

'Metro Line 3 will decrease around 4.5 L vehicle trips per day on Mumbai roads'

MUMBAI'S FIRST underground line, traversing the Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ route, will be partially completed by the middle of this year. **ASHWINI BHIDE**, managing director of the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC), speaks to **SWEETY ADIMULAM** on how it will augment the city's public transport systems.

With Phase 1 of the MMRC operations set to commence soon, could you provide an update on the progress? What specific tasks are underway for the city's inaugural underground Metro Line 3?

We have made significant progress with 95 per cent completion of Phase 1, encompassing tunnelling from Aarey to BKC and the construction of nine intermediate stations. Our focus now is on completing the depot, crucial for Phase 1 operations. However, a key aspect that remains pending is the full connectivity between the depot and the main line, particularly at the shunting neck area. We anticipate achieving full connectivity by February 15.

Train trials have commenced with two trains that can access the depot but integrated trials can begin only once the depot-main line connectivity is estab-

lished, which is expected between February 15 and 20. We have requested the government to inaugurate the integrated trial through PM Modi. Our target for full commissioning of Phase 1 is by the end of May.

You've discussed the potential for driverless train operations. What is the current plan regarding this?

The plan involves implementing unmanned train operations (UTO), but prior to that, there are two intermediate stages: automatic train protection and automatic train operation (ATO). At present, our target is to operate in ATO mode. UTO certification, a crucial step for fully unmanned operations, has not yet been attained in India.

How significant is this entire corridor to the public, considering the eagerly awaited operation of Metro 3? Could you summarise its importance?

This metro line is the sole corridor traversing the island city, acting as a central backbone interconnecting various modes of transportation. Particularly noteworthy is its passage through extremely congested areas and neighbourhoods of Mumbai. Many of these areas are



actually languishing because there is no proper connectivity, despite having a grand legacy and great historical importance.

This corridor facilitates all the unconnected areas to get connected. It extends connectivity to areas beyond CST and Churchgate, previously accessible only by road.

Do we have any estimates on the number of cars that will be reduced from the roads

due to the Metro 3 project?

According to our estimation, initially, around 4.5 lakh vehicle trips per day are expected to decrease with the commencement of the Metro 3 operations. As the system reaches its ultimate capacity, this number is projected to rise to approximately 6.5 lakh vehicle trips per day. Achieving these reductions will take time, perhaps around 5-10 years, as it involves a significant behavioural change for commuters.

Can you provide an update on how many kilometres of roads were initially barricaded, and how many have been reinstated thus far due to Metro work?

Approximately 7-8 km of roads were barricaded during the construction phase, primarily due to the construction of a 5.5-km steel deck and necessary diversions. MIDC and Marol have been partially reinstated, while Vidyanagari and Santacruz are in the process of being reinstated. Partial reinstatement has also occurred in areas like BKC, Sitladevi and sections in South Mumbai. Additionally, reinstatement work has commenced in Dadar.

What speed will the trains be operating at when operations commence?

The designed speed of the trains is 95 km per hour, but the effective operating speed will be around 35 km per hour. This slower speed is due to the necessity of stopping at every station.

Regarding the Wadala-GPO metro project and the southern extension of the current Metro Line 3 up to Navynagar, could you provide an update on their status and any recent developments?

For the Wadala-GPO metro project, the DPR was initially prepared by the MMRDA, but viability was not established. To make the project viable, the central government has given certain suggestions and we are in the process of updating the DPR. For the southern extension of the current Metro Line 3 up to Navynagar, the DPR has been prepared and discussions with stakeholders are ongoing.

How much will be the ticket fares for Metro Line 3?

The board of MMRC will approve the first fare, ensuring it aligns with current fare structures in Mumbai. Once approved by the board, these fares will be implemented, and subsequent fare revisions will follow the guidelines outlined in the Metro Act.