

Graphic Kaleidoscope New graphics program under review includes a plan to repaint Metro Buses and Metro Rail cars in colors that would clearly identify each vehicle with the type of service it would provide.



PHOTO BY LAURA WOODWARD

‘Identity Crisis’ Clouds Image of MTA’s Transit Services

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 19, 2003) Believe it or not, MTA suffers from an identity crisis.

Compared with other transit agencies here and abroad, MTA’s buses, trains, stations, bus stops, transit passes and literature are clad in an array of colors, logos, type fonts and signage.

This graphic kaleidoscope prevents MTA from projecting a clear image to potential customers, the Communications staff believes.

On Thursday, the staff presented major elements of a new graphics program to the MTA Board’s Executive Management and Audit Committee. The staff recommended a comprehensive plan that would give a unified visual appearance to all MTA services and supporting materials. The Board is expected to discuss the proposal at a future meeting.

The program includes a plan to repaint Metro Buses and Metro Rail cars in colors that would clearly identify each vehicle with the type of service it would provide.

While bright red would continue to herald the successful Metro Rapid service, California poppy orange would denote local bus service and a crisp blue would be used on freeway express buses. All Metro Rail cars would either be painted silver or would retain their stainless steel appearance.

Improve safety and visibility

The base color to be used throughout the bus and rail fleets would be silver. When paired with reflective decals signifying service type of Metro service, the design would improve safety and visibility on the street, especially at night.

Color schemes on bus stop signs would echo the bus service colors, making it easier for riders to match the route number with their bus.

MTA designers already have begun redesigning agency literature and plans to introduce a new look for the Metro “M” to distinguish it from others.

Customer surveys show that 57 percent of respondents associated the “M” logo with Metro or MTA – a figure the staff believes would increase with consistent use of a more distinctive design.

"The proposed graphics program is broad," says Deputy Executive Officer Maya Emsden, Creative Services. "It would touch everything we do."

Sweeping visual transformation

While changing the appearance of everything from buses to brochures can be planned rather quickly, actually making such a sweeping visual transformation in the nation's second largest transit fleet would take several years.

A three-year implementation plan has been developed to convert to the new design scheme.

Beginning as early as this year, existing buses and trains could be repainted in their normal rotation. Three buses already have been repainted as prototypes of the new design.

New buses – such as the 45-foot NABIs and articulated coaches now in the procurement process – would enter the fleet with the new paint schemes.

A similar procedure would be in effect for Metro Rail cars. And both projects would be accommodated within fiscal year budgets.

To Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond, the proposed new color schemes and graphics designs signal something larger – a rethinking of MTA services to better meet the needs of transit users.

"This isn't just about painting buses," he says. "This is a change in how we do business."

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