

Six-coach metro trains given wide berth despite rising passenger rush

Currently, 55 of the 57 three-coach train sets available are being run during the peak hours of 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m; they can only be extended by another three train sets, with no scope of attaching to them an extra coach or two

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The Airport Metro project has been hogging the lime-light these days. In the meantime, however, Hyderabad Metro Rail (HMR) phase one, operating on three traffic-dense corridors of the twin cities, is running more trains during the morning and evening peak hours with a frequency of three minutes and four minutes respectively, especially between Ameerpet-Raidurg and Mettuguda-Ameerpet/Raidurg.

With pandemic restrictions easing and many employees returning to offices, ridership has been hovering between 4.40 lakh and 4.70 lakh passengers a day, with total passenger trips amounting to over 6.22 lakh a day. Many passengers are posting photos of packed coaches on social media, seeking more coaches or trains.

The issue is that the existing three-coach train sets can only be extended by another three train sets, with no scope of attaching to them an extra coach or two. This despite that all the overhead stations were built to accommodate six-coach trains.

Limitations

Though almost every spare train is pressed into service during peak hour traffic, each three-coach set can



Packed to capacity: Metro rail ridership has been hovering between 4.40 lakh and 4.70 lakh passengers a day since easing of pandemic restrictions. NAGARA GOPAL

carry only 900 riders. Given that the project was built to be able to run trains every two minutes, one option is procuring more trains.

Even if such a decision is made by L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad (L&TMRH), the concessionaire that built the 69.2-km project, it will take at least a year (after a contract is placed) for them to arrive. With the project itself running at losses of around ₹1,740 crore, it is anybody's guess whether more funds will be infused into the project.

Right now, 55 of the 57 three-coach train sets available are being run during the peak hours of 9 a.m. to

11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Usually, five trains are put on standby for maintenance or emergencies.

Withstanding load

"We have noted that, during certain timings and between some stations, coaches are getting crowded. But, metros are built to withstand such crush loads. In cities like Tokyo, you have specially drafted security personnel to push in the riders. We have not reached that stage," said HMR managing director N.V.S. Reddy.

The rush on Red Line – L.B. Nagar to Miyapur – is almost steady throughout the day and night, with 1.74

lakh trips by 2.45 lakh passengers. Blue Line – Nagole to Raidurg – gets packed during the peak hours towards Raidurg in the morning and towards Nagole in the return direction, with 1.35 lakh trips a day by about 2 lakh passengers.

Currently, HMR runs special short-loop services from Mettuguda to Ameerpet and also upto Raidurg every four minutes and between Ameerpet and Raidurg every three minutes.

This apart, it is taking measures such as employing more security guards (women personnel too) for orderly entry and exit and

Why do the trains squeak and squeal?

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The rumbling and shaking of metro trains may unnerve many a passenger. But, L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad (L&TMRH) says there is "nothing to worry" and attributes the noise to the "unique alignment of many sharp curves and steep gradients due to the topography of the city".

"The rail and wheel metal interaction creates more vibrations and screeching sounds, compared with straight-line metros. Regular monitoring of the structure is done as part of the standard operating procedure, includ-

ing continuous/frequent track lubrication to reduce both vibration and noise levels," say senior officers of the company.

They say that the noise levels are monitored regularly and that the values are kept well within permissible limits. Regular preventive maintenance work is done on all the civil structures, including viaduct parapets across the metro rail network. Superficial hairline cracks, a common phenomenon for areas subjected to continuous vibrations, are rectified immediately upon being noticed, by applying an epoxy coating for weather protection.

making announcements about allowing passengers to deboard first.

"Passengers are crowding near doors making it difficult for others to get in or out. Crush load capacity, calculated based on our population's average height and weight, is 8-10 passengers per sq. metre. This is an acceptable range compared with 15 passengers per sq. metre in Mumbai local trains. International standard is six passenger per sq. metre," said Mr. Reddy, adding that

stoppage time has been increased from 20 seconds. As for the procurement of fresh rolling stock, he said discussions were on with L&TMRH to expedite action.

Hyderabad Metro Rail phase one operates Red Line or Corridor One (Miyapur to LB Nagar, 29 km and 27 stations), Green Line or Corridor Two (JBS to MGBS, 11 km and eight stations) and Blue Line or Corridor Three (Nagole to Raidurg, 29 km and 22 stations).