

Aqua Line: 1st phase by Dec-Jan

33.5km underground network considered to be crucial in entire Metro Rail project; runs parallel to the existing North-South Suburban Rail System; offers east-west connectivity

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The long-awaited phase 1 of the 'Aqua Line' Metro corridor is set to become fully operational by December-January. This will bring in much-needed relief to lakhs of Mumbaikars commuting from Bandra Kurla Complex to the heavily congested MIDC Marol Naka or Terminals 1 and 2 of the airport. This corridor connects south Mumbai's Colaba/Cuffe Parade to BKC, Aarey Colony and Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ).

This 33.5km underground network is considered to be the most crucial in the entire Metro Rail project as it not only runs parallel to the existing North-South Suburban Rail System but also offers east-west connectivity. Additionally, it will link previously unconnected areas such as the domestic and international airport and six Central Business Districts (CBDs) including BKC, Fort, Nariman Point, Cuffe Parade, Lower Parel, and SEEPZ/MIDC, said Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) managing

Second phase stations

Cuffe Parade, Nariman Point, Churchgate, Hutatma Chowk, CSMT, Kalbadevi, Girgaum, Grant Road, Mahalaxmi, Worli, Dadar and Shitladevi, Dharavi, among others

Services

- ▶ 24-hour surveillance, escalator facilities, air conditioning, and WiFi connectivity
- ▶ The trains will also be equipped with driverless technology
- ▶ Aqua line expected to reduce traffic congestion by 35%
- ▶ Removing nearly 6.5 lakh vehicle trips per day
- ▶ Saving 350,000 litres of fuel per day

director Ashwini Bhide. She added, "It's here that movement of labour force is concentrated, which is why this line will have maximum impact on the commuting lives of Mumbaikars. It will become the second lifeline of Mumbai."

Once operational, the Aqua Line is expected to serve 17 lakh passengers every day. The first phase will include stations at SEEPZ, Aarey

Colony, MIDC, Marol Naka, Sahar Road, the domestic and international airports, Santacruz, Vidyanagari and BKC.

The second phase, scheduled to open in July 2024, will cover 17 additional stations of Cuffe Parade, Nariman Point, Churchgate, Hutatma Chowk, CSMT, Kalbadevi, Girgaum, Grant Road, Mahalaxmi, Worli, Dadar and Shitladevi, Dharavi, among others.



First phase stations

SEEPZ, Aarey Colony, MIDC, Marol Naka, Sahar Road, the domestic and international airports, Santacruz, Vidyanagari and BKC

The corridor will offer 24-hour surveillance, escalator facilities, air conditioning, and WiFi connectivity. The trains will also be equipped with driverless technology. Bhide emphasised that the primary goal of the project is to connect previously unconnected areas.

Furthermore, plans are underway to introduce a 'common mobility card' that will enable commuters to seam-

lessly switch between various modes of travel, including the metro, suburban local trains, BEST buses, monorail or state transport buses, all without the need to purchase separate tickets. Bhide highlighted that 85% of the public relies on public transport.

However, with times changing the suburban rail landscape required a revolutionary breakthrough to sustain the city's changing influx of commerce, owing to the emergence of new work areas like BKC that were not connected by the existing local network.

Therefore, the old dynamic of overburdening the suburban rail system is no longer an option. Hence, gradually, the BEST started evolving dynamically to take on 35-40% of the load. Simultaneously, Mumbaikars started opting for cars and motor vehicles which, in turn, gave rise to the problem of road congestion.

The Aqua line is expected to reduce traffic congestion by 35%, removing nearly 6.5 lakh vehicle trips per day and saving 350,000 litres of fuel per day.