

Adam Giambrone

Toronto City Council & Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto, Canada



Speaker Qualifications

Adam Giambrone is an elected member of Toronto City Council and Chair of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). He was first appointed to the TTC in 2003, and served as Vice-Chair before being selected as Chair in 2006. The TTC is an agency of the City of Toronto and has sole rights to the provision of public transit within its boundaries, operating subways, streetcars, light rail transit (LRT) and buses.

Giambrone is also an advocate for sharing of information and best practices in the public transit industry at home and abroad, studying systems across Canada and the world, and participating in international forums.

The Toronto Transit Commission's e-Communication Initiatives

In the past, transit riders were content to just get to their destination in a timely fashion. Today, transit riders also want access to more information about transit operations than ever before and they want this information to be available in multiple formats so they can choose a method to get the information that's most convenient to them. They want real-time information about the locations of every vehicle and about every transit delay so they can make split-second decisions about the best route and best mode of transport to get them to their destination. And they want to be able to use electronic communications to engage directly with their transit providers.

For the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), responding to these new expectations from our passengers has required this large public agency to go through a major rethink of how we operate and how we interact with our customers. The result has been the ongoing roll-out of an aggressive e-communications strategy and thinking about how to better integrate e-communications into all aspects of our daily operations. Our philosophy has been to provide the means for people to be able to customise their information requests, what information they receive, as well as the method by which they obtain information and interact with us.

Like many other transit properties, we have recently implemented a "Next Vehicle" information and an email alerts system for our subway network. This year we are also introducing "Next Vehicle" information by text message to all of our surface stops and expanding the e-alert system to include all bus/tram routes and elevator/escalator outages. The system is supplemented with LED/LCD screens at subway stations and some surface stops. By the end of 2011, the "Next Vehicle" system will have been fully integrated with all 11,000 of our bus, tram, LRT and subway stops.

Our web strategy began with a revamped website and a new web based trip planner. Our design avoided flashy visuals in favour of accessibility and functionality. For example, our website is compatible with computer programs that allow information to be read out loud to our visually impaired customers. Our website and trip planner are also compatible with standard cell phone formats to allow people to access the information while on the go. We have also worked on making our web tools interactive, such as the mystreetcar.ca project which allowed the public to view and provide feedback on the design for our new streetcar fleet. We are currently working on integrating web 2.0 concepts with our information systems through our "open data" project which will make all our web applications and system information, such as vehicle GPS data, available in a standard open-source code format. This will allow riders to design their own "apps" for their cell phones and computers to further customize the information based on their needs and personal preferences.

Finally, we've also aggressively pursued a communications strategy that involves using social media like Twitter and Facebook. The Toronto market has one of the highest rates of use of both of these social media programs in the world. Not only do these tools give us another method to get up to the minute information out to our customers, they also are providing new ways for us to engage directly with our riders and them with us and to help build public support for our transit initiatives.