

July 16, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the London Transit Commission Board,

I am seeking an opportunity to bring forth a proposal to approve the display of writings, such as poetry and art work from local artists in unsold advertising space on the public transit system. This idea is not new as other transit systems have displayed the work of local artists for years.

It is a simple idea that utilizes the existing program of advertising on the transit system. It simply swaps out unsold advertising space with art work until the space is sold. The standards for displaying art work is comparable to those for advertising, such as nothing controversial or defamatory, no advocacy, no nudity, and so on.

I am very familiar with such a project because on the cusp of the "last century" I was part of a group of photographers affiliated with an artist run gallery in Toronto, participating in a new city wide initiative named CONTACT, aimed at highlighting the work of local photographic artists. We decided that we would prefer to display our work in a more public fashion as opposed to a gallery and approached the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) if we could display our work in the subway system. Keeping the spirit of art in public places, we collectively agreed to keep our work anonymous.

The TTC agreed. They provided standards for us to adhere to, including printing standards. All costs were carried by us and the TTC decided where our work would be displayed - only in unsold 'frames' - wherever that may be in the system. It was so successful that to this day, impressive works of art, whole installations in fact, are typical in the TTC subway system.

The whole idea is mutually beneficial. It was exhilarating for us to see our work enlarged and on subway platforms, great for riders to have a more interesting space while waiting for the trains and good public relations for the transit system. The only effort imposed of the transit system was installation.

In London, displays can be extended to bus shelters too.

This idea cannot move forward without securing the approval of the London Transit Commission first.

Sincerely

AnnaMaria Valastro