

Rename LeBreton transit station 'Pimisi' to honour Algonquins, OC Transpo advises

BY DAVID REEVELY, OTTAWA CITIZEN AUGUST 14, 2013



Proposed colour scheme for Ottawa light-rail trains as submitted in a package of advice to the city's transit commission.

Photograph by: Handout photo, City of Ottawa

OTTAWA — The new light-rail station at LeBreton Flats should be called Pimisi Transit Station, OC Transpo advises, in recognition of the area's Algonquin history.

The recommendation is in a package of advice to the city's transit commission, which is to vote on the name next Wednesday. The LeBreton station has been imagined as a showcase of Algonquin art and culture, a nod to the natives who populated the Ottawa area before Europeans arrived.

Pimisi is the Algonquin word for eel, a creature that thrived in the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers and their tributaries and was seen as sacred because of the long distances it travelled and its ability to live in both fresh and salt water. But according to the Algonquins of Ontario, eel populations crashed in the middle of the last century as hydro dams up and down the river blocked their migration routes. Besides recognizing that history, the name could provide a boost to ongoing Algonquin efforts to restore eels to the river and add ladders at dams so the eels could spawn again.

"It is not lost on the Algonquin people that the survival of Pimisi is also an apt metaphor for the survival and rebuilding of the Algonquin Nation," says a letter included in the report, from the Algonquins of Ontario's executive director, former city councillor Janet Stavinga.

The transit commission is also to consider a handful of other new station names, which OC Transpo presented for public consultations earlier in the summer. The first phase of rail construction involves converting existing Transitway stations between Tunney's Pasture and Blair to become rail stations, and most would keep their names, but Campus station would become uOttawa and Train station

would become Tremblay, with a subtitle indicating it's the stop for the Via Rail station.

New underground stations would be called Lyon, (a change from the proposed "Kent" that better reflects the station entrance locations), Parliament and Rideau — ByWard Market."

OC Transpo has nixed the idea of renaming its Tunney's Pasture station to simply Tunney's. That would be snappier but confusing to newcomers. "[W]ithout a more compelling reason to change the name besides shortening it and reflecting the more colloquial usage, the status quo is more appropriate," the report to the commission says.

The report also includes a proposed paint job for the new trains the city is buying from rail supplier Alstom, a modernized version of the red-and-white colour scheme featured on OC Transpo's buses. Most of the paint would be white, with additional features added with decals, the report says, which are cheaper to maintain and replace than a complicated multi-coloured paint scheme.

"Nothing on the new trains will appear dated in future decades, as the city and transit service grow and evolve," the report promises.

The new rail system is under construction and is due to open in 2018. Transit general manager John Manconi says the station names have to be decided early so they can be programmed into numerous computer systems as they're installed during construction.

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