



**Limited reach:** Chennai is building an impressive Metro Rail, aimed at easing the congestion on the roads. But it doesn't reach many areas. The first phase reaches only 16% of the residents, says an expert.  
K. PICHUMANI

# Comprehensive mobility plan for Chennai to be released by June

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## CITY MATTERS

R. Srikanth

The Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA) will release the comprehensive mobility plan (CMP) for the expanded Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) by June. It has got the primary survey done through an agency and will have a preliminary meeting with stake-holding departments before finalising the final draft.

CUMTA Special Officer I. Jayakumar says two things are crucial for development and expansion of the city. The land use pattern and the mode of transport. Though both play a complementary role, land development can happen only when good transport is available. Previously, the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) had studied both parameters; transport has been given to the CUMTA after it started functioning.

Mr. Jayakumar says the CMP is aimed at developing a long-term vision for mobility in the expanded CMA, duly integrating land use and transport, and present a transport plan for the Third Master Plan. The CMP being a strategic vision document for the entire CMA, the focus of the study was to optimise the pattern of mobility of people and goods rather than of vehicles.

The CMP will focus on a structured growth in the extended region, recommending how to improve public transport infrastructure for reducing the overall demand for travel by private vehicles and foster higher use of public and non-motorised transport through public transport linked with multi-modal transport hubs similar to Tambaram, Guindy, Avadi, and Ambattur.

### Extension of Metro Rail

Mr. Jayakumar says the CUMTA, as part of the CMP, will also consider extension of the Metro Rail corridor from the airport to Kilambakkam and beyond on GST Road, and from Poonamallee to Thirumazhisai towards Tiruvallur. The Tamil Nadu government expanded the limits of the CMA from 1,189 square kilometres to 5,904 square kilometres through a government order (No. 184), dated October 21, 2022. To meet the expansion, the CMDA has started

## Crucial development

- CUMTA is preparing the comprehensive mobility plan to include the Third Master Plan that is being prepared by CMDA
- The Third Master Plan will have land use and transportation map for the expanded city metropolitan area of 5,904 sq. km from 1,189 sq. kms, covering five districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur and Ranipet
- CUMTA undertook primary study using 16 factors of road inventory, and surveys of speed and delay, household, pedestrian, passenger and freight terminals, bus boarding and alighting, and parking facility
- Traffic analysis was done in 770 zones covering all the districts, including 200 divisions of the Chennai Corporation
- The final draft of the CMP will be tabled in June after consultation with stakeholders is completed

a Third Master Plan study of the land use pattern and the CUMTA is working on a transport plan to meet the safe and sustainable mobility needs of the residents.

Mr. Jayakumar says the expanded Chennai Metropolitan Planning Area (CMPA) falls in five districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, and parts of Chengalpattu and Ranipet. The planning area comprises the Municipal Corporations of Greater Chennai, Avadi, Tambaram and Kancheepuram, 16 municipalities, 13 town panchayats, 1 special grade town panchayat, and 22 panchayat unions, which included 1,321 villages.

### Low carbon footprint

The theme of the CMP study would be GRIDS: green, resilient, inclusive, development-focused and safe movement for the public rather than predominance of vehicles. The GRIDS will facilitate a low carbon footprint, resilience to natural hazards, and affordable access through walking and cycling amenities. The CUMTA engaged SYSTRA as the consulting firm for carrying out the primary study and updating the CMP of 2018 for a 25-year plan period.

Mr. Jayakumar says the exhaustive primary survey, carried out by SYSTRA, had 16 different types of surveys for readying the draft plan. Among the 16 types of surveys carried out were an inventory of road network data and a classified traffic volume count to find out the vehicle density, along with parking and pedestrian counts. Also, four types of classified traffic volume count were carried out on the CMA covering outer corridors, inner corridors, and traffic intersections.

The survey dealt with bus boarding and alighting patterns and railway, bus, and freight passenger terminals. It also gathered information on the operators of private vehicles such as omni-buses, commercial vehicle aggregators and freight operators. The highlight of the study was the household surveys which were carried out for gaining knowledge of the demographic and travel patterns. Nearly two lakh household members took part in the survey. The team went door to door with a global positioning system with latitude and longitude registers for ensuring a fool-proof survey.

CUMTA officials started working on the secondary data sources for preparing the

draft plan by taking into consideration census and accident data, the Master Plan of Chennai 2026, civic infrastructure projects, and also energy and environment data.

Shreya Gadepalli, founder of Urban Works Institute, says the goal of a mobility plan is to achieve excellent mobility for everyone at a low cost and a minimal impact on the environment. Only good public transport, along with safe and attractive walking and cycling spaces everywhere, meets these criteria.

Ms. Gadepalli says Chennai is building an impressive Metro Rail. However, it doesn't reach many areas. The first phase reaches only 16% of the residents. MTC buses reach 60% of the citizens, but are uncomfortable and unreliable. "That is why people are shifting to personal motor vehicles. The solution is an immediate roll-out of a Metro-quality bus service that reaches every corner of the city," she says.

### Triple 5 service quality

The government must guarantee the citizens a 5-5-5 service quality: bus stops within 5 minutes from anywhere, frequent buses that require less than a 5-minute wait, and buses so reliable that there is an under 5-minute delay to any destination. This will require doubling of the bus fleet immediately, making the entire fleet low-floor and air -conditioned, giving buses priority on roads to beat the traffic, and charging of ordinary fare on all buses to provide every citizen with affordable, reliable, and comfortable mobility.

Highlighting the importance of making public transport an excellent system, Ms. Gadepalli points to the important aspect of controlling the unabated use of personal vehicles. A car user occupies 10 times more road space and consumes 10 times more fuel than a bus passenger does, not to speak of the huge amount of parking space a car requires. A significant increase in the parking fee will not only discourage the use of personal vehicles but will also make available much-needed funds for improving walking, cycling, and bus infrastructure, she says. Ms. Gadepalli cites Enrique Peñalosa, the former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, who famously said an advanced city is not the one where the poor use cars but the one where the rich use public transport.