

Technology turns subway tunnels into flip book

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — An advertising firm is using a 167-year-old technology to create a shimmering illusion on a city subway line.

For the past two weeks, riders on PATCO trains from Philadelphia to Camden, NJ, have been startled by the sudden appearance of a flickering, moving advertisement for Coca-Cola's Dasani water, floating in the air outside their subway window.

From the train it looks as if a cascading waterfall is being projected on a tunnel wall, but what riders are actually seeing are hundreds of small luminescent billboards, each flashing by for a fraction of a second.

The result — moving pictures — works on the same principle as zoetrope movie projectors that predate the Civil War.

Riders are actually seeing the panels through narrow slits. They can only see one panel at a time, and since the frames are zipping by at roughly 200 per second, they create an illusion of a moving picture similar to film or television.

The zoetrope waterfall lasts around 15 seconds and concludes with the Dasani logo and the slogan, "Treat yourself well — every day."

The first such ads were unveiled last month on Atlanta's MARTA system.

Submedia of New York developed and installed the system and hopes it will create a whole new market for advertisers.

"The riders seem to like them a lot," said Submedia chief executive and co-founder Joshua Spodek. "It's not like having a television on in a station. It looks very different from television. When we unveiled the

system in Atlanta, people were actually going around a second time to get another look."

If the campaign is successful, it may provide a new source of revenue for transit lines. Submedia officials said they estimated that the ads would rent from \$35,000 and \$250,000 a month.

The panels that create the illusion are hung along a 450-foot stretch of tunnel near the unused Franklin Square station in Philadelphia.

In the dark, the image seems to hang in the air at an uncertain distance from the speeding car. It vanishes before many riders realize it's there.

"It's kind of neat. The colors are very bright. It's eye-catching," said Joann Peterson, 35, of Haddonfield, NJ. "The first time I saw it, it sort of surprised me. I had to ride past it again to get a second look."



H. Rumph, Jr., AP

Train riders from Philadelphia to Camden, N.J., are the first to be exposed to shimmering advertisements that appear outside the windows of subway trains.