

Metrolinx Wayfinding Standards

Key Facts and Design Rationale

Use of Standards on Eglinton Crosstown

Metrolinx first published its Wayfinding Design Standard in 2019 after several years development and consultation with our transit partners, as well as full testing with customers and our accessibility advisory committee. The intent of the WDS is to gradually coordinate all customer-facing transit information and, as a result, simplify use of the expanded network being built in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region.

However, the Eglinton Crosstown project was well underway with deadlines already set in stone when work on Metrolinx's regional wayfinding standard began. As a result, a unique wayfinding standard was created for the Crosstown that served as a 'prototype' for the regional standard that followed.

Standards are 'frozen' early on in projects delivered through the Alternative Finance and Procurement (AFP) model as means of managing costs and avoiding on-going revisions or changes.

Due to this set up and some contractual quirks, the Metrolinx Wayfinding team does not have review rights over Crosstown signage. This review is conducted by a technical advisor working directly on the project.



↑ The standard created for the ECLRT served as a 'prototype', but there are several important differences between it and the WDS.

Familiar TTC elements

On the Crosstown, the TTC's iconic typeface, logo, the orange Line 5 number and circle will still appear in many places. The TTC logo will be installed on the exterior of all stations and stops, while the orange line 5 number and circle will appear on directional signage throughout the line.



↑ The TTC's iconic typeface, Bloor-Yonge, will appear at both platform and street level, like it does here at Keelelssdale.

← The orange Line 5 number and circle will appear on signage within the station.

Typeface

Signage Typeface

Metrolinx uses ClearviewADA on wayfinding signage. Metrolinx and the CNIB partnered to research typeface legibility for signage. Five fonts were tested with 100+ participants with various visual impairments. ClearviewADA was determined to have distinct advantages for people with a variety of vision challenges. The test suggested Swiss721 should not be used for signage.

Bloor-Yonge Typeface

Accessibility best-practice suggests that all messaging should be in mixed-case lettering. Mixed-case makes it easier to tell different characters apart, particularly for those with low vision. However, TTC's iconic subway typeface, Bloor-Yonge, does not have a lowercase. It wouldn't seem right to deliver a rapid transit project in Toronto without this lettering appearing somewhere, so we have protected for the use of Bloor-Yonge as a decorative element: in its traditional spot on platform walls, and as supergraphics on station exteriors.



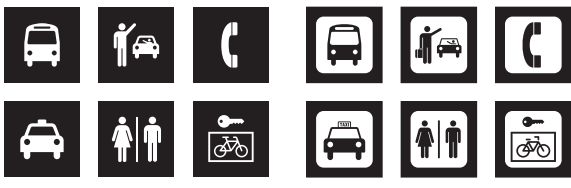
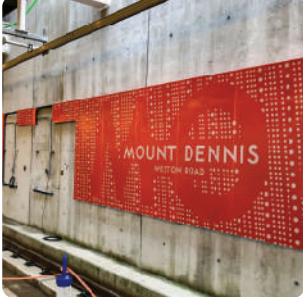
ClearviewADA



Swiss721

↑ CNIB designed letter and number content based on commonly confused characters for each typeface. Each string was assessed for legibility from various distances in a variety of conditions.

The Bloor-Yonge → typeface will be found throughout the line, like it is here on platform level.



↑ Icons in the Metrolinx (left) and TTC (right) standards are largely similar

The Crosstown vehicles look similar to streetcars, but TTC chose to identify the ECLRT as part of the subway network. That decision triggered several others, including aligning exterior livery with the subway.

We want customers to be able to relate the icon on signage to the LRT vehicle, while keeping it visually different to a streetcar, so we developed a unique LRT icon that appears throughout the line. This icon is also used by Region of Waterloo for use on their LRT.

For the Metrolinx Standard, we take a more generalized approach, using one icon to represent both subway and light rail, grouping the services together as the same type but still acknowledging the differences in vehicle design.

We use a different streetcar icon than the TTC, opting for a side view for the icon to create a strong visual difference from the LRTs. The icon is also more closely representative of the modern rolling stock in use today, compared to the old streetcars which have now been retired.



← The LRT icon on the Crosstown (left) is also used on the Region of Waterloo's LRT system. It will eventually be updated to the icon used in the Metrolinx Standard (right), which represents both subway and light rail.

Pictograms

Both Metrolinx and TTC use pictograms which emphasize clarity and familiarity, in the style of those developed by the American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA). AIGA symbols are widely used and broadly understood. The majority of these pictograms are consistent between both Metrolinx and TTC standards.



← Metrolinx uses a streetcar icon with a side view to differentiate it from the light rail icon, as the streetcar and LRT vehicles are similar in appearance.

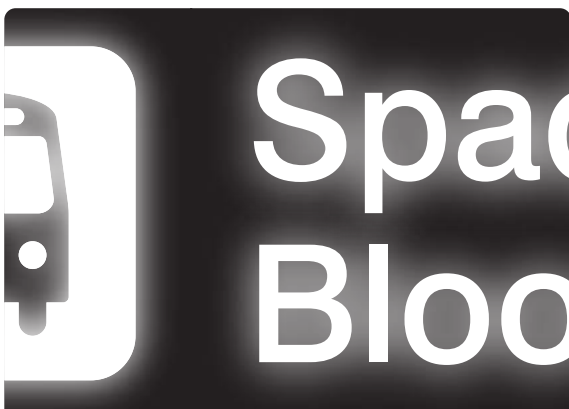


← The TTC's streetcar icon is well-recognized and has a classic design, however the vehicle it is representing (the CLRV and ALRV) is no longer in service. This means that the icon will become less intuitive and recognizable over time.

Illuminated signage

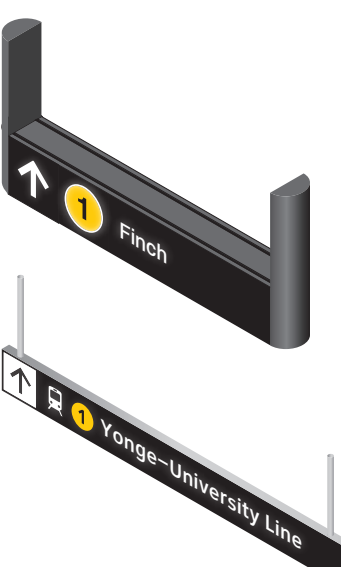
The TTC has used white text on black signage since the opening of the Yonge subway line in 1954 and Metrolinx does the same. This approach has its pros and cons: white reflects more light so when it is used on a dark background, text and icons can appear larger. However, it can also cause a blurring effect around the edges of letters, particularly when illuminated. This phenomenon is called 'halation' and is, in part, why many people struggle to read using dark mode on their phones.

The TTC signage typeface has tight tracking (the space between letters) while being used on signage which is generally backlit. The combination of these factors can make sign messages difficult to read as letters can blur together. Characters that are often confused with others (such as lli1, eas, cl d, rn, m) become especially challenging to tell apart.



The TTC uses numbers within coloured circles to identify subway lines. While colour is useful supporting information, the primary information being communicated is the line number. The line colour is used to reinforce the line number, but the line alone would not be enough to identify the line as not everyone sees colours as the same and a variety of visual impairments can impact how many of us perceive colour. The TTC uses white outlines on line codes, whereas Metrolinx does not, due to the possibility of halation. We do, however, ensure that appropriate colour contrast is met between the number and the colour. Metrolinx only illuminates external station signs and a select number of others as required.

Halation and a lack of colour contrast → between the white outline and the line colour can cause issues with legibility.



Code compliance

Metrolinx is required to comply with the French Language Services Act (FLSA), the Ontario Building Code (OBC), and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and those requirements extend to elevator buttons and floor numbering.

Elevator buttons now require Braille and tactile messaging to be placed next to buttons, as opposed to on them. This prevents Braille readers from pressing a floor they don't want while trying to read what floors are available.

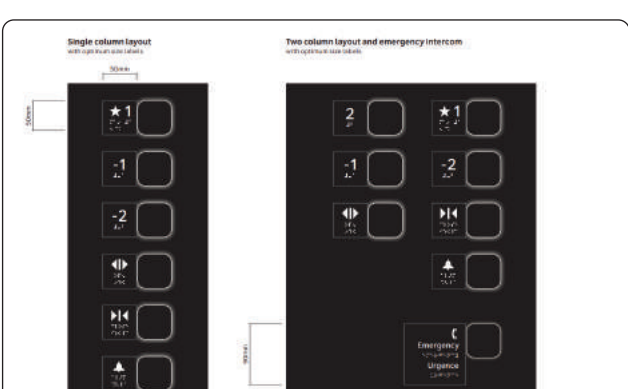
On newer projects where Metrolinx funds and owns the infrastructure, all OBC and AODA requirements that Metrolinx standards follow are applicable.

We frequently consult with our Accessibility Advisory Committee to understand how our standard can be as easy to use as possible for people of all abilities.

Metrolinx and the TTC follow different standards → for floor numbering; in an underground station; the TTC may use numbers that increase as you go deeper into the station, whereas the Metrolinx would be to use negative “-” numbers to differentiate between above and below-ground floors in a multi-level station



TTC approach



Metrolinx approach