



Big change – and not a good one – coming to TTC subway

Dear TTC Riders,

A big change is coming to Toronto's subway system – a change that could make riding the red rocket a lot less safe.

For decades, Toronto's subway trains have been equipped with a 2-person crew – a Driver to drive the train, and a Guard to oversee passenger safety. Having a 2-person crew on each train is key to what's made our subway system one of the safest in the world.

Yet TTC management has decided to eliminate the Guard. This will leave passengers to fend for themselves in difficult and dangerous situations, from medical emergencies to power outages.

We are TTC employees who work on these subway crews as Drivers and Guards. And we think it's outrageous that TTC management has made the reckless decision to eliminate the Guard without even consulting you, the rider.

In fact, they're being really sneaky about it, hoping to slip it by you. They're quietly planning to eliminate the Guard very soon – first on the Yonge-University Line. And they're counting on you not paying attention.

We have a better idea. Let's call them out. Let's make some noise. Let's demand they hold public hearings so you can have your say.

Wondering why TTC management didn't consult you? They probably had a hunch you wouldn't be keen on a change that jeopardizes your safety—especially at a time when the pandemic has made us all more worried about safety.

In a new poll we commissioned, 71% of respondents disapproved of the TTC's plan to eliminate the Guard, while fully 84% said it was important that the TTC hold public consultations before proceeding with the plan.

As Guards, we see the hazards on the subway up close every day. We know what happens on crowded trains and subway platforms, and how quickly a situation can become dangerous.

We've seen passengers caught in the doors, even dragged along by a moving train. Fortunately, we've quickly spotted these situations, stopped the train and no one's been hurt.

We also deal with hundreds of medical emergencies every year – passengers having heart attacks, seizures, or fainting and falling onto the tracks. In one case, a pregnant woman went into labour on a subway platform. The Guard created a privacy barrier around her, covered her with a coat and got an ambulance to rush her to hospital in time for a safe delivery.



We've intervened and resolved countless situations where rowdy passengers were harassing or assaulting other passengers.

We know there would have been many more such situations if we hadn't been on the job. Usually our presence alone discourages aggressive behaviour, which is why women travelling alone at night often sit near the back of the train, where the Guard is located.

We've helped out in the situation every parent fears – becoming separated from your child on a crowded subway platform, realizing your child is suddenly alone and surrounded by a crowd of strangers as trains whiz by.

We're always watching for lost children, and our presence means there's a person in authority to ensure the child's safety until the parents are located. We've been gratified to assist in reuniting lost children with their parents.

And, crucially, we've also handled emergency passenger evacuations when trains have been stranded due to fire or other dangers on the track. We're trained to handle these tense situations, including leading hundreds of nervous passengers through a darkened tunnel – where there's a live wire that needs to be shut off.

Eliminating the Guard would mean all these vital tasks would no longer get done, or would have to be done by the Driver. But Drivers are busy doing their own job – driving the train, following traffic signals, ensuring the track ahead is clear so they can move the train as quickly as possible from station to station.

If you think subway trains are slow now, wait until Drivers have to do their own jobs and the Guard's job too.

These days, police are cracking down on “distracted driving” on our roads. But the TTC is almost guaranteeing there will be “distracted driving” on our subway tracks.

In fact, “distracted driving” has been one of the well-documented problems associated with Driver-only trains in countries where they've been tried.

The TTC has experimented with Driver-only trains on the less-travelled Sheppard line. But that experience should serve as a caution: there's been a 50% increase in “red light violations” which occur when a Driver fails to stop despite the presence of a person or object on the track.

How can the Driver, located at the front of the train, possibly pay full attention to the track ahead and to what's happening on the platforms and inside the subway cars?

And, what if the Driver becomes incapacitated? Who would take charge? How would passengers trapped inside subway cars even know what's going on? How would they get out?



The TTC says it's increasing the number of Station Managers to respond in a crisis. But these officials won't be right on the scene. They may not even be nearby. They'll likely have to come by car from another station. How can they possibly respond in the split-second time needed to avert a tragedy?

Once the train pulls out of the station, Station Managers are useless in an emergency. And yet they're paid more than subway Guards. So the elimination of the Guard is unlikely to save any money. All it will do is make our subways less safe.

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If your subway rides have been mostly safe and uneventful, that's largely because there's been a Guard on every train closely monitoring everything going on.

You may not notice the Guard, but the Guard notices you.

So why is the TTC eliminating the one TTC employee who oversees your safety?

Don't you think you should have a chance to ask TTC managers that question directly?

Stay safe! Wear a mask!

Carlos Santos

President

ATU Local 113 - Toronto