



## **Proposed Interim Wayfinding Strategy**

**Date:** January 27, 2025

**To:** TTC Board

**From:** Chief Strategy and Customer Experience Officer

### **Summary**

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The TTC Wayfinding Strategy aims to guide people and align all parts of the TTC network that affect how customers find their way. The TTC is in the process of refreshing its Strategy with a renewed focus on the digital landscape. This interim report provides the rationale for an updated wayfinding strategy, and a proposed broader wayfinding scope.

The current wayfinding objective is to update physical signage throughout TTC stations, stops and vehicles, supporting multi-modal and multi-agency movements. On the surface network, stop markers and maps have been updated. In stations, several types of signage have been updated through operating and capital projects. As we continue to procure new vehicles, livery and decals reflect new standards. The *Wayfinding and Signage Standards* followed have been durable and meet many current needs, however, full implementation is ongoing, and, in many cases, stations are partially updated, creating customer experience gaps for navigation. Since the original standards were created, the expectations of customers and the digital world have evolved significantly. Four key drivers contribute to the need for an updated Strategy:

1. The discipline of *wayfinding* has evolved to encompass a broader range of sensory touchpoints broader than maps and signage as people move from place to place. The navigation experience should be consistent with what customers hear on audio announcements, what they see on signage and vehicle destination screens and extend to the experience on customer's personal devices.
2. The Standards require tools that can be implemented during planned diversions and unplanned disruptions to ensure customer expectations are met.
3. The current Standards are not fully implemented system-wide and require project management, resources and funding to complete.
4. Metrolinx DS-03 Wayfinding Design Standards has been introduced for signage and maps within the TTC environment for expansion projects.

Our goal with this Strategy is to establish a framework for implementing a comprehensive wayfinding solution across the TTC that ensures no customer feels lost or disconnected in our current environment. This framework will focus on enhancing the customer experience by integrating forward-thinking systems, optimizing existing resources and building on proven strategies. By embracing new technologies, we aim to

adapt to evolving language needs and reflect the diversity of our community, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all.

The Strategy will build on the existing *TTC 5-Year Corporate Plan, 5-Year Accessibility Plan and 5-Year Service & Customer Experience Action Plan* and will be informed by the current-state inventory, customer and employee feedback and with a focus on international best practices for multi-modal local-regional transit wayfinding.

In keeping with emerging wayfinding principles, the Strategy will address an expanded scope of the following key wayfinding elements:

- Accessibility
- Language
- Maps
- Universal design
- Integration with cityscape
- Transit partner connections
- Static and digital signage
- Customer support
- Audio
- Illumination of pathways
- Sustainability

Consultation with customers, stakeholders, transit partners, TO360 (City of Toronto's pedestrian wayfinding system) and the surrounding region will be a key component of the Strategy, to best meet the needs of transit users in Toronto and the GTA. While there is an expectation that the Strategy will identify short term opportunities, a priority will be placed on leveraging existing wayfinding investments and sustainability, thereby minimizing new and life-cycle costs and ensuring that the system remains relevant as the city grows and evolves.

Successful wayfinding promotes better navigation through the system, information about accessibility, reduces travel time, minimizes frustration and increases the likelihood of repeat use. By prioritizing wayfinding, the TTC can not only retain and support their existing customers but attract new and repeat customers through positive and effective customer experience. By creating both a short and long-term strategy, it allows for immediate opportunities and gradual adaptation to changes in infrastructure, technology and user needs, to foster a stable and familiar navigation experience for our customers for the next 15-20 years.

This interim report is to inform the Board of fundamental directions informing the development of the updated Strategy and is presented to the Board to enable input prior to a final Strategy. These fundamental directions include:

1. Estimates of current Standards implemented across TTC stations, vehicles and surface stops and preliminary outstanding wayfinding requiring funding.
2. Review of the current environment for consideration in the Strategy:
3. Broadened scope to emerging best practices of wayfinding

4. Preliminary considerations of DS-03 Wayfinding Design Standard
5. Overview of the process to update the Strategy

The Strategy will be presented with priorities and a roadmap to the Board in May 2025, in advance of 2026 budget planning.

## **Recommendations**

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It is recommended that the TTC Board:

1. Receive the Interim Wayfinding Strategy Update report for information.

## **Financial Summary**

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This report has no direct operating or capital financial impact beyond that which has been requested as part of the 2025 Operating Budget and *2025-2034 TTC Capital Budget and Plan* approved by the Board on January 10, 2025 and will be before City Council for consideration at its meeting on February 11, 2025.

The TTC's current Wayfinding Strategy is partially funded through the following capital programs:

- a. *System Route Map Upgrades*: As of December 2024, 104 new system route maps have been installed at key locations in 25 priority stations.
- b. *Easier Access Program*  
The Easier Access Program includes the installation of elevators and other accessibility features at subway stations as well as updated signage and wayfinding at these locations to support new accessible paths. To date, this has supported accessibility-related wayfinding with 13 stations remaining and included in the 2025-2034 Capital Budget and Plan.
- c. *Second Exit Program*  
The Second Exit Program creates new entrances and exits at stations to improve customer safety and convenience and new wayfinding signage specifically in these exits is included in the scope. Currently the TTC has projects at Museum, College, Summerhill, Dundas West and Greenwood stations.

The balance of the existing strategy is either unfunded or not fully costed, as is any proposed expansion of the Wayfinding Strategy. As the TTC develops the new Strategy and implementation plan, the TTC will strive to leverage partnerships, capital projects and operating projects to implement wayfinding changes incrementally and strategically. Work to estimate the cost of the new Strategy and Implementation Plan will be undertaken and resourced by existing staff.

The Chief Financial Officer has reviewed the report and agrees with the Financial Impact information.

## Equity/Accessibility Matters

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The TTC has a strong organizational commitment to making Toronto's transit system barrier-free and accessible to all. We believe all customers should enjoy the freedom, independence, and flexibility to travel anywhere on the public transit system, regardless of ability. The TTC serves the diverse population of the City of Toronto with over 3.02 million people who speak more than 200 languages and dialects, representing diverse backgrounds, cultures, identities, and abilities.

The Strategy will continue to apply the principles of universal design (the practice of designing in such a way that a diverse range of people can access and make use of it) to support the multicultural and multilingual customers in Toronto. The TTC will explore language and graphic elements in the Toronto context and research best practices to facilitate multilingual needs of customers and visitors.

The *TTC Corporate Plan 2024-2028* includes the objective to "Improve Customer Satisfaction, Safety, Well-being and Accessibility." Accessibility is an important wayfinding element that includes approaches for illustrating accessible paths of travel and ensuring wayfinding information is presented in formats that are accessible. The Strategy will include exploration of innovative technologies to support these elements and will ensure all standards are following accessibility best practices.

## Decision History

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TTC's Wayfinding Strategy was first formally introduced in 2013 and other TTC plans reference the role of the Wayfinding Strategy. In 2020, there was a motion [Executing Bilingual Subway Signage at New Stations/ Affichage bilingue dans les nouvelles stations de métro \(ttc.ca\)](#) made that requested the TTC consider bilingual English and French signage at all TTC stations receiving overhaul, reconstruction or renovation as part of its Strategy and report back. The Strategy should also consider the cost for all new wayfinding to be bilingual and should reflect local neighbourhoods and any linguistic concentrations. This remains outstanding.

### **TTC Board, October 23, 2013:**

At its meeting on October 23, 2013, the TTC Board received the *New TTC Wayfinding Standard Report* for information which included a presentation of TTC's New Wayfinding Standards.

Presentation:

[New Wayfinding Standards](#)

### **TTC Board, January 27, 2020:**

At its meeting on January 27, 2020, the TTC Board adopted the Notice of Motion- Executing Bilingual Subway Signage at New Stations. This report outlined the direction to have TTC staff report back through the Wayfinding Strategy, the costs to install bilingual signage in any existing subway station undergoing an overhaul, reconstruction or renovation, identify costs for all new wayfinding signage to be bilingual and report

back in the Strategy a reflection of local neighbourhoods and any linguistic concentrations.

Notice of Motion:

[Executing Bilingual Subway Signage at New Stations/ Affichage bilingue dans les nouvelles stations de métro \(ttc.ca\)](#)

Decision:

[Notice of Motion – Executing Bilingual Subway Signage at New Stations \(ttc.ca\)](#)

## **Issue Background**

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### **Assessment of Current State**

In 2012, TTC introduced redesigned and updated *Signage and Wayfinding Standards*. These standards focused on the physical signage in station, on our surface network and on our vehicles and incorporated signage best practices for accessibility and universal design at that time. TTC staff worked closely with internal and external stakeholders to ensure signage met the requirements of our customers, our regional transit partners, and third-party advertising partners. The Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT) was instrumental in providing valuable insights that led to dramatic improvements for accessibility across the system.

The TTC has leveraged a range of partnerships and resources to enhance wayfinding across the TTC. Developer connections, construction initiatives and transit partnerships have enabled significant updates to our signage. For example, through our partnership with Pattison, digital assets have been added for Next Vehicle Arrival Screens (NVAS), System Information Screens (SIS) and Platform Video Screens (PVS) throughout our stations. At the same time, our operating budgets have been strategically used to update stop markers system-wide, replace damaged signage and make updates to the system.

Signage has been a component integrated into the scope of our capital projects. These included: Easier Access Program, Second Exit Program, Insignia Pylon Project, Line 1 Extension (TYSSE) and state of good repair initiatives using capital project funding. Over the past decade, 39% of station signs have been updated and replaced. However, full implementation remains incomplete and if TTC were to bring subway stations to completion, the estimate is \$140 million based on our preliminary findings. To bridge this gap, we must explore innovative approaches as our current capital projects proceed to completion, identifying new opportunities and partnerships to accelerate progress and ensure a seamless, inclusive wayfinding experience across the system.

As we develop an updated Strategy, two critical factors must be considered: first, the environmental context and second, the ongoing system expansion in collaboration with Metrolinx.

## Environmental context

The benefits of high-quality wayfinding are well demonstrated. Environmental context of a system is considered one of the most key factors for effective wayfinding. The following are some of the local factors to be considered in the Strategy:

- *Regionalization.* The Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) is expanding and connecting. With the introduction of programs like One Fare, passengers should be able to seamlessly travel between transit agencies. Coordination is required between agencies to create a better customer experience.
- *City of Toronto Pedestrian Wayfinding (TO360):* TO360 assists Torontonians with street connections and is used extensively by TTC at connection points. The base map is flexible and is currently used by multiple City of Toronto partners, such as Toronto Bike Share, Billy Bishop Airport, Toronto Department of Parks Forestry and Recreation. Further exploration as they pertain to Points of Interest will create better navigation for customers seeking direction beyond the transit network.
- *Property development and Transit Oriented Communities:* Currently the TTC has 73 existing entrance connections to the TTC subway through property developers (PATH network, condominiums and businesses) and has 60 more in development, changing and adding new paths for customers to connect to transit.
- *High digital adoption.* Canada's high digital use has increased customer's expectations for online tools to pre-plan journeys since 2013 and mid-trip replanning. Related to this is the importance for consistency between the digital and physical environments.
- *Cultural diversity:* In Toronto, over 200 languages are spoken, and English is the primary language. Toronto's combination of multiculturalism, linguistic variety and inclusive policies set it apart from other cities and make it a unique metropolis where global cultures converge and coexist. Finding solutions to making the transit system understandable to everyone creates a more inclusive transit system.
- *Accessibility:* There is an increased demand for accessible transit and with that comes changes in peak transit usage, demand for local and community-oriented transit and a stronger focus on urban design and mobility.
- *Planned and Unplanned service disruptions:* Planned disruptions are required to support State-of-Good-Repair, capital expansion and City initiatives. Unplanned closures occur throughout the system and require adaptability as they impact customer navigation without advanced notice. Expanded strategies are required to assist with navigating the complexity of service changes.

- *Role of TTC in Toronto and Region:* Accommodating future population growth sustainably. Alignment of quality transit service to support social, economic, and environmental goals.
- *Customer and Service:* Addressing concerns about safety and security on the system and focusing on the basics of fast, frequent, reliable service – key to ridership recovery and attracting future riders.
- Recognition of network expansion being delivered by the Province and the TTC’s operator role. There is an interim period of construction to manage before customers realize the benefits of new rapid transit.

### **Provincial projects and consideration of Metrolinx standards**

As Ontario builds and expands transit in Toronto, more projects utilize Metrolinx Design Standards, introducing an additional wayfinding standard within the TTC network.

The Metrolinx Design Standards are intended for transit infrastructure under Metrolinx expansion programs, while the balance of the TTC system aligns to the existing TTC Wayfinding and Signage Standards.

While reference to Metrolinx Design Standards is included in each project agreement, there are significant differences between them. Having multiple signage standards lead to inconsistencies between old and new station facilities. Development of the new TTC Wayfinding Strategy will evaluate the potential to adopt elements of the newest MX wayfinding design standard (DS-03) within the TTC environment.

### **Expanding wayfinding, an integrated approach to enhance the customer journey**

With consideration of the above, the TTC is looking to expand the scope of its Wayfinding Strategy from a principle focus on signage and maps to a broader scope, addressing these the environmental context, provincial projects, the customer touchpoints below and emerging best practices in wayfinding. This will ensure the revised Strategy encompasses all communication channels and sensory touchpoints that facilitate wayfinding for transit during regular and disrupted (planned and unplanned) service.

The Strategy will include reviewing third party digital (Google, transit apps) and third-party physical (developer connections, transit connections, expansion projects, city wayfinding and points of interest) while addressing these customer touchpoints:

Static and digital signage, universal design, maps, accessibility, language, customer support, integration with cityscape, audio, transit partner connections, illumination of pathways and sustainability.

## Comments

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### Process

The TTC is undertaking a review and refresh of the organization's Wayfinding Strategy, to reflect changes in the TTC operating environment, including emerging best practices.

### Evaluation of current state

#### *Public and Stakeholder Consultation*

We continually consult and engage with customers, stakeholders, partners at the City of Toronto and regional transit service providers. We will seek out additional ideas to improve wayfinding for all customers with particular attention to the wayfinding standards of other GTHA transit agencies. We will ensure that the Strategy meets the needs of our customers and provides accessibility for all and that we have support to proceed with implementation.

When developing our consultation plan, we will be proactive, inclusive, accessible and transparent.

Consultation and engagement activities include:

- a. Online surveys
- b. 5-Year Service and Customer Experience Action Plan consultations
- c. Focus groups
- d. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (ACAT)
- e. Meetings with stakeholder groups
- f. Ongoing monitoring of Customer Service Comments (CSC) from TTC customers

### Evaluation of external practices

1. *Consulting with transit partners:* Researching other transit agencies allow us to explore new innovations, improvement opportunities and collaborate with other design teams. With our regional transit partners, opportunities for creating a seamless customer experience between agencies is vital to ensure consistent wayfinding literacy and optimize the customer experience.
2. *Research on international standards:* Collaborating with other agencies internationally offers numerous benefits, enhancing efficiency, innovation and user experience. Sharing best practices and data allows us to adopt more effective strategies. These collaborations foster innovation and will assist with strategy development and creates opportunities to discuss and explore the key elements of wayfinding. We will continue to engage international agencies to bring new perspectives. Our discussions-to-date with international and national agencies:

TMB (Barcelona): Accessible technology, multi-language, points of interest  
CTA (Chicago): Closures and diversions  
STM (Montreal): Standards development and organizational structure



NYCT (New York): Standards development, organizational structure  
OC Transpo (Ottawa): Light rail, closures and diversions  
RATP (Paris): Digital integration, standards  
SEPTA (Pennsylvania): New standards, organizational structure  
WMATA (Washington): New standards, research and development  
Translink (Vancouver): Standards, organizational structure, closures

## **Review of current state**

A high-level review of 70 stations, surface network stops and all vehicle types has been conducted to assess current wayfinding components. The detailed results are provided in Attachment 1.

## **Contact**

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## **Signature**

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## **Attachments**

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Attachment 1 - TTC Wayfinding Inventory