

SEATTLE-TACOMA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



SINGAPORE AIRLINES BUSINESS CLASS BREAKFAST



AIR CANADA ECONOMY CLASS SNACK BOX



MESKWAKI CASINO, TAMA IA



UNION SQUARE SUBWAY PLATFORM



A SMART IN CAR OUTSIDE STUYVESANT TOWN



THE IKEA WATER TAXI



PRIVATE COMPANIES PAY LOWER FINES FOR PARKING VIOLATIONS



TELEVISION SET



THE HONEYMOONERS



AMERICAN APPAREL STORE IN PARIS



AMERICAN APPAREL RFID TAG

OPEN PLATFORM

Public and private interests are colliding in physical and digital space. Organizational structures that were before infeasible due to logistical constraints are now possible due to technical innovation. Infrastructure that was formerly private has become quasi-public via deregulation; conversely, through sale-leaseback transactions, what was formerly public is now becoming private.

Today, the US Postal Service outsources to FedEx. Verizon operates a de-regulated telecom network; ConEd operates a deregulated electrical grid. The FCC just finished selling segments of the public UHF spectrum to private telecommunication companies. The Internet is managed by thousands of private telecommunications companies, worldwide.

Open standards and technologies make this model of layered ownership and operation possible because they coordinate and standardize; as the ISO makes industrial exchange fluid, the IEEE and ITU enable fluid, Internet-mediated communication.

The history of the Internet provides clues to the future evolution of infrastructure such as the subway: transitioning from government-run public service to a privately-managed, publicly-accessible commodity, the subway will become a market-driven, private/public logistical platform:

The MTA will continue to operate the tracks and signals, but railcars and platforms will become privately owned. The MTA will auction off existing railcars and station assets, using the money raised to pay off existing debt and invest in new rail lines. A limited number of railcars will be transferred to a non-profit charged with operating them on behalf of the public; the so called "public option."

While all trains now consist of multiple railcars, trains in the new system will be "packetized"—broken up to be exactly one railcar long. This lowers the barrier of entry to train purchase, and also makes transport in the system more consistent and resilient to failure or terrorist attack. Even better, new stations can be built cheaply, as the required size of a station will be much smaller.

Because so many different players (new to the industry) will be involved in the system, safety and consistency must be enforced among all operators. An open, standards-based signaling system will dispatch and control all trains in the system to prevent collisions and ensure proper behavior. Any railcar, regardless of manufacturer or owner will be allowed to access the system, as long as it can demonstrate its railcar meets these open standards.

The new signaling system will run in an out-of-band channel on a larger, system-wide fiber optic data-communications network. This data network will provide cheap, ubiquitous Internet connectivity to each railcar via wireless networking technologies, enabling innovation and free data exchange among railcar operators and the world.

Architects and designers will be called upon to participate in the design of this system in a way they couldn't on the Internet. Just as interactive ads became a new business on the Internet, interactive architecture will continue to expand to serve the needs of commercial interests in physical spaces like stations and railcars. Branded railcars and platforms will become commonplace; private companies will rush to increase their "share of voice" in this new advertising market, just as they first did on the Internet.

Publicly-run railcars will continue to exist, but will be subsidized by advertising and the sale of demographic data to large market research firms. Since public railcars will be a limited, high-demand resource, riders will bid to ride on the few public railcars. Riders can submit their bids via their mobile devices; railcars will adjust bidding according to adherence to time tables, or demand (i.e. the amount of people currently in the railcar). This market mechanism will work to artificially inflate the price private railcar operators can charge.

All railcars and platforms must provide service to all riders, but private operators are free to set the price of a ride on their railcar as they please. Private operators may choose to allow riders to claim a subsidy by sharing demographic data about themselves, or by watching advertisements. Privacy and the avoidance of advertising will become a "premium" service one pays for by choosing to ride on "premium cars."