

With the exception of Eglinton Station, 11 of the 12 stations of the original Yonge Subway line have been renovated extensively. Some stations retained the original typefaces but with tighter tracking and subtle differences in weight, while other stations were renovated so poorly there no longer is a sense of simplicity seen with the 1954 designs in terms of typographical harmony.

Queen Station, for example, used Helvetica (LT Std 75 Bold) in such an irresponsible manner; it is repulsively inconsistent with all the other stations, and due to the renovators preserving the original glass tile trim, the font weight itself looks botched and unsuitable.

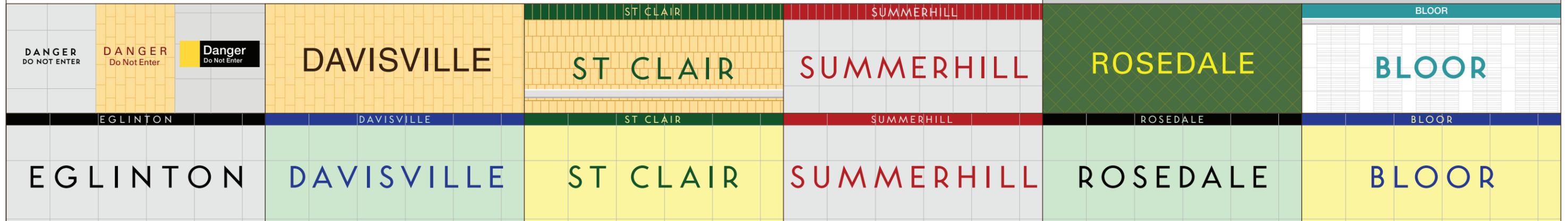
The intention of using Helvetica and Univers is unknown, however with the usage of the latter on the design of the Spadina Subway in 1978, it may have been an internal decision to try and assimilate subsequent renovations of existing stations in the aging Yonge and University lines. The TTC avoided the usage of the Toronto Subway font on new subway stations for over two decades.

The Sheppard Subway in 2002 saw the return of the Toronto Subway typeface as it is used for the names of the stations posted on platform level. Helvetica became the primary typeface for all TTC wayfinding signages and informational material system-wide.

The Toronto Subway Font (Designer Unknown)  
Based on Futura by Paul Renner (1928)

**ABCabc RQKS**  
**ABCabc RQKS**

There are subtle differences between the two typefaces, notably the R, Q, K, and S; most have different terminals, spines, and junctions.

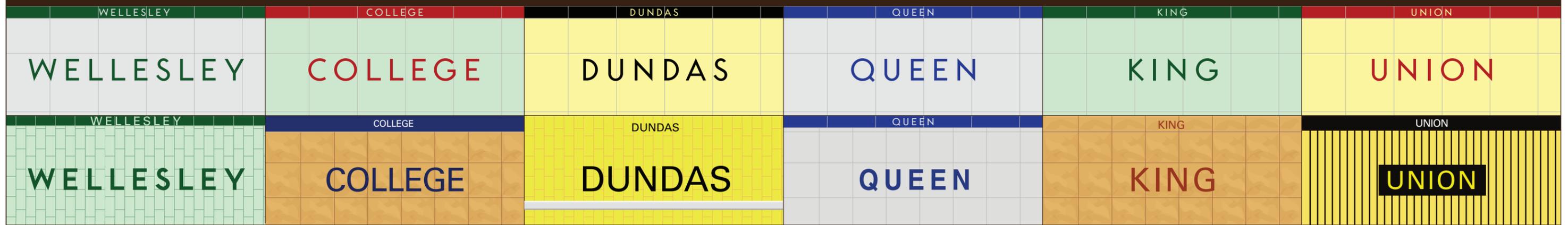


# 1954 YONGE SUBWAY

The specially-designed Toronto Subway typeface graced the walls of the 12 stations, complementing them with wayfinding signs

that embodied the spirit of modernism and progress. During the early 1980s, the stations were renovated, 6 of which had the typeface

replaced with a brutal mix of Helvetica and Univers. Only Eglinton retains the splendor and elegance of its original architecture.



## Signages - 1954

**NORTHBOUND** **NORTHBOUND**

Both the Toronto Subway and Franklin Gothic (Speculative) typefaces are used for signages in all levels of each station. The Northbound sign on Franklin Gothic was used in Queen Station.

**WAY OUT** **ROYAL YORK**

These signs are from the Union Station mezzanine level pre-renovation. (Based on historical photographs from the Toronto Archives)

**EGLINTON WEST**

Eglinton  
West 32

**32 Eglinton West**  
32 To Renforth  
32A To Renforth and Skymark  
32B To Airport Corporate Centre

As the city grew, wayfinding signs evolved to accommodate expansion. With these examples of surface route signage, one can see how the usage of type is based on legibility or otherwise. Eglinton Station became the northern suburban terminus of the subway, with access to surface routes serving the outer regions within the then Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. As the bus routes divided into various branches, signs had to be bigger and more explanatory, which in turn have better legibility in all conditions.

By the 1970s and early 1980s, the signs were changed with the route number and the face based on Univers or Helvetica with lowercase letters and acceptable tracking. Not until the late 1970s are pictograms used.

The latest revisions are composed with Helvetica (now the standard typeface used on TTC informational material) apparently to improve readability on signs containing route divisions and branches.

# 1963

## UNIVERSITY SUBWAY

The University Avenue Subway also followed the same typographical styles as the Yonge line with the Toronto Subway typeface used

throughout the line. Only St. Andrew and Osgoode stations were heavily renovated which resulted in the main typeface converted

to Univers and Helvetica. The rest of the stations have their original typefaces with subtle revisions to wayfinding signs.

|   |   |  |                              |                                  |                           |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ST. GEORGE  | MUSEUM                                      | QUEEN'S PARK<br>COLLEGE STREET   | ST. PATRICK<br>DUNDAS STREET | OSGOODE                          | ST. ANDREW                |
| ST. GEORGE<br>ST. GEORGE  | To Bloor St.<br>Varsity Stadium and Arena → | QUEEN'S PARK<br>COLLEGE STREET   | ST. PATRICK<br>DUNDAS STREET | OSGOODE<br>- QUEEN ST -          | ST. ANDREW<br>- KING ST - |
| <p>In 1994, wayfinding designer Paul Arthur designed what was to be signs suitable for a majority of riders including illiterates, children, and people with moderate visual impairments with the usage of pictograms and legible type. Gill Sans was chosen by Arthur for all typographical components of the subway system; it is classy, quite legible to the designer's opinion, and faithful to the old subway typeface.</p> <p>St. George Station was used for the prototype designs, which in the end the TTC quietly abandoned and left bits of the components all over the station. The usage of Gill Sans is unnecessary considering the geometrical similarities to the Futura-based Toronto Subway font, which is legible as well as elegant and classy on its own without further improvement or scrutiny. The pictograms would have been good enough.</p> |   | <p>Queen's Park and St. Patrick stations saw the placement of metal panels to replace painted lettering that deteriorated over time. Osgoode and St. Andrew stations were completely renovated just less than a decade after the opening of the University Subway due to rapid deterioration of the glass tiles. It is known that Osgoode and St. Andrew's design was based on the 1954 Yonge Subway stations, but their colour schemes are speculative*. After renovation, Helvetica and Toronto Subway blended together in a conservative motif with the usage of harmonic tile patterns.</p> <p><small>*The speculative colour schemes on the two stations are based on findings by Mark Brader, John Chew, and Justin Bur, <a href="http://www.posifit.com/ttc/colour.html">http://www.posifit.com/ttc/colour.html</a></small></p> |                              | <p>← SOUTHBOUND NORTHBOUND →</p> |                           |

# 1966-68

## BLOOR-DANFORTH SUBWAY ISLINGTON TO YONGE

The architectural design of all 29 stations were based on Museum and St. George stations on the University line. The stations

stood the test of time, with the tiles and the typefaces left unchanged (the stations did have some minor modifications to wayfinding

signs and accessibility). The stations had a more spartan, utilitarian look compared to the 1954 Yonge Subway stations.

|   |             |            |                  |                                |           |
|---|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| ISLINGTON   | ROYAL YORK  | OLD MILL   | JANE             | RUNNYMEDE                      | HIGH PARK |
| ISLINGTON   | ROYAL YORK  | OLD MILL   | JANE             | RUNNYMEDE                      | HIGH PARK |
| KEELE   | DUNDAS WEST | LANSDOWNE  | DUFFERIN         | OSSINGTON                      | CHRISTIE  |
| KEELE   | DUNDAS WEST | LANSDOWNE  | DUFFERIN         | OSSINGTON                      | CHRISTIE  |
| BATHURST  | SPADINA     | ST. GEORGE | BAY<br>YORKVILLE | YONGE                          |           |
| BATHURST  | SPADINA     | ST. GEORGE | BAY<br>YORKVILLE | YONGE                          |           |
| <p>The Bloor-Danforth Subway offers a historical presentation of modernist values for passengers of the system; despite how banal the stations look, one has to appreciate the philosophy of geometric forms as once thought to be the ideal. The Toronto Subway typeface is used from the mezzanine and ticketing levels to platform level; from the 1970s onwards, newer signs based on Helvetica and Univers were installed on high traffic stations to supplement the older signs for legibility and better navigation.</p> |             |            |                  | <p>WESTBOUND → Westbound →</p> |           |

Next Station  
Lansdowne / Westbound To  
Kipling

Subway

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Bloor Danforth Subway  
West to Spadina

EXIT  
← CUMBERLAND  
BAY - BELLAIR →

EXIT  
AND BUSES

Westbound  
to Kipling

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St. George

EXIT  
Spadina  
University  
Trains

EXIT  
Buses

# 1966-68

BLOOR-DANFORTH SUBWAY  
SHERBOURNE TO WARDEN

The architectural design of all 29 stations were based on Museum and St. George stations on the University line. The stations

stood the test of time, with the tiles and the typefaces left unchanged (the stations did have some minor additions to wayfinding

signs and accessibility). The stations had a more spartan, utilitarian look compared to the 1954 Yonge Subway stations.



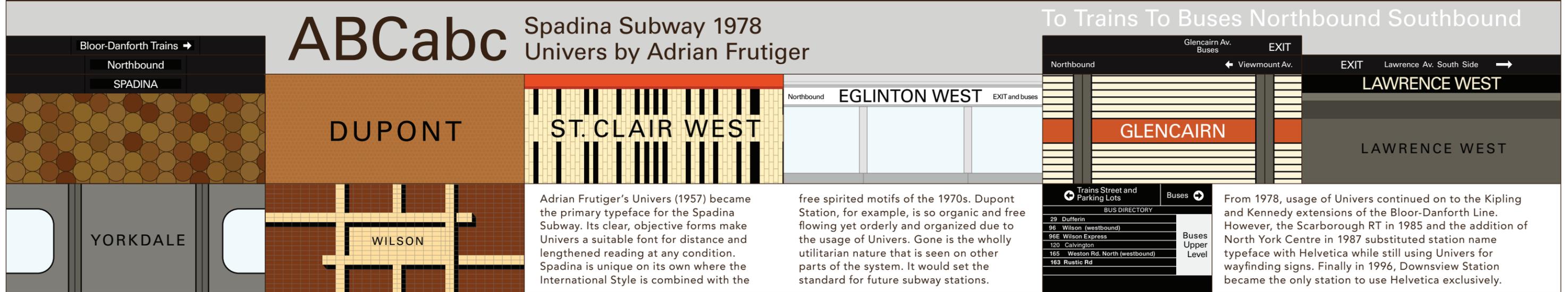
# 1973-74

NORTH YONGE EXTENSION  
EGLINTON TO FINCH

Four new stations were built to extend the subway northward to the suburbs. The Toronto Subway typeface is still used for the

station titles and wayfinding signs, despite the different architectural style of the tiles. Sheppard station was renovated extensively

but unlike the 1954 Yonge stations, the typefaces were left intact, and newer signs based on Helvetica were added.



# 1978

SPADINA SUBWAY

The Spadina Subway was architecturally unique on its own; for the first time, artwork became an integral part of its overall design.

The main typeface used was strictly Univers, though Helvetica has found its way through some of the signs. There is little or no

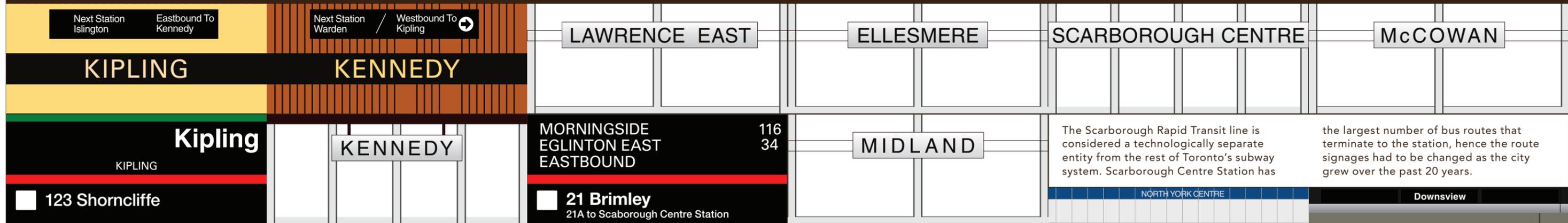
evidence of usage of the Toronto Subway font, presumably to keep a consistent 1970s contemporary style throughout the line.

# 1980-85 KIPLING/KENNEDY EXTENSION SCARBOROUGH RT

The subway went deeper into Etobicoke and Scarborough with the Kipling/Kennedy extensions; both stations used mostly Univers

and later Helvetica for signs. The Scarborough Rapid Transit (RT), which opened in 1985, began to use Helvetica for station

names and some signs. A progression towards the use of Helvetica is emerging for future rapid transit expansions in the city.



North York Centre was a long proposed station that was originally to be built with the North Yonge extension of 1974; had it been built beforehand, it would have the

same architecture and typeface styles used on the other four North Yonge stations. Downsview Station, on the other hand, was a small step in a northern Spadina Subway

expansion. Its aviation theme is based on the fact that the station is near a former air force base. The huge vaulted platform remind passengers of aircraft hangars,

while the glass and aluminum bus terminal give an airy non-claustrophobic waiting area. It is a station that must be visited and appreciated for all its aesthetic beauty.

The Scarborough Rapid Transit line is considered a technologically separate entity from the rest of Toronto's subway system. Scarborough Centre Station has

the largest number of bus routes that terminate to the station, hence the route signages had to be changed as the city grew over the past 20 years.

NORTH YORK CENTRE

Downsview

# 1987-96 NORTH YORK CENTRE & DOWNSVIEW STATIONS

North York Centre Station was built on existing subway tunnels between Sheppard and Finch stations in 1987, while Downsview

extended the Spadina Subway further north. Similar to the Scarborough RT, North York Centre uses Helvetica for its station name and

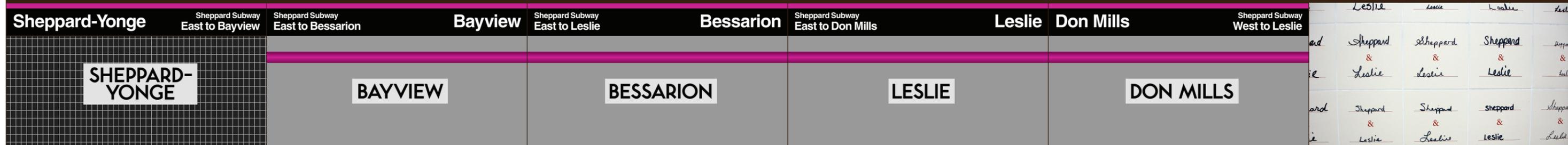
Univers for all signs. Downsview Station uses Helvetica exclusively, a significant departure from the rest of the Spadina Subway.

# 2002 SHEPPARD SUBWAY

The Sheppard Subway is the 21st century counterpart of the Spadina Subway with cues from the past - the Toronto Subway font has

found its way back to the station names, while Helvetica is used exclusively for wayfinding signs and informational material. A station

worth noting is Leslie; 17,000 tiles are installed in the station's interior, which bear the handwritten words "Sheppard & Leslie."



The Typographical Timeline of the Toronto Transit Commission Subway System.

Sources Used:  
 Transit Toronto - An Essay on Subway Design by Mark Brader  
<http://transit.toronto.on.ca/subway/5009.shtml>  
 City of Toronto Archives  
<http://www.toronto.ca/archives>  
 St. George Pilot Project by Paul Arthur  
<http://www.joeclark.org/ttc.html>  
 TTC Subway Photos by Craig James White  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/castelmar/sets/1169190/>  
 Toronto Subway Station Tiles by John Chew and Justin Bur  
<http://www.posifit.com/ttc/colour.html>

The 5 stations of the Sheppard Subway emphasized art work on tiles installed almost everywhere except the walls next to the train tracks, presumably to save on maintenance costs. These illustrations show how on track level, passengers are greeted with the station name on concrete.

The Sheppard Subway takes into context the impact of transit to the communities it serves as well as radical ideas in expressing creativity in a communal manner as public transit becomes effective public space. Unlike the Spadina Subway, Sheppard invites passengers to create a connection between them and the artwork.

One must visit Leslie Station to appreciate a kind of typography that no machine can replicate - the human hand and its handwritten typeface.

*Ampersand* by Micah Lexier consists of 3,400 different handwriting samples, each of which have been reproduced in a quantity of five to create the 17,000 tiles that cover the walls of Leslie Station. The handwritten samples were collected during the spring of 1997 from across Toronto. The title *Ampersand* takes its name from the 'and' symbol linking the names of the street intersection where the subway is located, "Sheppard & Leslie."

As we have seen in this timeline, each typeface has given an extended personality that makes each set of stations unique. The Toronto Subway face gave the 1954 Yonge Subway modernist practicality that simply ties to the one purpose of these spaces as subway stations and termini.

Through handwriting, human personalities are put into public space where one can't help but speculate when looking at each and every tile the writer's gender, age, or occupation. Passengers are usually isolated from each other when commuting, but when one waits for the train and looks at the tiles it is as if they're part of a crowd.

At the same time, when one compares the cut faces on glass tiles at Eglinton Station to the 3,400 handwritten tiles at Leslie Station, one realizes the significance of how the latter creates the human spirit through handwritten type as opposed to mass produced geometric type.

The variations are immense, and with the tiles installed everywhere, the stations become more humanistic than utilitarian. Every tile speaks to the passenger in its own unique way, instead of Helvetica or Univers speaking to them in a monotone fashion. Wayfinding signages are set in Helvetica, but the tiles overpower it.



Detail of Leslie Station handwritten tiles.