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Metrolinx - GO Transit

Graffiti Management Guidelines



Document Approval Information

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Railway Corridor Management Office Graffiti Management Guidelines	01 April 2013	Grant Bailie

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1. Introduction

GO Transit manages approximately 288 km of Metrolinx-owned railway corridors, corresponding to about 68 per cent of the total railway network that GO Trains regularly operate over. By keeping these corridors and the nearly 535 km of track they contain properly managed and maintained, GO Transit's Railway Corridors division helps to ensure that every week approximately one million train passengers get where they need to be going, safely and reliably.

The Railway Corridors Management Office (RCMO) resides within the GO Transit, Railway Corridors Division.

The RCMO supports safe and reliable train service through a variety of measures that range from trespassing prevention to ensuring vegetation does not block train sightlines. This group also deals with community proximity issues including anti-whistling initiatives and general landlord responsibilities associated with railway corridors, such as debris and graffiti management. To achieve these goals, the RCMO oversees the railway right-of-way maintenance contractor and liaises with the municipalities our corridors pass through and other government agencies such as Transport Canada.

In addition, the RCMO oversees all Third Party Project applications, such as utility companies or road authorities wishing to cross our tracks (either over, at-grade or under) or work undertaken adjacent to the railway corridor.

It is important to note that the majority of graffiti along the railway corridor occurs on railway overpasses/underpasses, private buildings and fences, and other railway structures (CN and CP) that are not managed by GO Transit. These locations are outside of GO Transit's jurisdiction and often other parties are responsible for graffiti abatement or clean-up activities.

2. Purpose

One of the key cornerstones of the GO Transit Customer Service Strategy is a commitment to always take safety seriously. Often the presence of graffiti causes people to feel unsafe and creates a perception that the area is uncared for, or in decline. When left unattended, graffiti will often attract even more graffiti and can lead to other more serious types of crime to occur. Creating graffiti can also be very dangerous, particularly when persons trespass onto the railway corridor and are in close proximity to live tracks.

Graffiti - Form of visual communication, usually illegal, involving the unauthorized marking of public space by an individual or group. Technically the term applies to designs scratched through a layer of paint or plaster, but its meaning has been extended to other markings. Graffiti is widely considered a form of antisocial behavior performed in order to gain attention or simply for thrills. But it also can be understood as an expressive art form.
Source – *Encyclopedia Britannica*

GO Transit managed railway corridors are an integral part of the fabric of the communities that we serve. As such, we have a commitment to work with communities and stakeholders to ensure that the aesthetics of the railway corridors are maintained and that they continue to contribute to the vitality of the community.

For the purposes of these guidelines, **graffiti shall be treated as an act of vandalism.**

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The purpose of the following Graffiti Guidelines are to provide an overview of:

- graffiti removal priorities;
- current approaches to graffiti on structures in close proximity to the corridor; and
- current approaches to graffiti abatement.

In addition, other approaches to address graffiti and other related issues are included in the GO Transit toolbox. Approaches such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), provide opportunities to work closely with our community stakeholders and implement broader strategies and responses targeted at the root causes of vandalism and graffiti.

3. GO Transit Operated Corridors Map

Figure 1 below provides an overview of all GO Transit managed railway corridors.

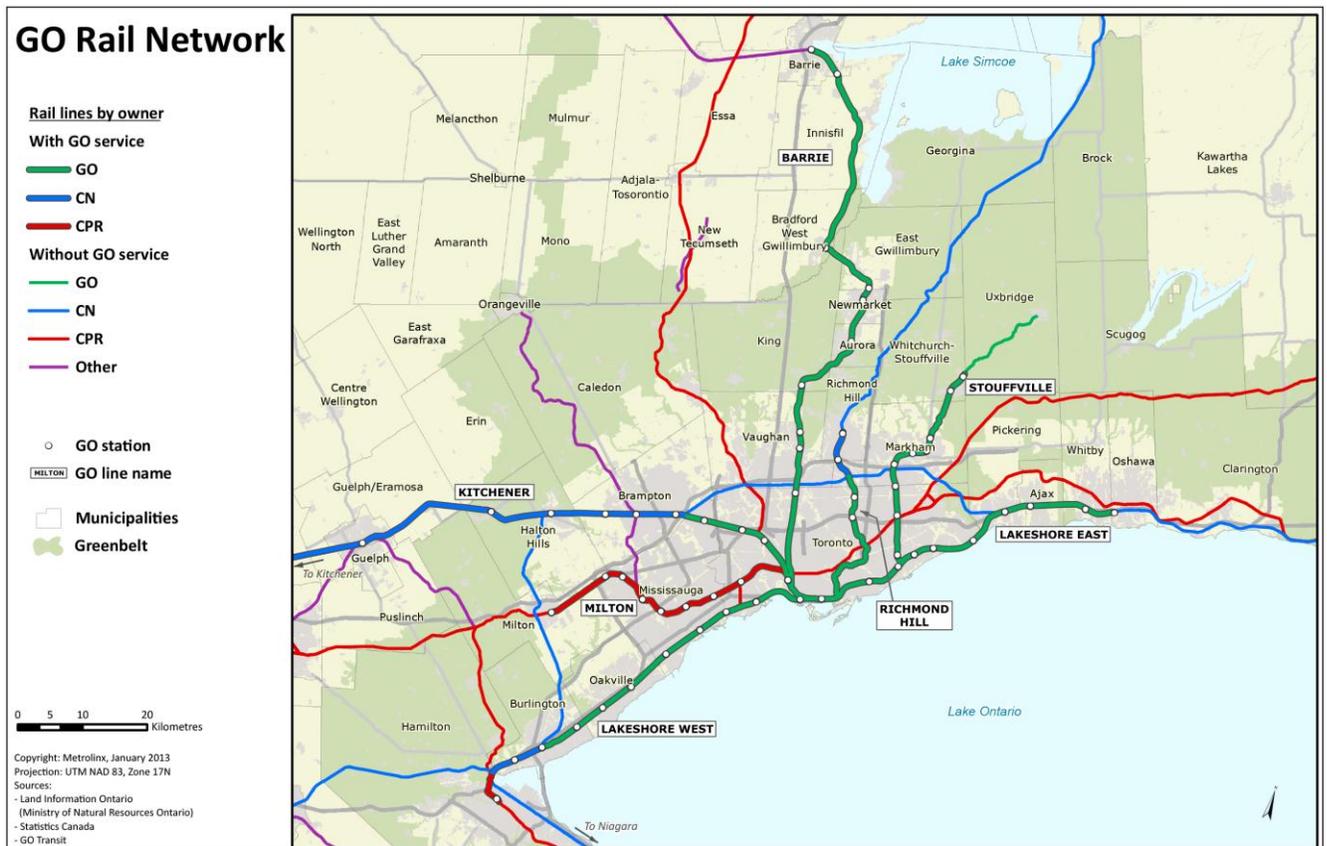


Figure 1 – GO Transit Managed Railway Corridors

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4. Graffiti Removal Priorities

GO Transit is committed to removing graffiti along its railway corridors as quickly as practical. Work will be prioritized in the following order:

- graffiti that impacts safety (e.g. graffiti on railway operating signs/signals);
- graffiti that contains obscene or offensive content; and
- graffiti on other railway infrastructure (e.g. signal bungalows and signal bridges, equipment buildings etc.).

The removal of graffiti is a part of routine track and corridor maintenance. The current maintenance contracts with PNR and TTR include provisions for graffiti removal and abatement initiatives.

5. Approaches to Graffiti on Structures in Close Proximity to the Corridor

As noted earlier, the majority of graffiti along the railway corridor occurs on overpasses/underpasses, private buildings, fences and other structures that are not owned by Metrolinx. These locations are outside of GO Transit's jurisdiction and often other parties are responsible for graffiti abatement or clean-up activities. To address these types of locations, the following approaches have been established in cooperation with our corridor stakeholders and based on stated priorities:

Graffiti on structures that carry a GO Transit managed railway line over a roadway - Graffiti within the road allowance below the bridge deck (e.g. along abutment walls and piers) will be addressed by the local or regional road authority (even in cases where GO Transit may own the abutments and piers). In these locations, the road authority crews would have the appropriate equipment and jurisdiction (e.g. to implement lane closures etc.) to address and manage graffiti.

Graffiti on structures that carry a road over a GO Transit managed railway line - Graffiti within the railway corridor below the bridge deck (e.g. along abutment walls and piers) will be addressed by GO Transit even though the road authority may own the abutments and piers. In these locations, the railway maintenance crews would have the appropriate equipment and jurisdiction (e.g. to coordinate track protection for workers on site) to address and manage graffiti. It should be noted that graffiti at these locations will only be addressed when it contains obscene or offensive content, as resources and other priorities allow or in conjunction with community anti-graffiti initiatives (e.g. community mural, BIA clean-up initiatives etc.).

Graffiti on privately owned buildings/fences and other structures - Graffiti on walls/buildings/fences and other structures adjacent to railway corridors are the responsibility of the private property owner to address. Where possible, GO Transit will work cooperatively with the adjacent property owner to arrange for work permits and/or track protection to address and manage graffiti on private property.

Graffiti on railway structures owned by CN, CP or GEXR - Private freight railways currently own just over 1/3 of the total network of railway corridors that GO Trains travel over. Graffiti on CN, CP or GEXR owned railway structures are the responsibility of the respective railway. Reports of graffiti that impacts safety (e.g.

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graffiti on railway operating signs/signals) or contains obscene or offensive content will be forwarded to the respective railway for immediate action.

6. Approaches to Graffiti Abatement

The large GO Transit service area comprises many different urban, suburban and rural conditions that influence the levels of graffiti and approaches to graffiti abatement. GO Transit currently uses a number of different approaches to prevent graffiti depending on the needs of the local area:

Anti-Graffiti Coatings - GO Transit is currently piloting the application of graffiti-resistant paints to help deter graffiti on railway infrastructure (e.g. signal bungalows and signal bridges, equipment buildings etc.). With these special coatings, mild cleaners can be used to remove graffiti on various surfaces.

Living Fence - GO Transit is moving forward with the installation of “living fences” to create a more natural barrier (e.g., Russian olive, thorny rose bushes) that limits access to the railway corridor and deters trespassing. This approach also encourages plants and trees to cover exposed vertical surfaces such as retaining walls and noise barriers (where safe) and limits the amount of surface area vulnerable to graffiti.

Community Murals – GO Transit has formed a number of partnerships with local stakeholders to develop community art depicting the local community’s history or achievements, community partnerships and promoting economic development. GO Transit has facilitated these types of initiatives by providing local artists with safe and controlled access to railway structures such as retaining walls and bridge abutments. In most instances, Community Murals are not targeted by vandals and the integrity of the community/local artist artwork is not tampered with. Figure 2 is an example of a community mural located at Joe Shuster Way and Dupont Street along the Weston GO Rail subdivision.



Figure 2 – Examples of Community Murals - Joe Shuster Way and Dupont Street along the Weston GO Rail Subdivision

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Bridge Banner System (BBS) –GO Transit / Metrolinx are currently pursuing opportunities to develop a BBS to enhance the appearance of GO Transit managed bridges. Figure 2 provides an example of a BBS in the City of Vaughan. The development of a BBS would also include:

- undertaking surrounding site maintenance (e.g. graffiti control, removal of illegal banner placements, garbage removal, shrub and flower planting);
- providing financial compensation to Metrolinx through advertising revenue; and
- working with GO Transit and its community stakeholders on various messaging opportunities reaching targeted market segments.



Figure 3 - BBS in the City of Vaughan

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) - In addition to the ongoing inspection and abatement initiatives, RCMO and System Safety staff will initiate CPTED surveys to inventory and address locations where graffiti is most prevalent. The CPTED survey would also be used to identify or recommend enhancements that can be employed as crime prevention or other security measures. The CPTED approach provides opportunities to work closely with various community stakeholders and implement broader strategies and responses targeted at the root causes of both vandalism and graffiti.

7. Conclusion

GO Transit has a strong commitment to work with surrounding communities and stakeholders to ensure that graffiti issues are addressed when impacting safety or containing obscene or offensive content, while ensuring that the aesthetics of the railway corridors are maintained and contribute to the vitality of the community. GO Transit's goal is to pursue various opportunities to work closely with our community stakeholders and implement broader strategies and responses targeted at the root causes of graffiti.

GO Transit recognizes that the removal of graffiti is a part of routine track and corridor maintenance. The current maintenance contracts with PNR and TTR includes provisions for graffiti removal and abatement initiatives.