



Pioneer Village Station Art Installation Update

Date: July 10, 2018
To: TTC Board
From: Chief Executive Officer

Summary

Prior to the public opening of Pioneer Village Station, staff elected not to activate the art installation, as previous concerns with respect to the possible misuse of the messaging feature had not been addressed. At the January 2018 Board Meeting, the Board approved not activating the art installation until mitigation features are added to limit the potential for misuse and that there be further consultation with the artists.

The artwork included as part of Pioneer Village Station is entitled “LightSpell” and is an interactive installation consisting of a suspended array of 40 light elements. Each element is made of 16 individually controllable lights and can produce all letters of the alphabet, as well as special characters and numerals from 0 to 9.

Touch-screen keypads are located on the platform level and allow customers to type messages of up to eight characters in length using the letters of the alphabet, special characters or numerals, allowing messages to become visible through the light display.

As designed, installation allows customers on the subway platform to type in any eight-character message that will then be broadly displayed to all other customers and employees on the platform. There is a significant risk that the system could be misused to include hate messages or messages that target and/or discriminate against a specific individual or group of people. Such misuse will undermine the objective of creating a safe and welcoming environment that is free from any form of discrimination or harassment.

In consultation with the artists, five general principles have been agreed upon in order to limit the potential for misuse while also establishing a process to address any misuse.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Approve activating the art installation at Pioneer Village Station upon implementation of the five mitigation principles noted below:
 - a. Displaying terms of use relating to the artwork;

- b. Limits to be placed on the time of day the interactive portion of the artwork is accessible to the public. At certain times at night, based on a reduced volume of customers, the interactive portion of the artwork will not be displayed.
 - c. Safety related words, which list is to be developed, are to be prohibited;
 - d. Inappropriate content contrary to the laws of Canada are to be removed, subject to subsection (e) below.
 - e. An independent third party panel is to be established to evaluate the content removed in accordance with subsection (d) and complaints related to inappropriate content and make recommendations for permanent removal or reinstatement. In order to ensure transparency, all decisions of the third party panel will be publicly available, including potentially through the artwork.
2. Approve the artist to revise the artwork and the artistic software to accommodate the mitigating measures.

Financial Summary

The cost of the potential mitigation features are currently unknown and are dependent on development of the mitigation features described in this report. However, the costs of any mitigation measures are not expected to be significant and funds are available within the capital program.

The cost related to design and construction of the art installation at Pioneer Village Station, which is part of the TYSSE budget, is approximately \$1.9M, which includes approximately \$200,000 paid to the artists for the concept and implementation of the artwork.

The Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial summary information.

Equity/Accessibility Matters

The TTC is committed to providing a work and service environment that is safe and welcoming, and free from any form of discrimination or harassment. The current art installation at Pioneer Village Station provides TTC customers with access to type eight-character messages for public display. The current software, as it exists, contains no filters and allows for potential misuse by the public. The artistic software is to be revised by the artist to address TTC staff concerns with respect to the potential for inappropriate content, including, but not limited to, hate messages or messages that target and/or discriminate against a specific person or group of people, to be displayed.

The recommendation as noted above is that the art installation only be activated when mitigation features are included to greatly reduce the risk of misuse and the potential for discrimination or harassment against TTC customers and employees.

Decision History

In 2009, as part of a competitive procurement, a contract was awarded for the public artwork at Pioneer Village Station to realities: united gmbh, led by artists Jan Edler and Tim Edler.

As part of the TYSSE project, Art Design Review Committees were created for each station, which provided representation relating to the selection of public art at the new stations from the municipalities and relevant stakeholders. The public art for Pioneer Village Station created by realities: united was presented and approved by the Pioneer Village Station Art Design Review Committee (previously referred to as Steeles West Station) in 2009 and 2010. The Pioneer Village Station Art Design Review Committee included representatives from the City of Toronto, City of Vaughan and York University.

At its meeting of February 2, 2011, the Board approved the final design, finishes and artwork for Pioneer Village Station as part of the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension.

http://www.ttc.ca/About_the_TTC/Commission_reports_and_information/Commission_meetings/2011/February_2_2011/Reports/TYSSE_Steeles_West_S.pdf

At its meeting of January 18, 2018, the Board approved not activating the art installation at Pioneer Village until:

- a. Mitigating features can be added to limit the potential for misuse; and
- b. Further consultation with the artist.

Report: [Pioneer Village Station Art Installation](#)

Decision: [Pioneer Village Station Art Installation](#)

Issue Background

As described above, the art installation is an interactive installation consisting of a suspended array of 40 light elements that allows TTC customers to type out eight-character messages on touch-screen computer terminals, which are then broadcast above the station platform. The touch-screen keypads include all of the letters of the alphabet, special characters and numerals 0 to 9.

The typed messages become visible through the light display and remain visible until a new message is typed. The software, which runs the system, was developed by the artists and does not currently contain any filters, pre-approved words, or prohibited words.

From the original development of the art concept, up until the opening of Pioneer Village Station, TTC staff and members of the public raised concerns with the artists relating to the potential misuse of the artwork (messaging system). TTC concerns are largely focused on customers using the system to type and display inappropriate content,

including potential hate messaging or messaging that targets a specific person or group of people.

The TTC strives to ensure that its transit system is a safe and welcoming environment, and concerns remain that without any mitigation features that potentially restrict content on what a customer can publicly type and display, that this goal is undermined.

Over the last several years, TYSSE staff have repeatedly raised concerns with the artists and believed that some mitigation feature (e.g. filter) was going to be included in the software. It was not until just prior to commissioning of the artwork that the TTC learned that the software did not include any mitigation features to limit the potential misuse of the system.

Prior to the public opening of Pioneer Village Station, TTC staff decided not to activate the art installation as previous concerns with respect to the possible misuse of the messaging feature had not been addressed. This decision was reinforced by the board at the January 2018 meeting, at which time the board requested that mitigation factors be added to limit the potential for misuse and that further consultation with the artist be undertaken.

Comments

Subsequent to the request of the Board to consult with the artist, the TTC has had a number of conference calls with the artist to come to a consensus on the best means to manage any misuse of the artwork.

It was agreed that there is potential for misuse of the artwork by the public and that the public could be offended by particular content that might be posted. Similarly, the artwork could be used in a manner which contravenes existing laws and statutes and that mitigating measures are required.

The following mitigating measures are proposed:

- 1) Terms of use will be prominently placed describing how the artwork is to be properly used.
- 2) Limits will be placed on the time of day the artwork is accessible to the public. At certain times at night, based on a reduced volume of customers, the interactive portion of the artwork will not display the inputted data.
- 3) Words that compromise safety will be prohibited. Words that could incite panic or cause harm to passengers will be prohibited from being displayed. This list will be maintained and updated by TTC.
- 4) The TTC is to have the ability to remove content that is determined to be contrary to the laws of Canada. Based on complaints received from the public, the TTC would have a means to immediately remove or quarantine content that is deemed to be contrary to Canadian laws. This content would be reviewed by a third party panel to

determine if it should be removed permanently or allowed to be reinstated for use by the public.

- 5) A working panel will be established with the necessary experience to evaluate inappropriate content that has been quarantined and make recommendations for permanent removal or reinstatement. All decisions of the third-party panel will be publicly available.

Contact

Ian Trites, Facility Co-ordinator, Architectural
416-590-6596
Ian.Trites@ttc.ca

Signature

Richard J. Leary
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)