

NYC's terrible subway map idea

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Sometimes, ideas that *seem* well-intentioned (in theory) actually fall somewhere in the realm of “worst idea ever” when it comes to real-life implementation.

This includes ideas like holograms in the airport or QR codes for remote real estate signs (or using QR codes for anything at all, ever). It usually boils down to using new technology in a way that is clearly flawed. (I don’t want to point fingers, but usually it’s some sort of well-intentioned, but doomed-to-failure government idea.)

The most recent “we’re implementing this idea despite real-life consequences” idea comes to us from New York City, where the city has decided to add [90 47-inch touchscreen subway maps](#) [1] throughout various subway stations.

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The touchscreens will allow passengers to select a start and end point, and the map will supply a direct route. In time, the maps will also feature landmarks like the Empire State Building and the closest subway station to it. Plus, the screens will show delays, outages, schedules, and ads, and they'll feature cameras and two-way communications so issues can be reported to and monitored by the MTA. The most exciting thing about these maps is they will offer Wi-Fi.

In theory, these are all great things. The NYC subway is notoriously confusing and having a map that tells you where to go is a great idea. They would offer extra security cameras and in city teaming with tourists, maps are a must. Plus, Wi-Fi!

Now, let's talk about realistically. I'm not sure that the proponents of this idea have ever actually *been* in a NYC subway. They're usually sort of dark and dank and not somewhere I would put a 47-inch touchscreen or anything of value. Best-case scenario, it's constantly broken. Worst-case, it gets destroyed or ruined.

I'd much rather see the money going into newer trains, station maintenance, or hiring someone to work the booths. I'd *really* like to see it go into digital screens on the trains and in the stations offering information on when the next train will run. Some stations and trains already offer this, but it seems to me that you could skip the screen, take the money, and equip even more stations and trains. Plus, only one person can use this at a time, as opposed to a normal map which can be viewed from several angles and heights.

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I wish this type of technology worked out, but it never does. Plus, all this information is available on your smart phone, and if they stuck some wi-fi in the tunnels, that would be a better solution. At the end of the day, why invest money in screens that are going to be destroyed and a pain to maintain? NYC should keep the added modules (Wi-Fi, info on delays, security measures), ditch the screen, and keep the traditional maps.

What are your thoughts? Best idea ever or waste of taxpayer money?

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<http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2013/03/nycs-terrible-subway-map-idea>

Links:

[1] <http://gizmodo.com/5991520/new-york-city-is-getting-futuristic-touchscreen-subway-maps>