringes of the town.

Guiding commuters

At HiTec City station, metro officials have deployed ushers and cue cards to guide commuters to the two platforms as the facility for track switching is not yet ready. "Some trains will come on platform 1 and others on platform 2. We will guide commuters to the right platform," said a metro official.

Among the first commuters to get onto the train returning from HiTec City was P. Srinivas. "This will change my travel time and pattern. I used to take the office cab



Passengers queuing up to take the Hitech City to Nagole metro train on Wednesday evening. •NAGARA GOPAL

which had a fixed departure and arrival time. Now I will have a little more flexibility and it will save me time," said the infotech employee, who lives in Begumpet.

'Extend timing'

"I wish the service is available till midnight or 12.30 a.m. as we have calls with clients in the US and Canada and occasionally log out around 11.30 p.m. If they extend the train timing, it will see a big rush of IT employees like me," said Mr. Srinivas, adding that the metro fares will be much lower than the monthly ₹ 4,500 he used to pay for the office cab.

"I had to change two buses, and it used to take 40 minutes to travel between my Yusufguda home to Hindu Public School at Sanathnagar. I will have to change trains, but this is more predictable," said Shashank, an intermediate student.

Varsha, another student who got into the train, said, "I commute between Madhapur and Lakdikapul. The traffic is horrible and I used to waste hours on the road. I had to travel in shared autorickshaws as well. But this will be convenient and safer for me."

Tiding over challenges

Among those cheering the first train run and sharing *motichur laddoos* was K. Srinivasan. "I was involved with metro from the preparatory work phase. Then there were many challenges. Now as I travel with my colleagues, all the memories flash in my mind about the struggles, the fight for right of way clearances, and now, there is a sense of satisfaction," said Mr. Srinivasan.

The train took 17 minutes to cover the distance and did not stop at Jubilee Checkpost, Peddamma Gudi and Madhapur stations.