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Underground light show awaits Blue Line riders

May 31, 2005

BY MARK J. KONKOL Transportation Reporter

CTA Blue Line riders are the target of a new advertising campaign that turns a subway wall into a makeshift movie screen.

The first string of backlit pictures in the tunnel near the underground Clark/Lake stop morph into a 15-second commercial for Target stores when L trains rumble past.

It's the CTA's first foray into subway tunnel commercials -- a money maker during tight budget times -- that have popped up in New York City, Philadelphia, Atlanta and a handful of international cities such as Hong Kong.

In CTA tunnels, the first commercial will include images of a girl blowing apart a dandelion, a woman sprinkling Target bulls-eye logos from a garden hose and a kayaker navigating a stream bubbling with Target bull's-eyes.

"We're always looking for creative ways to advertise and reach clients. Chicago is a fabulous market and this is a fine way to communicate with the fine folks of Chicago," Target spokeswoman Lena Michaud said.

The tunnel commercials were developed by a rocket scientist inspired by a children's toy that puts pictures in motion, the zoetrope.

Astrophysicist Joshua Spodek used that idea to come up with the process that brings linear still pictures to life, and puts train passengers in the middle of a life-sized flip book.

'Wow, that's pretty cool'

New York City ad agency SubMedia sold the CTA on the ad program, which will change about every month. The CTA is paid monthly for use of the tunnel and gets a percentage of the advertising revenue.

Following the Target commercial, the Blue Line advertisements will include 15-second bits for Hummer, Land Rover and fall season TV shows, SubMedia chief executive officer Peter Corrigan said.

"It's a way for [CTA] to generate non-farebox revenue, it's great for advertisers to reach consumers. And regular people look at it and think, 'Wow, that's pretty cool,'" Corrigan said.

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