

MUMBAI UNDERGROUND

NEW METRO TO LINK BYCULLA, CRAWFORD, FORT AND GATEWAY

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The second underground metro system in the city, Metro 11, has had its route realigned to serve Byculla, Fort and Gateway of India, some of the most crowded and visited parts of south Mumbai.

With this development, the two underground transit systems of Metro 3 and 11 will complement each other as they help the city make the north-south journey along its western and eastern seaboard, respectively.

While the first phase of Metro 3 is expected to become functional in May and the entire line in Sept, the Rs 16,000 crore, 16-km Metro 11 is expected to be completed in about five years once work on the project starts — insiders say it might become functional somewhere around 2030.

Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL), already entrusted with the execution of the 33.5-km Metro 3 (Seepz-Bandra-Colaba) corridor, was assigned the responsibility of spearheading the development of the Metro 11 corridor about a year ago.

After MMRCL took over the project from MMRDA, it decided that Metro 11 should not connect just Wadala and CSMT along the eastern side of the Harbour line of Central Railway, as was originally planned, but make a slight westward departure midway and cross under the railway line to better align with the interests of residents.

Once Metro 11 becomes functional, the heavy reliance on buses and taxis in the Byculla-CSMT-Ballard-Pier-Colaba stretch today is expected to diminish significantly, offering a more efficient and cost-effective transportation alternative to the public, particularly in congested areas like Nagpada and Bhendi Bazaar.

With one station planned outside the Times of India building, the proposed corridor will provide interchange facilities with Metro 3 and suburban railway lines at CSMT.

The Metro 11 project will have Wadala at its northern end and pass southwards through Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) land before, ac-

METRO 11 TO NOW PASS THROUGH BUSY AREAS

WHY THE TWEAK: Old route would limit ridership potential because of lower visitor numbers and proximity to rail line. New route will serve areas where masses are present but have few mass transit options now



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ording to the new alignment, swerving westwards around Reay Road to pass through Byculla, Nagpada, Bhendi Bazaar and Crawford Market, the bustling heart of the island city.

The underground line will then extend further south to CSMT and Horniman Circle, a business and finance hub that is home to RBI and BSE, among other offices, and terminate at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk at

Regal Cinema, a popular tourist district that will be its southern end.

"We have engaged the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation [DMRC] to prepare the detailed project report for the new corridor," MMRCL managing director Ashwini Bhide said.

DMRC has initiated the survey process, and upon completion of the detailed project report, authorities will proceed to deciding on the financial arrangements and finalising the tendering process.

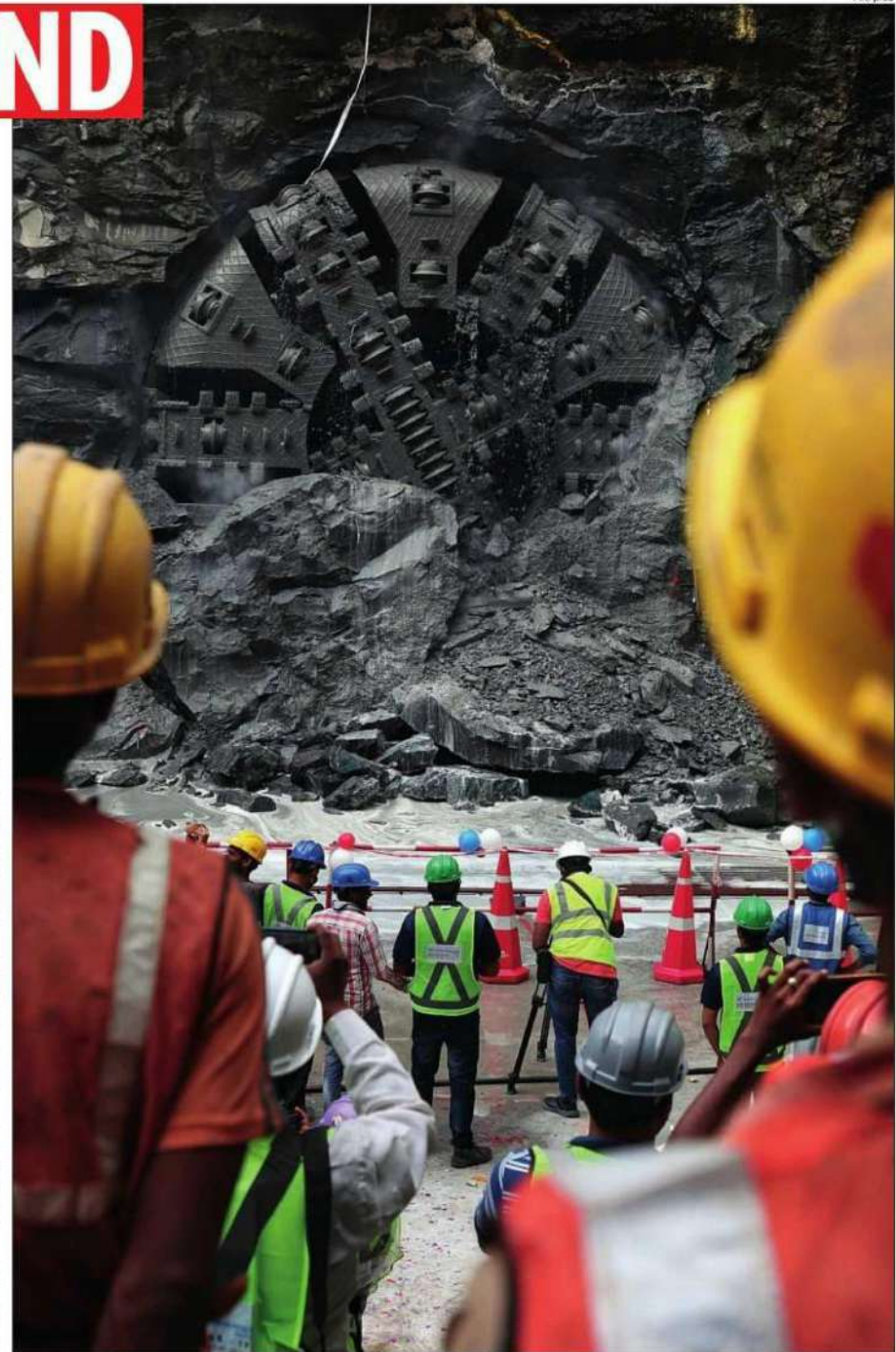
While the original route did not cater to high-density population areas or commercial districts — most of the length of the corridor would have been along Harbour line railway stations, which meant that ridership potential would not be fully exploited — and ended near CSMT, authorities decided Crawford Market and the area around it must be included in the route as it was a good catchment area for ridership because of the presence of the oldest and busiest retail and wholesale markets there.

The terminal station at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk is expected to serve a significant volume of passengers, especially tourists visiting the Gateway, the nearby Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalay and Jehangir Art Gallery, among other must-see attractions in the vicinity. It is also expected to benefit shoppers frequenting the renowned markets of Colaba.

"The route envisioned now aims to connect the Wadala area to the eastern waterfront, traversing through inner-city neighbourhoods such as Byculla, Bhendi Bazaar, Crawford Market, and concluding at the tourism hub of SP Mukherjee Chowk," MMRCL director (planning) R Ramanna said.

There are some minor changes to Metro 11 towards the north side, too, one of which is moving its northern end further north to Anik Depot in Wadala from Wadala Depot. Another tweak is the inclusion of Antop Hill, which has central govt quarters as well as dense slum pockets, in the route.

Ramanna said the decision to opt for an underground route was justified as it would not disturb long-established patterns of life on the surface.



"The chosen path traverses through densely populated areas with narrow and congested roads, as well as heritage sites such as CSMT, Regal Circle, and Horniman Circle, necessitating minimal disruption," Ramanna said.

Authorities said they expected the underground

project to trigger an overground real-estate boom along the corridor. Cluster development in Bhendi Bazaar and Nagpada is expected to pick up, besides rehabilitation of slums. The Centre would also be able to think of redeveloping its staff quarters in Antop Hill.