FACT SHEET

WAYFINDING HARMONIZATION PROJECT

As the transit network in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) continues to grow and expand, transit wayfinding will play an even more crucial role in helping people get around.

One of the priority actions in The Regional Transportation Plan, includes "consistent wayfinding across all modes" (Priority Action 3.3)

To address the need, Metrolinx is working with all GTHA transit agencies towards the goal of harmonized wayfinding through the Regional Transit Wayfinding Harmonization project. The goal of the initiative is to improve the consistency of wayfinding across the region to make it better and easier for our customers to take transit. Together, we're working to develop a common set of wayfinding guidelines that ensure information is presented in a clear, consistent and intuitive manner. The guidelines will create a common approach for presenting transit information in the GTHA, including consistent signage at stations, naming conventions and mapping.

Some of this work is being tested now through a wayfinding pilot at Pickering GO, Hamilton GO, the Finch GO Bus Terminal and the four UP Express stations. Based on the outcomes of the pilot phase, the guidelines will be updated and an implementation plan will be developed.

Why are we creating regional wayfinding standards?

A Priority Action in the Regional Transportation Plan, our commitment to design excellence is delivering a better, more comfortable and seamless customer experience. Clear and consistent wayfinding tools are an important part of that commitment.

The population of the GTHA is projected to increase to 10.1 million people by the year 2041. Better wayfinding - consistent maps, common signs, and graphics - will deliver a better customer experience.

WHAT IS WAYFINDING?

Wayfinding tools can refer to any information that helps you find your way. In a transit environment, tools that help this process can include maps, signs and graphics that help customers navigate the transit network.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Effective wayfinding tools simplify space and travel for customers. We are developing wayfinding tools to make the regional transit network easier to use.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

Connected and coordinated wayfinding information simplifies the network, entices more people to take transit and enjoy a great customer experience.

How are the new wayfinding tools different?

The key difference is the use of a common approach to placement, sign types and graphic design for all transit information, regardless of operator. Examples will first be piloted at Pickering GO, Hamilton GO, the Finch GO Bus Terminal and the four Union Pearson Express stations to test this new approach in real situations.

As part of this project, international best practice pointed to the need for a single symbol to identify the transit network. The concept of a Network Identifier is part of the wayfinding pilot to demonstrate how one symbol can represent a whole network, and show points of access to that network. This idea is already used by major transit networks around the world.

For now, we are demonstrating the concept through this symbol:

The wayfinding approach and tools we are testing will be refined based on how well they perform for the public and operators.

How did we get here?

Transit wayfinding tools throughout the region have historically been designed by each operator using their own wayfinding conventions. As the GTHA expanded, this has led to the overlap of wayfinding systems creating inconsistencies in signage, graphics, terminology, maps and other elements. These inconsistencies create barriers to mobility, make it difficult to plan trips, and are particularly confusing for visitors and occasional customers.

With the help of wayfinding experts, Metrolinx and our transit partners started a complete review and redesign for wayfinding in 2014 through The Regional Transit Wayfinding Harmonization Project. The amount of existing information across the region's operators, together with the complexity of designing common standards that could work everywhere, required in-depth research, assessment, testing and discussion.

PHASE 1

During the first phase, we researched what information is is currently provided to customers and what they need when travelling around the region. This highlighted the current challenge of understanding how to plan a journey that requires transfers between different transit operator services, especially for new or unfamiliar users. Together, we agreed that wayfinding tools must help 'to encourage and enable transit use by creating an inclusive, excellent customer experience for all types of travellers.' This aim was translated into guiding principles and concepts for a common standard for planning and designing wayfinding.

PHASE 2

During the second phase, we brought these concepts into a full set of working standards through detailed evaluation of the region's existing systems, international best practice, public surveys, and work with accessibility advisors. A team of wayfinding design specialists then developed customer-focused standards that we are testing at Pickering GO, Hamilton GO, Finch GO Bus Terminal, and UP Express Stations. Feedback from customers and transit operators will be included in final refinements of the designs.

What's next?

New wayfinding design standards and guidelines will be produced in 2019, and applied on all new Metrolinx projects. Our municipal transit partners are encouraged to use the new standards, especially on parts of the system that are particularly difficult for customers to navigate, such as multi-modal and multi-operator interchanges.

ABOUT THE DESIGN

Colour

A bold black and white palette offers optimum contrast, while providing a neutral backdrop for colour coding and operator brand colours.

Pictograms

International standard pictograms are used in most situations. New pictograms have also been designed using the same style for specific applications. Pictograms are designed to be easily read whether on signs or on maps. Pictograms are supported by text in most cases to improve understanding and the designs representing vehicles are simplified to make them "future proof".

Typeface

Clearview ADA has been chosen as the typeface for the standards. Clearview ADA has been tested against other typefaces used in transit and recommended by the CNIB.

Sign Planning

In addition to design specification, the standard includes detailed planning guidelines to ensure consistent sign content and placement, and minimize clutter. The guidelines explain how information should be 'progressively disclosed' to distribute complex information along the journey, making it easier to understand.

Product design

Physical sign products are designed to be durability and straightforward to implement and maintain. Key design elements include the use of anodized aluminum bases to protect against snow and salt, toughened glass for clarity and durability, and off-the-shelf poster cases that are simple to construct and easily updated.

Accessibility

Metrolinx's Accessibility Advisory Committee was consulted for their views on inclusive design and system accessibility. The Committee's advice guided design work in several areas including the clarity of graphics, colour contrast, viewing heights, the use of tactile surfaces and Braille, and the application of a Network Identifier.

## Network Identifier – A symbol for a connected network

The concept of a Network Identifier is part of the wayfinding pilot at Pickering GO, Hamilton GO, Finch GO Bus Terminal, and UP Express Stations. Let us know what you think at wayfinding@metrolinx.com

Used Around the World

The Transport for London 'roundel' is an iconic and historic identifier of transit in the UK capital. Closer to home, TransLink adopted the 'T' to help visitors to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games find downtown stations and stops. Around the world, transit systems comprised of different modes, operators and areas are often identified by easily recognizable symbols.

While the letters "M" and "T" are used frequently, along with a series of abstract marks or logos, their meanings vary depending on the context and are most often used to identify access to a specific transit mode, or the services offered by a specific transit operating company. Only in exceptional cases are these letters or symbols used as a unifying element
across multi-operator networks.

International examples
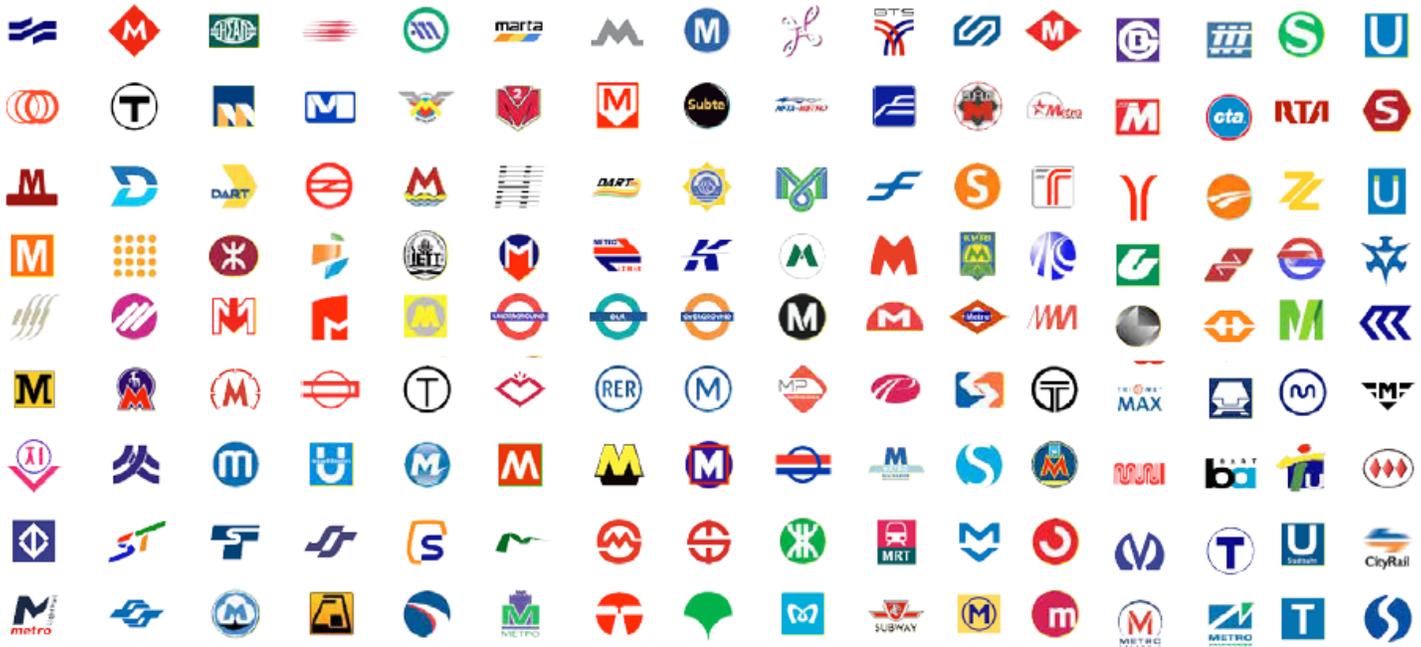
The idea of using a symbol for the GTHA transit network came from the research and consultation phase of the Regional Transit Wayfinding Harmonization project. The studies revealed that recognizing how to access the network, when all services are described by the identity of local operators, is a central challenge to wayfinding especially for new and unfamiliar transit users. We heard similar feedback during consultation on the Regional Transportation Plan.

Concept Design

The concept of a Network Identifier was approached considering a balance between the practical requirements including visibility as a landmark, clarity at different scales, simplicity and uniqueness. Five guiding principles informed the concept design.

1. **Identify transit:** Easily recognizable to unfamiliar and new transit users.
2. **Inclusive:** Legible, memorable, simple and useable at different sizes without loss of clarity.
3. **Mode neutral:** Representative of all public transportation modes and types.
4. **Brand neutral:** Symbolic of a coordinated, regional network.
5. **Timeless:** High quality, adaptable design.
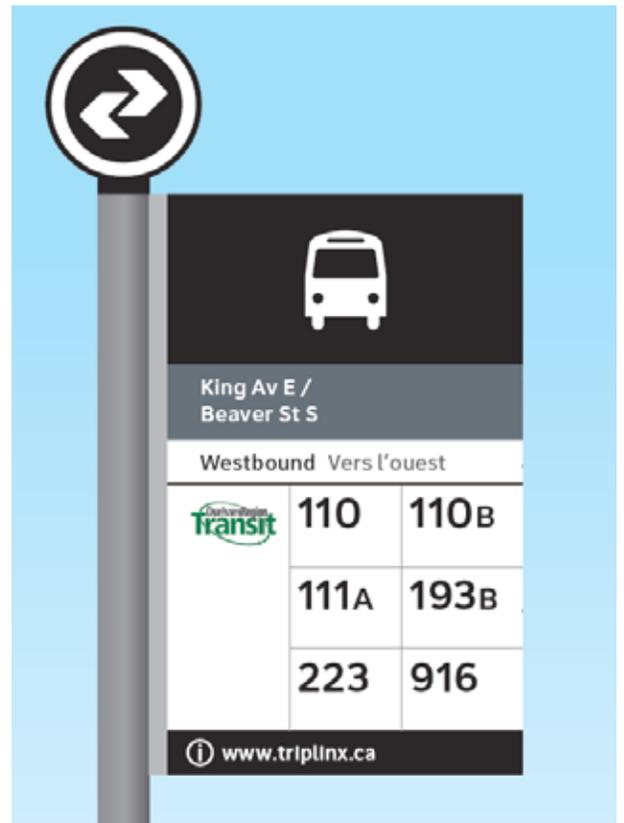
Focus group

The Residents Reference Panel, convened during the review of the Regional Transportation Plan, helped inform the concept. Wayfinding design experts facilitated a workshop with the Panel, which brought forward the following comments and suggestions:

• The symbol must work across physical and digital uses.

• The colour should be neutral to avoid confusion with operator brands.

• The symbol must be simple, uncluttered and clear.

• Abstract and illustrative symbols are friendlier than letters.

• Using the Metrolinx or PRESTO logos would add to confusion.

• Letter symbols would not be unique enough for a smart phone app icon.

Beginning in fall, 2018 you will start to see new signs and maps at Pickering GO, Hamilton GO, Finch GO Bus Terminal, and UP Express Stations. Customer feedback is key to our success. Tell us what you think at **wayfinding@metrolinx.com**