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MTA ropes in Grinch to teach courtesy

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There may be no A train to Whoville, but that's not stopping the Grinch from telling subway riders to be kind.

New York City Transit partnered with Dr. Seuss' beloved character The Grinch, who is currently appearing on Broadway, to remind riders to be "civilized" during the hectic holiday shopping season.

"Hey! What's all the shoving? Where were you raised? Try a little tenderness -- You'll be amazed. When the doors open up, Let the passengers through -- Listen, If I can be civilized, Then so can you!" the Grinch admonishes in one ad that is dotting subway stations.

The Grinch, after all, eventually learned the true meaning of Christmas and is the perfect spokesman to keep riders focused on civility during the often stressful season, TA execs say.

"We're happy that the Grinch was able to take some time out from stealing Christmas," quipped Lawrence Reuter, president of New York City Transit.

The ads went up last week and will come down early next year. In addition, to telling folks to move from the subway doors, two different bus ads remind people to offer their seats "to someone who's really in need" and to take off their backpacks.

"We thought it was different and fun and I don't think anyone will be offended by the messages. The Grinch is the Grinch," said Paul Fleuranges, spokesman for New York City Transit. "They are messages we would like people to heed."

Timothy Mason, who wrote the lyrics for "How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical," provided the three transit rhymes.

"The Grinch campaign is a great idea. It says gently and slightly tongue-in-cheek about what needs to be said," said Samantha von Sperling, an etiquette expert and director of the downtown firm Social Image Consultants.

"People can be extra rude during the holidays. They've been in crowded stores, they are cold, tired, stressed out and financially drained from the holiday shopping. They've been pushed and prodded and oversold and over-jingled."

Von Sperling agrees with the Grinch that riders need to be generous with their seats.

"If you are a man, you stand for a woman, particularly pregnant women carrying holiday shopping," she said. "You have no idea what I witnessed this week."

The Grinch courtesy ads, the brainchild of Chantal St. Louis, New York City Transit's promotions director, came at no cost the agency. Instead, the bottom of each ad has a plug for the musical with ticketing info.

Also, riders can get a free \$10 MetroCard with the purchases of "How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical." Just mention the code "Metro."

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