Designing and Building Transit: Improving the Customer Experience

John Potter
Metrolinx, Design Excellence Division
The Goal:
Achieving excellent, user-focused design for transit infrastructure to support a high quality customer experience.
Achieving this goal requires:

1. A clear process
2. Engagement of stakeholders
3. Ongoing communication
1. Putting the Customer First
2014: The Metrolinx Board of Directors established the Design Excellence program.

2018: The mandate was expanded and a formal Design Excellence Division was established.
THE INITIAL DESIGN EXCELLENCE MANDATE

1. Drive cultural change in the organization
2. “Set the bar” through the development of design guidelines and policies
3. Establish a corporate design review process
4. Ensure that public money is spent prudently and effectively
The Design Excellence mandate represented a significant organizational change.
Organizational History:
- GO Transit has a reputation for service excellence
- Built infrastructure evolved in an incremental and ad-hoc manner
- The design of stations and other public facing facilities were utilitarian at best
- The organization was led by engineers and planners
Change Management Issues:

• Changing a long established organization structures
• Lack of understand about the role of the new Design Excellence program
• There was resistance to breaking down divisional silos, sharing responsibility, and embracing the mandate for Design Excellence
2. The Role of Design Excellence
Design Excellence coordinates inputs from various disciplines to deliver a holistic vision for achieving a high-quality customer experience.
AN INTEGRATED DESIGN PROCESS FOR A HIGH QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Legible and Consistent Design Identity
- Placemaking and Site Specific Adaptations
- Balancing Regional and Local Interests
- Customer Centric Design
  - Universal Design
  - Design for Long-term Operational Efficiencies
  - Sustainable Design and Climate Resiliency

Design Excellence
Purpose:
• MDRP is set up to provide meaningful feedback and direction at key junctures in the design process

Accountability:
• The panel members are directly accountable to the Metrolinx Board of Directors
3. A Suite of Design Standards and Guidelines
2041 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

• The 2041 RTP puts the traveler needs at the core of planning and operations
• The document is a blueprint for creating an integrated, multi-modal regional transportation system
TECHNICAL STANDARD

• The Design Requirements Manual outlines the guiding principles, technical details, and prescriptive infrastructure requirements to design and build GO Transit infrastructure
NETWORK WIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES

• The Design Excellence Guidelines focus on those elements that create a network-wide legible and consistent design identity

• The design guidelines shape the customer experience in GO Transit facilities
PROJECT SPECIFIC DESIGN BRIEFS

• A “one size fits all” approach will not work in a region as large and diverse as the GTHA.

• The Design Briefs focus on the variable elements that recognize the distinct identities of the communities we serve.
INTEGRATED PUBLIC ART

• Integrated Art is a feature that builds civic identity by adding to the distinctiveness of each station and site

Artist: Sarah Morris
4. Building Support for Transit: Communication & Engagement
Manage change by:
- Clearly articulating a process to achieve the common objective
- Engage internal stakeholders early and often
- Maintain open lines of communication
SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Design Excellence Division (CPO)
Customer Service Delivery (COO)
Customer Experience Division (CMO)
Business Development & Partnerships (CMO)

CPO - Chief Planning Officer, COO - Chief Operating Officer, CMO - Chief Marketing Officer

Above:
PC Express Grocery Click & Collect Pilot Project
Business Development & Partnerships

Below Left:
Secure Bicycle Storage, GO Station
Mobility Management

Below Right:
Rideshare
Mobility Management

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ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Transit is a social and political issue:

• Politicians are key decision-makers and they are sensitive to their constituent interests

• Engaging the taxpaying public plays a critical role in driving support for transit

Image:
Public Information Session
GO Expansion Projects
Design Excellence plays an key role in the communication of the benefits of transit investment to:

- The Transit Customer
- Local Communities
- Taxpayers

There are many aspects to this - beyond laying down tracks and trains, but also focused on using the physical realm and digital communications to move people seamlessly through the region.

Marlene McInnes, a professor at the University of Toronto, noted, “I think that we’re living in a time where the built environment is becoming increasingly important. It’s no longer just about how we move from place to place, but also about how we interact with our environment.”

The challenges of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT are many, including how to integrate the infrastructure with existing buildings, parks, and transportation hubs, as well as how to ensure that the design is accessible to all users.

Article featuring the Eglinton Crosstown LRT
By: Alex Bozikovic
The Globe and Mail, Saturday, September 16, 2017

LEADING WITH DESIGN

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ENGAGING THE DECISION MAKERS

Communications & Public Affairs:

• Intergovernmental Relations
• Stakeholder Relations
• Community Relations & Communications
• Media Relations & Issues

Above:
Queen’s Park, The Legislative Assembly of Ontario
Metrolinx is an agency of the Government of Ontario

Below:
Toronto City Hall, Council Chambers
The City of Toronto is one a key municipal stakeholders
5. Construction impacts and the Community Experience
Lesson Learned

• Be clear about the short and medium term construction impacts associated with this massive investment in public infrastructure

• Acknowledge there will be negative impacts, and work with neighbouring communities to mitigate the issues

Above:
Tunnel Construction Access and Staging Area
Eglinton Crosstown LRT Project

Below:
Mount Dennis Terminus Station
Eglinton Crosstown LRT Project
The value of full scale mock-ups:

- Working through constructability issues
- Test assumptions about the customer experience and customer journey
6. Transit Challenges in the GTHA
CONTEXT: GREATER TORONTO AND HAMILTON REGION (GTHA)
THE GTHA IS SERVED BY 12 TRANSIT AGENCIES

Each transit operator has its own:

- Brand identity
- Service model
- Fare structure

Impact on the Customer:

- Cross boundary transfers
- Confusion
- Inconvenience

Transit agencies currently operating in the GTHA
Solution: remove barriers and enable transit in the GTHA to be perceived and experienced as one network composed of multiple systems/service providers.
WAYFINDING DESIGN STANDARD

Vision:
The Connected Network project is a Metrolinx-led initiative to harmonize transit wayfinding information across the GTHA.
GTHA FARE INTEGRATION

Vision:
The GTHA Regional Fare Integration Strategy will increase customer mobility and transit ridership while supporting the financial sustainability of GTHA’s transit services.
MODAL INTERCHANGE STATIONS

Increased Connectivity:
Metrolinx is planning, designing and constructing new transit infrastructure in order to expand service and help customers easily navigate an increasingly complex multi-modal network

Above:
Mount Dennis Station Modal LRT and Bus interchange station

Below:
Allen Station
Subway, LRT and Bus interchange station
37 DESIGNING FOR A HIGH QUALITY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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