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TN to renegotiate CMRL-MRTS merger

“Why should the railway bleed? They can hand over MRTS to Chennai Metro and prevent loss,” sources told TNIE.



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Chennai Metro (Photo | PTI)

By C Shivakumar

Express News Service

CHENNAI: After a four-year stalemate, the merger of Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) with Chennai Metro Rail has again gained steam with Chief Secretary Irai Anbu likely to hold discussions on the issue.

The merger was put on the backburner after 2018 when there were differences between the State government and Southern Railway (SR) over acquisition of land for SR to construct a new line between Beach and Park Station. Now, with the proposed meeting to be chaired by the Chief secretary, official sources are hoping for some breakthrough as MRTS has been reporting Rs 100 crore operational loss every year.

“Why should the railway bleed? They can hand over MRTS to Chennai Metro and prevent loss,” sources told TNIE. The move comes after the Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Department announced in the State Assembly on Saturday about continuous efforts to get approval from the Central government for Chennai Metro to take over the operation and maintenance of MRTS from SR.

In 2018, a final report prepared by the consultant to study the MRTS-Metro merger stated that the State will have to spend Rs 2,800-Rs 3,100 crore to revive the dull and hollow platforms of MRTS and putting in place new rolling stock to

provide the ambience of Metro stations. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and Balaji Railroad Systems carried out the study and two interim reports and a draft final report was already submitted in 2018.

The MRTS utilises conventional broad gauge EMU rolling stock that is shared with other suburban lines. Given the incompatibility of this rolling stock with Metro standards, the State government and Metro have indicated that new Metro-standard rolling stock will be procured for MRTS. There was a line of thought to have interoperability of services across the Metro and suburban section. Though the proposal looked technically feasible, a decision was taken against it due to challenges in terms of operation, safety, personnel and service issues.

The report also highlights that assets like private and Central government land will be taken over and treated as State government land. However, no rolling stock will be taken over as a decision was made to procure Metro-standard rolling stock.

Study on new Metro link for Kilambakkam

Chennai: The government is planning to link Phase-II of Chennai Metro Rail's Corridor 3 between Madhavaram to Siruseri with Kelambakkam and Kilambakkam. The State Planning Department, which made the announcement in the State Assembly, said the decision to hold a feasibility study to extend Corridor-3 till Kilambakkam - where a new moffusil bus terminus will come up - via Kelambakkam, Mambakkam and Vandalur, was taken to meet the growing transportation demands.

This also comes as Chennai Metro is planning to extend the existing Wimco Nagar-Chennai Airport stretch to Kilambakkam. Similarly, in a bid to decongest northwest Chennai, the government also announced a feasibility study to link Corridor-5 to link Ambattur and Avadi.

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