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Residents along Reach-1 can't wait no more

Shivakant Menon

BANGALORE: As 53-year-old Satish Shetty waited from 7.15 pm to 7.45 pm at NGEF bus stop for a BMTC bus to Shivajinagar, the Metro passed overhead on its test run from Byappanahalli to MG Road.

Satish's face immediately lights up as he remarks, "In two weeks, I won't have to wait this long. Even if I walk to Shivajinagar after getting off at MG Road in a Metro, I will still be quicker."

The number of Metro cards issued since September 3

stands testimony for people's wait for the train's commercial run. In 37 days, 4,761 cards have been issued through the counters at the six stations.

Combining online card registrations, the total number is 5,750. "BMRCL has earned Rs 5.53 lakh through Metro Cards. This is bound to go up when the service commences," says BMRCL spokesperson B S Y Chavan.

Normally, the time taken to travel the seven-km stretch between 7 pm and 8.30 pm is about an hour. This travel time will be drastically cut

down to just 16 minutes.

M N Srikumar, who works at Bagmane Tech Park and lives at 4th Cross, Kaggadasapura, says while the Metro does not help people like him on work days, it sure will on weekends. "Saturday and Sunday, we will not have to take our vehicles out. Getting to the central business area around Brigade Road will be a matter of just 30 minutes both ways," he says.

But doubts are being raised about the parking facilities at Byappanahalli and Swami Vivekananda Road stations, the only two stations that have

parking facilities, which however is not yet ready. Central Parking Services (CPS), which handles parking areas at malls and bus stations, had proposed to take up the same with BMRCL.

N Sathyanarayanan, MD, CPS, says while the BMRCL is keen on getting the commercial operations up and running, it has not given much priority to parking.

"It is especially important at stations which are around residential areas. This means, apart from MG Road and Trinity Circle, all other stations need proper parking fa-

cility. However, only two stations have this and can accommodate 2,000 vehicles at once. However, the BMRCL is yet to give tenders for the same," he adds.

The 'last mile' connectivity might prove to be a major hassle for Metro. Swati Ladha, who resides on 10th Main, Mottapapalya, Indiranagar, says it takes her at least 11 minutes to walk to the CMH Road Metro station. "But if I have to get back home at night after 8 pm, I will not use the Metro, as it is unsafe for me to walk till home," she says.

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Shivakant Menon, Bangalore, Oct 7, DHNS:

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