

## MTA's New 'Wayfinding Kit' Will Help Sight-Impaired Travel Metro Rail System

By BILL HEARD, Editor  
(Feb. 21, 2002) Navigating the 59.4-mile Metro Rail system can sometimes be challenging for the first-time rider, but imagine the difficulties a sight-impaired passenger might face.



^ The Wayfinding Kit includes audiotapes describing the Metro Rail system, large print and Braille pocket guides and a map of the rail system.

The MTA not only has imagined that possibility, but now has developed a Metro Rail Wayfinding Kit – a set of audio, tactile and visual “tools” to acquaint the sight-impaired with Metro Rail and to help them in using the system.

The MTA has produced 4,500 Wayfinder Kits in English and 500 in Spanish. The kits, which will be announced to the public in March, will be distributed free to agencies that provide services to the sight-impaired.

“The Wayfinding Kit wasn’t required by the ADA,” says project coordinator Barbara Burns of MTA Marketing. “This is something the MTA decided on its own to do for our sight-impaired passengers. It’s been extremely well-received by the agencies that provide services to the sight-impaired.”

The idea for the Wayfinding Kit arose from a series of surveys and open house meetings in 2000. Sight-impaired participants expressed a need for easy-to-use information about the Metro Rail system, Burns said.



^ Project coordinator Barbara Burns show the elements of the Wayfinding Kit to Ellen Blackman, left, and Lynda Bybee, who also were involved in development of the kit.

### Developed by MTA Marketing

The kit was developed by MTA Marketing over the past year with help from a committee representing the sight-impaired community, a mobility consultant and an expert on the Americans with Disabilities Act. The MTA’s ADA compliance officer, Lynda Bybee, and Ellen Blackman, the agency’s liaison with the Access Advisory Committee, also were involved with the project.

Enclosed in the black vinyl Wayfinding Kit are two audiotapes. One gives an overview of the entire Metro Rail system with the names and order of stations, how to buy a ticket, sounds to listen to and other helpful information. The other is specific to the Metro Red Line, describing exact paths of travel through each of the subway stations.

The kit contains handy large-print, pocket-sized guides in English, Spanish and Braille that a passenger can carry as a reminder of the recommended path of travel. The guides detail each Metro Red Line station and provide the station sequences for the Metro Blue and Green lines. A sturdy map of the rail system, with large print and Braille type,

also is included.

An earlier element of the project included tactile, large print and Braille signs that tell the sight-impaired which side of the platforms trains will depart from. Located near stairs and elevators closest to the exits, the signs were installed last July.

In the mid-1990s, the MTA developed a large print, Braille "flash card" booklet that is helpful to the sight-impaired in riding Metro Buses.

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