

Cow camouflage or Pepto pink, city's busvertisements grab the eye

I was driving down Lake Otis the other day when I saw Bart Simpson in my rearview mirror.

"nam ,woc a evah t'noD" Bart said.

Too late, Bart. The city transit system already has one.

Perhaps you've seen Bart, Homer, Marge, Lisa and Maggie riding around town on The People Mover. The local Fox affiliate, Channel 4, is taking advantage of the transit system's latest marketing idea to advertise the popular prime-time cartoon show.

They've turned a bus into a giant rolling billboard.

How did this happen?

"We have some buses that were purchased in 1982 and '83 and we've had some deterioration of the frame of the bus," Transit Director Dan Titus said. "We take a lot of

the skin off and do the framework and we put the skin back on and it needs to be painted anyway."

At this point, maintenance turns into commerce. The transit system leases the bus — actually, the advertising space on the bus, which amounts to everything but the undercarriage — for \$7,500 a year, two-year lease with an option on the third.

"We paint the base coat," Titus said, "and they go out and find someone to do the design on the bus."

So far, no honest-to-God money has changed hands. "They" have been limited to organizations that can offer advertising space of their own in return, in an arrangement known as a trade-out.

"KTBY Channel 4 has the Simpsons," Titus said. "KTVA Channel 11 has a blue bus that they've painted the CBS eye and their logo on the side of it. The Pilots baseball team has a bus. We have a Matanuska Maid bus called The Mooover. And then the two Power 102 buses."

The lease seems to come complete with an artistic license. The Mat Maid bus, which

came stampeding by me on Northern Lights last week, is painted in black and white patches. I'm sure everybody from Wisconsin could immediately identify it as a Halsey or a Guernstein. They could probably even tell you what kind of cheese the thing gives. But it looked like cow camouflage to me.

The Power 102 buses are basic black, but they've got the station's message emblazoned in one of those neon colors that teen-agers favor. Hey, if it's too bright, you're too old. It's either pink or orange; I've never looked directly at it. Who wants Power 102 burned into his retinas?

But the Simpson's bus is the absolute traffic stopper. Dan Titus, just what would you call that background color?

"Pepto-Bismol pink," Titus said.

So far, the repair schedule and the trade-out policy have limited the number of busvertisements rolling along our streets. But Titus says he's reached his goal of having 10 percent of his buses doing trade-out business. The next bus that gets its frame fixed is going for real money, and so are all the rest.



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doogan**

I'm not sure this is a good idea. Everybody seems to be into government finding new sources of revenue, and as a general principle that's fine. But do you want to see a giant can of feminine hygiene spray whizzing along Fifth Avenue? Since part of the deal is that the transit system runs the ad buses in a different part of town each day, you could have a really big tube of Preparation H in your neighborhood soon.

Or worse. It's an election year. Just how big do you think they could make John Lindauer's face on one of those things? Makes your blood run cold, doesn't it?

What they've got already is bad enough. I was so busy noticing the Simpsons bus I nearly shot the light at 36th. It's a real eye-grabber.

"People have told me that," Titus said. "And I say, 'That's great, at least you noticed a bus.'"

Kind of hard not to, dude.

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