

ManthanK.Mehta@timesgroup.com

After facing months of delays due to protests by activists and court cases, the construction of the Metro depot at Aarey is nearing completion, with authorities reporting that almost 99% of the work has been finished. The Aarey Carshed Depot, in Aarey Colony, will serve as a maintenance and operations hub for the Cuffe Parade-BKC-Aarey underground Metro, housing vast stabling lines for trains, among other gigantic facilities.

Depot construction work at Aarey came to a halt on Nov 28, 2019, following an order from the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government amidst environmental concerns raised by activists, though some viewed the decision as politically driven. Work resumed on July 1, 2022 after a change in government and with Eknath Shinde, the leader of one of the fractured wings of the then Shiv Sena, assuming office as chief minister. Since then, work has proceeded at a blistering pace. "We weren't expecting it to be ready within 18 months since then, but that is what has happened," said a senior official from Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC). Ashwini Bhide, managing director of MMRC, said, "We are on track to com-

AAREY CARSHED IS 99% READY AFTER BLISTERING PACE OF WORK

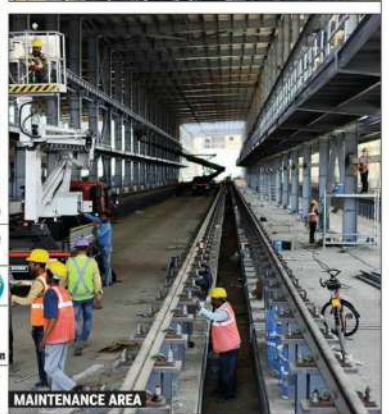
Pics: S L Shanth Kumar, Sanjay Hadkar, MMRC

DEPOT: MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS HUB FOR METRO 3 CORRIDOR

DRONE VIEW OF CARSHED



CONTROL CENTRE



VIDEO

Scan the code for an overview of Metro 3's nerve centre: The Aarey carshed

plete the work before Phase I (BKC-Aarey) commences. Initially, we anticipated the depot work to be unfinished, planning to operate with a backup operations and control centre (OCC) at BKC. But now, most of the depot work is finished, and by the time the route between Aarey and BKC is operational, the main OCC at Aarey will be ready."

The performance and efficiency of the Metro network will rely heavily on the functionality of the OCC. Authorities say only a few days' worth of work remains to connect the stabling lines with the main line, enabling the movement of trains in and out of the main tunnel into the carshed. This connection work was delayed as additional trees had to be removed to link the depot with the main line. The trees were cleared in April last year for the laying of the shunting neck after the Supreme Court approved the BMC tree authority's decision on March 15, 2023 (though the top court imposed a fine of Rs 10 lakh on MMRC for attempting to overreach its order).

"The entire project faced a three-year delay due to the unresolved car depot issue, which was heavily litigated," said an MMRC official. "The depot is vital to train operations. Without it, trains simply cannot run. The depot is like

WORK STARTED OVER 6 YRS AGO

Sept 2017: Work on Metro 3 depot begins at Aarey

Oct 2018: Bombay high court dismisses petitions to declare Aarey a forest and refuses to stop felling 2,500 trees for the depot. Within hours, 2,141 trees are cut. Later, Supreme Court stays tree cutting

Nov 2019: The then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray stays depot work on environmental grounds

THE DEPOT

30 HECTARES IS NET AREA

5 hectares to be green zone

25 hectares to have ramp, shunting lines, station and depot

FACILITIES

WILL INCLUDE:

- Control room (for Metro line 3, this will be something akin to an airport's air-traffic control, or ATC). It will facilitate automated, driverless train operations
- Washing line (for thorough heavy wash), with a capacity for handling six trains per hour
- Rake maintenance workshop (with 7 maintenance lines in inspection shed)

29 stabling lines

(each line to be 220-metre long to accommodate 179-metre rakes)

Test track (614-metre long) for rakes

Automatic washing plant (for quick wash)

Power sub-station

Stores for spares

Administrative office, canteen and related facilities

what the head is to the body. It is Metro 3's nerve centre."

Spanning 30 hectares, with five hec-

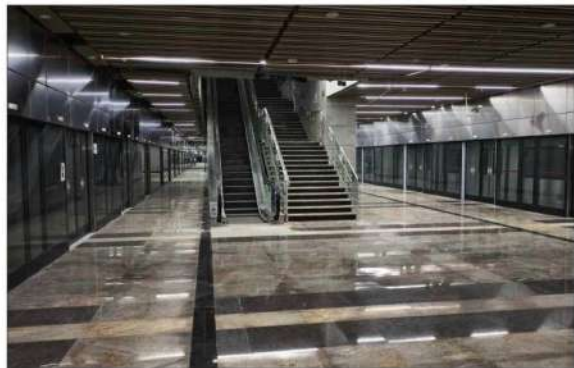
tares left untouched, the remaining 25 hectares hosts a station, besides the depot, which in addition to harbouring

maintenance and operational facilities, also had administrative and training facilities. Designed for 30 rakes of eight

cars each, the depot is being constructed at a cost of Rs 328 crore. Up to 30 rakes will be stabled at any given time, with

some stationed at terminal stations like Cuffe Parade and BKC, from where services may commence in the morning.

8 yrs later: 77% occupied roads to be returned by May



Shops on Metro route hoping for biz to get back on track soon

Richa Pinto & Manthan K Mehta | TNN

Mumbai: The light at the end of the tunnel, that is the Metro 3 rail network, is finally visible, with the first phase set to open in May after eight years of construction. Gradually, by September, the entire corridor is expected to be fully functional. Families and businesses en route, that have tolerated broken roads, noise, dust, pollution, traffic jams and diversions, are hoping life gets back on track.

Underground work has especially affected the people of Fountain, Fort, Dadar and Sitabdevi temple area in Mahim. Mahim resident Sebastian Souza said, "The pace of work was slow. Many residents and shopkeepers were affected. Already traffic jams were common but since Metro work began, if a large vehicle like a BEST bus broke down, the situation would become worse." Asked if he was looking forward to Metro 3, Souza said Mahim already has good connectivity to most places of the city so this infrastructure will be an added advantage.

Nisoufer Dubash, owner of Paradise Cinema in Mahim, said the box office entrance facade was masked owing to the work, which affected business. "The authorities were responsive if we approached them with issues. As citizens we need to be as such incoherence for infrastructure upgrade," she said. The Fountain precinct resembled a "tornado-hit street" for years. RTI activist Mansoor Darwish sold his 40-year-old stationery and watch repair shop three years ago. "Previously, small shops fetched a rental income of Rs 25,000, but decreased demand caused rent to plummet to Rs 15,000. Businesses will not recover now, especially when online shopping is pervasive," he said. A representative of Bombay Store said, "I'll be pleased if the road reopens for traffic and business gathers pace."

"The target was to finish road restoration work much earlier. It could not be completed on scheduled time because of the monsoon, and also due to unforeseen circumstances like the pandemic," said an MMRC official. "There were also the challenges of managing multiple utilities, not to mention project delays on account of protests and objections. But now there's something positive to look forward to: restored roads and sparkling Metro 3 services."

THE ROAD AHEAD: RESTORATION PLAN



"The project has been ongoing for several years and has caused some disruption to traffic and daily life. Now that it is finished, it is likely to improve commute, reduce congestion, and make it easier for people to get around the city as well as reduce pollution, improve quality of life"

IRFAN MACHIWALA | MAHIM SOCIAL ACTIVIST

The Question Every Mumbaikar Is Asking: If Tunnelling And Core Station Work Over, Why Delay In Returning Roads?

ManthanK.Mehta@timesgroup.com

Metro 3 authorities are set to return a substantial length of project-occupied road to Mumbaikars by May, eight years after sections of roads were barricaded for work on tunnelling and stations to commence. In all, road stretches totalling 12.3 km were handed over to Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) for work to proceed along the 32.5 km Metro 3 corridor. Restoration efforts have been underway for a while, though citizens have questioned its pace.

"The sentiment among road users led up with narrowed carriage-ways is: 'Tunnelling has been long over as has been core station work. What is taking so long for roads to be returned to the city?' According to MMRC, 77% of road restoration is slated for completion by May, with the balance by December 2024. MMRC managing director Ashwini Bhide said, "In most cases, road restoration work has been done, but it has been carried out in bits and pieces. If you look at Churchgate, Hutatma Chowk, Vidhan Bhavan, and the Cuffe Parade Metro station, we have begun road reinstatement work. A total of 19 stations have been built using the cut and cover method, and 7 through a combination

of cut and cover and another technology. In the cut and cover method, a stretch of road is dug up and then reinstated. Roads were also blocked at some spots where shafts were built to launch tunnel boring machines (TBMs). Bhide said, "As part of the traffic management plan, most of the traffic was diverted onto steel decks in many areas. The removal of these steel decks is a lengthy process. The area that we dug up has to be reinstated, and traffic

moved on to that, and only then can the steel parts be removed." Where reinstatement has been done, traffic movement is allowed, and the last bits are being removed, she said. "We hope to see significant progress by the end of May." In contrast to New Delhi's metro-rail construction, which largely occurred off main roads, Mumbai's densely populated landscape required excavation directly beneath existing thoroughfares. This necessitated the installation of steel decks to maintain vehicu-

lar access while construction continued below ground level. Metro 3 stations dot crucial roads in Andheri (East). It also has Santacruz station on Western Express Highway and BKC station near the ITO junction. Besides, in the island city, it has stations on L.J. Road in the Dadar-Mahim belt. It also passes via Dr DN Road in the CSMT-Hutatma Chowk area and the Churchgate station area, as well as Nariman Point and congested, narrow roads in the Girgaum-Kalabadevi and Grant Road areas. Because of barricaded roads, all these areas ended up with day-long traffic jams, disruptions to pedestrian pathways, and reduced footfall at adjacent commercial establishments, some of which moved court against the project. Thus, the imminent completion of road restoration promises relief for commuters and businesses alike. "The target was to finish road restoration work much earlier. It could not be completed on scheduled time because of the monsoon, and also due to unforeseen circumstances like the pandemic," said an MMRC official. "There were also the challenges of managing multiple utilities, not to mention project delays on account of protests and objections. But now there's something positive to look forward to: restored roads and sparkling Metro 3 services."

VIDEO

Scan to hear project in charge Ashwini Bhide speak on compensatory tree plantation and other matters

