

Low-tech movies jazz-up ads in subways

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A rider on a PATCO subway train watches through the window as hundreds of small luminescent billboards, each flashing by for a fraction of a second, create a shimmering illusion of a moving advertisement for Dasani water.

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania (AP) --Advertisers have apparently sunk to new depths. For the past few weeks, riders on PATCO trains from Philadelphia to Camden, New Jersey, have been startled by the appearance of a flickering ad for Dasani water floating in the tunnel outside their subway window.

What riders are actually seeing are hundreds of small luminescent billboards, each flashing by for a fraction of a second. Like a flipbook, the images create an illusion of a moving pictures.

Submedia L.L.C. of New York developed and installed the system and hopes it will create a whole new market for advertisers. The ads also are getting a tryout in Atlanta, Georgia. "It's eye-catching," said Joann Peterson, 35, whose two children, ages 5 and 8, squealed as the ad appeared during a ride Monday. "The first time I saw it, it sort of surprised me."

The technology is hardly new. It works on the same principle as zoetrope movie projectors that predate the Civil War. The panels that create the illusion are hung along a 450-foot stretch of tunnel.

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

"The riders seem to like them a lot," said Submedia chief executive and co-founder Joshua Spodek. "When we unveiled the system in Atlanta, people were actually going around a second time to get another look."