

THE TWENTIES *IN* New York City Subway Posters

The New York City subway has taken its place as an icon of Americana—and for subway riders of the 1920s, the company posters displayed in the subway cars and elevated trains became iconic in themselves. Today the “Subway Sun” and the “Elevated Express” offer a unique perspective on the period 1918 to 1932, the sixteen-year span of the series.

Presented here are twenty of the 385 21x16” posters produced by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) to encourage ridership after its first competitor, Brooklyn Rapid Transit, opened the first BRT line into Manhattan in 1917. Imagine reading the posters while riding the rumbling crowded subway in New York City in the years from the end of World War I to the beginning of the Great Depression.

- ❑ What major events and issues of the period were highlighted in the posters?
- ❑ How did the posters display prevalent attitudes of the period? How did they reflect a big-city perspective on the “modern age”? a business perspective?
- ❑ In what ways were the posters entertaining as well as informative or promotional?
- ❑ How did the graphic and text design change over the period? How did these changes reflect the period?
- ❑ Do you think the posters were an effective marketing device for the IRT? Why?
- ❑ Combine the subway posters with other single-source collections in *Becoming Modern, Theme I: THE AGE*, e.g., from another New York City source (*New Yorker* cartoons) or from another large city source (*Chicago Tribune* political cartoons). What unique insights can be gained by studying single-source collections from a period? What limits do they present?

Notes:

- “L”: elevated train.
- Brooklyn strike (Sept. 1920 poster): The August 1920 BRT transit workers’ strike was one of many postwar strikes for better wages and working conditions.
- Defense Test Day (Sept. 1924 poster): national radio broadcast by the federal government in 1924 and 1925 to demonstrate the nation’s defense preparedness.
- Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee [of New York] (1932 poster): city agency created to raise private donations for worker relief; initiated as part of Pres. Hoover’s campaign to stimulate volunteer aid for the unemployed.



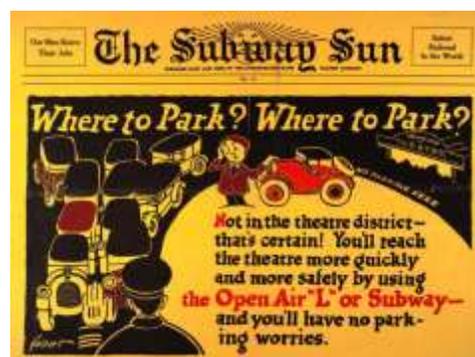
1920



1920



1924



ca. 1924

The Subway Sun "The Safest Railroad in the World"

Published occasionally by the INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

VOLUME 1 SEPTEMBER 27, 1918 NUMBER 3

Shuttle Service in Operation

The shuttle service from Times Square to the Grand Central Station will be placed in operation at 6 A. M., Saturday, Sept. 28th.

Whenever possible avoid changing to the shuttle.

To Prevent the Spread of

SPANISH INFLUENZA

sneeze, cough or expectorate [if you must] in your handkerchief.

You are in no danger if everyone heeds this warning.

By order of Board of Health
ROYAL S. COPELAND, President

The direct route will save you time.

Theodor P. Shouts
President

September 27, 1918

The Subway Sun World's Safest Railroad

Published now and then by the INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

VOLUME 1 NOVEMBER 25, 1918 NUMBER 9

A Job and a Welcome to Our Men

2,426 Interborough men are in Uncle Sam's service. When they come home they will find not only a hearty welcome-- but their jobs.

And our more recent employes will also be retained. The war so reduced our forces that there will



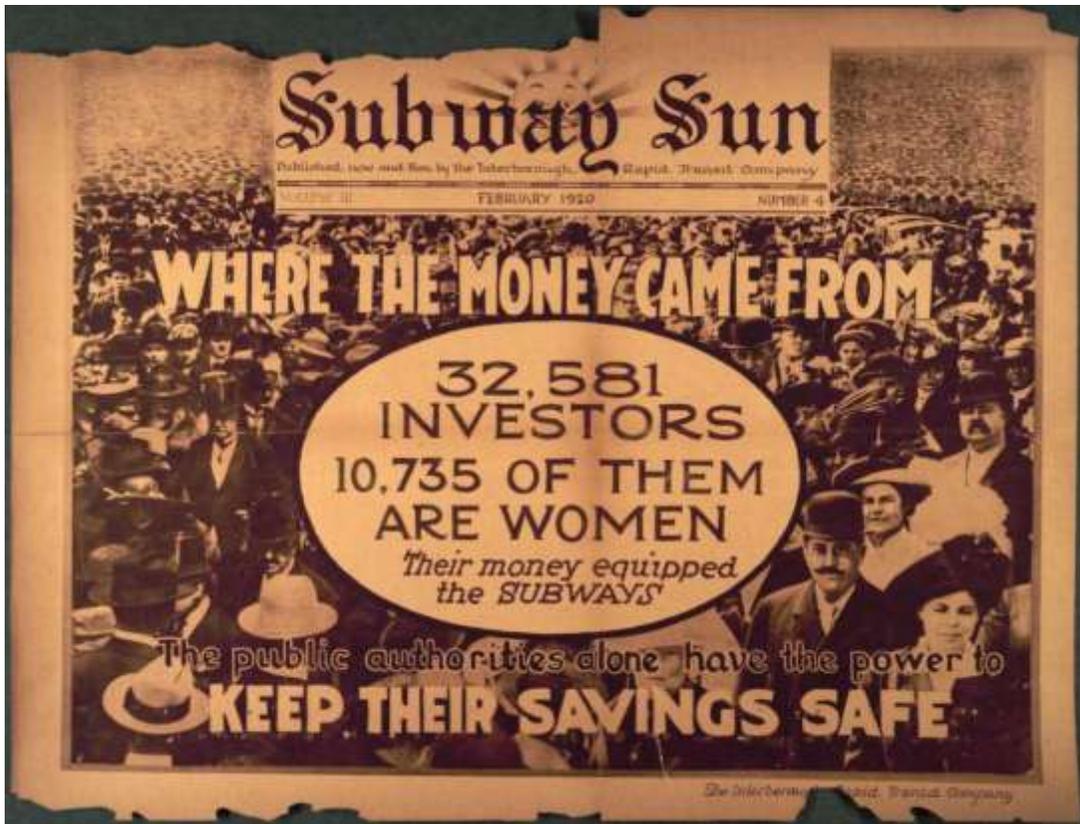
be work for men old and new,--even more.

Thanks to the women, it has been possible to keep up this service during the war; and we shall need them even after our men return.

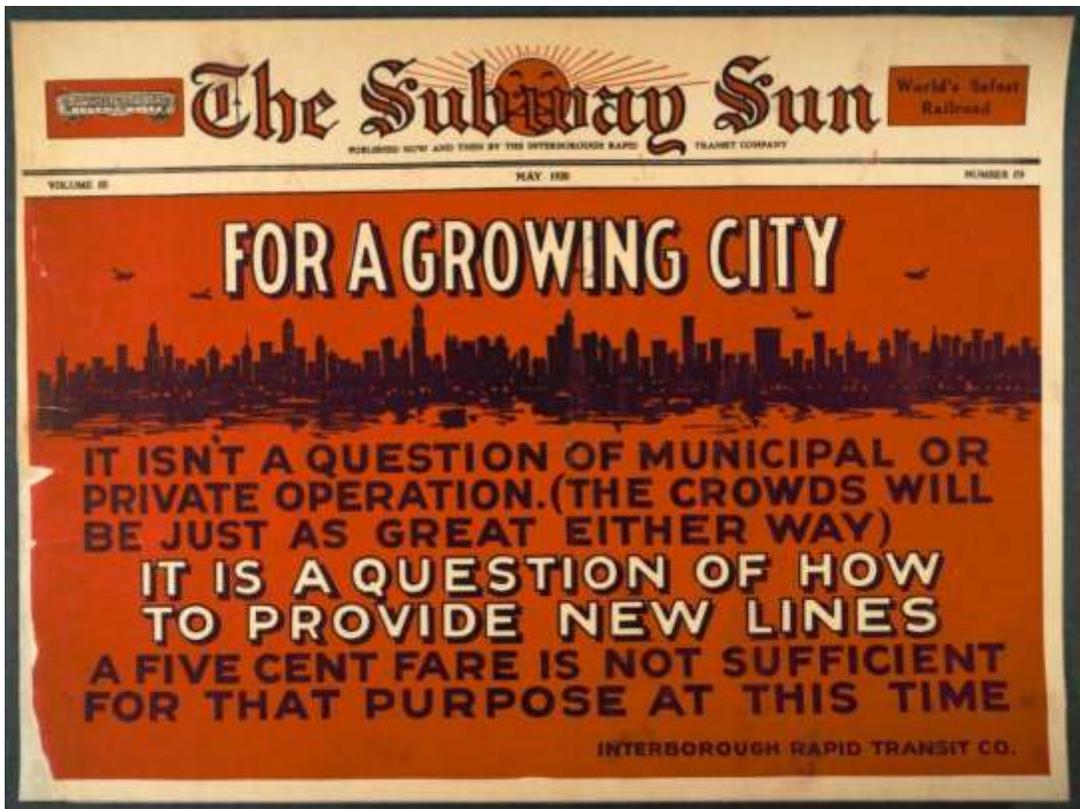
We believe the great riding public appreciates their service as fully as we do.

INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY
Theodor P. Shouts
President

November 25, 1918



February 1920



May 1920

 **The Subway Sun** World's Safest Railroad

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAILROAD TRANSIT COMPANY

VOLUME 10 AUGUST, 1920 NUMBER 32

From The New York World, August 2, 1920

68 KILLED, 632 INJURED, BY AUTOS IN CITY LAST MONTH

List Compiled by Medical Examiner Shows Thirty-Nine of the Dead Were Children Under Age of Thirteen—Fatalities in June Numbered Ninety-Two.

Death list in city for first seven months this year.....	378
Included in the seven months' list were children under thirteen years	194
The June death record in this city	92
Killed last month	68
Killed in State in last five years	4,685
Killed in this city in same period	3,525

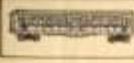
Sixty-eight persons were killed and 632 others were injured by automobiles in New York month. In June, ninety killed.

Included in the July thirty-nine children over the age of the June forty-three mentioned were Charles N. der, ...

More Street Traffic - More Danger /
 More Subways - Streets Safer /
THINK IT OVER!

Interborough Rapid Transit Company.

August 1920

 **The Subway Sun** World's Safest Railroad

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAILROAD TRANSIT COMPANY

VOLUME 10 SEPTEMBER, 1920 NUMBER 35

THANK YOU!

To The Public - The Brooklyn strike brought much discomfort and trial to our patrons, but they bore it all with patience and consideration.

To Our Men And The Police - To you the strike brought extra long hours and harder work. We wish to express our sincerest appreciation and thanks to the public, the police and our men.

Interborough Rapid Transit Company

September 1920

Going In



Going Out



Elevated Express

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT CO.

VOLUME IV DECEMBER, 1921 NUMBER 40

These two pictures were taken from opposite sides of the same gate.

Plenty of Gates at Every Station

The new FEATHER-WEIGHT PRESSURE GATES make handling of crowds easier. At all Subway Stations now using them the crowding is less and no standing in line for tickets.

Every gate is for either entry or exit.

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.

December 1921

OUTINGS IN NEW YORK No 1

Interborough **The Elevated Express** Always Dependable

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

VOLUME V JUNE, 1922 NUMBER 31

WHY COUNTRY BOYS ARE STRONG

Nearly all our great men were country boys. Sunshine and open air gave them strength.

Every New York child can get a bit of real country life for the next five months in our great parks.

Build up the Babies! No need to spend large sums for railroad fare. The Interborough lines take you to any one of five of the largest and most beautiful Parks in the World for a nickel.

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.

June 1922

OUR WONDERFUL CITY NO.1 BOOST NEW YORK

Our Men KNOW Their Jobs

Elevated Express
Published now and then by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company

Always Dependable

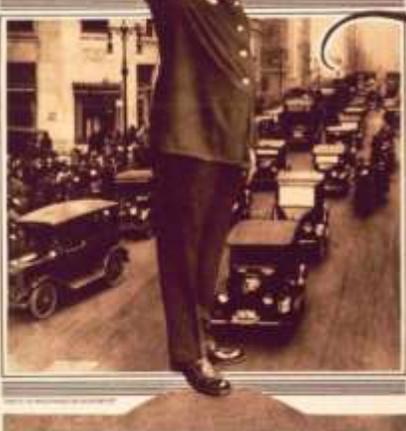
VOLUME VI APRIL NUMBER 12

Boost Her Police

They deserve it. They protect us day and night. They make about 27,000 arrests yearly. But that is only a small part of their work

For example, they regulate daily traffic for nearly half a million motor vehicles.

Interborough Rapid Transit Co.



E. C. Boring, Inc. N. Y.

ca. April 1923

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun
PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAILROAD TRANSIT COMPANY

Safest Railroad In the World

No. 25

A Word from President Coolidge

“Nearly every city is making large appropriations for parks and play grounds.

“Get the children out of the alleys and off the streets into open places.

“Teach them true sportsmanship, right living and the love of being square.”

—PRESIDENT COOLIDGE, in an address before the National Conference on Outdoor Life at Washington, May 21, 1924.

Any Interborough Line Will Take You To The Parks and Other Outing Spots



ca. June 1924

RIDE ON THE ELEVATED AND SUBWAY

Our Men Know
Their Jobs



The Subway Sun

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

No. 28

Safest
Railroad
In the World

To Every Boy and Girl



The
End
of a
Glor-
ious
Day

This picture is especially for you. It is a Fourth of July story of Americanism.

★ ★ ★

Boys and girls can make holiday travel safer and more comfortable by not shoving or rushing.

INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

ca. July 1924

Our Men Know
Their Jobs



The Subway Sun

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

No. 144

Safest
Railroad
In the World

DEFENSE TEST DAY

Friday, September 12th.



All conveniently reached by Subway or Elevated ~

A peace time test and demonstration of the organizations and resources that may be brought to the protection of our country.

Meetings of Citizens in all parts of New York.

See Newspapers for Time and Place

September 1924

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun

SAFEST RAILROAD IN THE WORLD

Published Now and Then by the INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

No. 41

Where to Park? Where to Park?

Not in the theatre district—that's certain! You'll reach the theatre more quickly and more safely by using the **Open Air "L" or Subway**—and you'll have no parking worries.

faipert

ca. 1924

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun

SAFEST RAILROAD IN THE WORLD

Published Now and Then by the INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

NUMBER 13A

Keep Cool and Keep Still

THE SUBWAY SUN
THIS CAR IS BUILT OF STEEL
AND CANNOT BURN -
IN CASE OF AN ELECTRICAL
BLOWOUT OR SHORT CIRCUIT
KEEP YOUR SEAT AND QUILT
YOUR NEIGHBOR -
FEAR AND PANIC ARE YOUR
ONLY DANGER.

From The New York Evening Graphic

ca. 1925

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun

Safest Railroad In the World

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAILROAD TRANSIT COMPANY

VOL. 11, No. 14 1928

HORSE CARS vs. RAPID TRANSIT

If the fare was 5 and 6 cents in the old days, IS SEVEN CENTS TOO MUCH NOW?

In New York City street car fares advanced from 5 to 6 cents after the Civil War Except in New York City they have gone up similarly since the World War.



WHY SHOULD NEW YORK'S TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT BE STIFLED BY AN INADEQUATE FARE?

© 1928 BY TRANSIT CO.

1928

Interborough **The Elevated Express** Ride on the Open Air Elevated

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAILROAD TRANSIT COMPANY

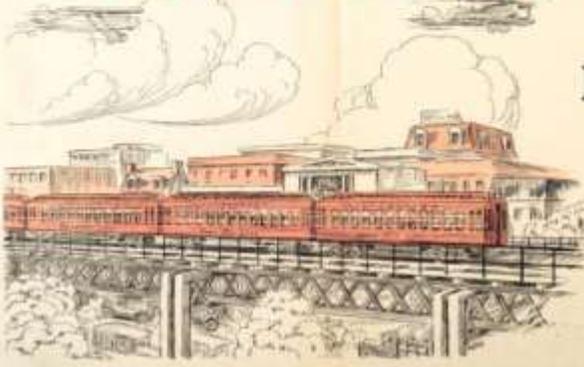
VOL. 12, No. 10 1929




The "L" Is Your Air Line

It has **Regularity**
Speed
Dependability

*Out In the Open -
Away From the Heat
Of the Crowded Streets*



© 1929 BY TRANSIT CO.

1929

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun

Safest Railroad In the World

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

VOL. XIII No. 10 1931



Let's Do What We Can for . . .

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

1931

Our Men Know Their Jobs

The Subway Sun

Safest Railroad In the World

PUBLISHED NOW AND THEN BY THE INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY

VOL. XIII No. 20 1932

Every employed New Yorker is urged to share, promptly and liberally, to provide relief to the thousands in distress... heads of families, lone women, single men, our neighbors... facing the winter with no work and no funds. *The need is far greater than a year ago.*

Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee

MANHATTAN: 70 Pine Street, D1ghy 4-9800 BROOKLYN: 215 Montague Street, TRiangle 5-6377

BRONX: 384 East 149th Street
 QUEENS: 29-27 41st Avenue, Long Island City
 RICHMOND: 30 Bay Street, St. George, S. I.
 HARLEM DIV: 129 West 135th Street

we'll see it through!

SHARING... doesn't hurt like SUFFERING

1932