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MTC off the pace in north chennai

Oct. 3: People living in the suburbs of industries-dominated north Chennai pin their hopes on public transport, specifically buses. However, service provider Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) doesn't have much to offer them. Abysmally low frequency of MTC buses in this belt has forced people to depend on share autorickshaws and their two-wheelers.

Though MTC has been steadily increasing its fleet strength, not too much of it has rolled down north Chennai's way.

Office-goers feel the pinch the most. Locals say commuting in autos and two-wheelers is risky. While most of the autos are invariably overcrowded, not many relish riding two-wheelers on roads dominated by lorries.

Thousands of office-goers from the low-income group live in these suburbs and using alternative modes of transport is an expensive proposition. Most cannot afford the luxury of taking autorickshaws to or from office every day.

M. Balaji, a resident of Manali New Town, says though MTC operates 44B (high court), 28A (Egmore) and 121D (CMBT) bus services from here, the frequency is very low. "Due to this, we are forced to depend on share autorickshaws or private vans," he adds.

K. Purushotaman of Vichoor says that their area does not have any dependable bus service other than 56M (to Vallalar Nagar). "Thousands of people are working in the industrial units located in the Vichoor SIDCO industrial estate but there is only one bus, 56M, between Vichoor and Vallalar Nagar," he says, and adds that MTC should introduce a new bus service connecting Perambur.

Though the municipality of Thiruvottiyur has buses from Tiruvanmiyur and Ambattur estate, it still lacks vehicles for internal transport. "People living in the interior areas of Thiruvottiyur like Balakrishna Nagar and Charles Nagar have to depend on autorickshaws to commute," Mr S. Jaffar, who works in the housekeeping department of an IT firm on the OMR, says.

North Chennai People's Rights Federation media coordinator T. Raj Kumar says that since the suburban areas of north Chennai have very limited rail connectivity, people living in these areas are entirely dependent upon MTC buses. "MTC should operate more buses in the suburban areas even if there is lack of adequate patronage," he says.

A senior MTC official admits that people from several areas are urging the corporation to operate more services. "We will consider all such demands at the time of introduction of mini-buses," the official adds.