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Tunnel Vision: MARTA to feature movies

New advertising source could bring in much-needed cash

by Stacy Shelton – Staff

Coming soon to a subway tunnel near you: Motion pictures.

A New York media company announced Wednesday it plans to bring the new advertising gimmick to MARTA riders this summer.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority is the first transit agency to sign with Submedia. What they'll show is still unknown. No advertisers are locked in yet, although a company official says a deal is close.

Submedia's concept is similar to the old flip books. The tunnel wall images stay in place; movement comes from trains zipping by; and riders will see what looks like a movie.

"It's a simple new twist on a century-old idea," said Submedia CEO Joshua Spodek.

Riders between the Dunwoody and Sandy Springs stations will get to see the first subway motion picture. It will be on a 900-by-3-foot display.

For financially strapped MARTA, the new advertising source could bring in much-needed cash. MARTA spokeswoman Kimberly Willis said Submedia's pitch predicted the transit agency could make \$15 million on the advertising over a five-year period. MARTA currently makes about \$5.4 million a year from advertising.

The first six-month deal with Submedia is worth \$90,000. If the demonstration works, in-tunnel movies could start popping up in other spots by next year. Sixteen MARTA locations already have been identified.

Submedia President Matthew Gross said "In some cases, we expect to be able to double transit authorities' existing advertising revenues by using an amazing asset of theirs—dark, unused wall space."

And riders still dealing with MARTA's new 25-cent fare hike that brought token prices to \$1.75 might find a moving ad more appealing.