

Mumbai Metro races against time to start ops by Mar 2024

Phase 1 service trials to start by Oct; operations to commence from Dec

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With the Maharashtra government setting a new deadline of March 2024 to complete the ₹33,400-crore Mumbai Metro line 3 project, India's leading construction companies led by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and the Tatas are racing against time to finish the construction work.

Metro officials say they are planning to start phase 1 of the project – between Aarey Colony to Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) – by December this year and the second phase by June next year. “The service trials of trains in Phase 1 will start by October this year and the operations will begin by December,” said a Maharashtra Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) official.

In a visit to the site on May 11, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde surveyed the project and asked the contractors to complete it by March, earlier than the previous deadline of June 2024.

L&T, which won two of the seven contracts, has already started putting the finishing touches to four stations in South Mumbai and three stations between Marol and Aarey. Both these projects, monitored by managing director and chief executive officer (MD & CEO) S N Subrahmanyam, were among the first ones to complete tunnelling work, laying of tracks and, construction of stations.

“We used unique tunnelling methods



PHOTO: KAMLESH PEDNEKAR

in South Mumbai to make sure that there is no damage to heritage structures and at the same time complete the project within time,” Palwinder Singh, project manager of L&T, said at the site near Nariman Point. “The project was extremely complex due to its proximity to the sea and marshy land,” he said.

The entire section was divided into seven packages and construction contracts were awarded to five consortiums to minimise the time needed for construction. In 2016, L&T, HCC, Soma Enterprises, Tata Projects, and Kumar Infrastructures won the contracts to build the projects along with their partners overseas. Of this, L&T won two packages between Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) and three stations (Marol Naka, MIDC, and Seepz) and their associated tunnels.

PROJECT DETAILS

- To connect **Cuffe Parade** to **Aarey Colony** via **Mumbai airport**
- Revised cost of project is **₹33,400 crore**
- Daily ridership expected to be **17 lakh**
- Total length of the route is **33 km**
- **248 coaches** ordered from Alstom; trains capable of unattended operations

Ashwini Bhide, MD, MMRCL said over 87 per cent of Phase 1 is completed. “Multiple small works are to be completed before integrated testing begins,” she said.

The metro corridor which was originally planned to start by 2021-end was delayed after the previous government led by Uddhav Thackeray stopped work at the Aarey depot citing environmental concerns and lack of labour due to Covid. The work between BKC and CST station is slower than the rest of the section, thus risking the March deadline to start Phase 2 of the project, said a source.

After the Bharatiya Janata Party returned to power in June last year, the work at the Aarey depot has restarted. The delay also increased the cost of the project to ₹33,400 crore from the original ₹23,136 crore.