

# Final interior design of new Metro trains is officially unveiled by Nexus

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The final interior design of the North East's new Metro fleet has been revealed following one of the most far-reaching public consultations the global rail industry has seen.

Nexus, the public body which owns and manages Metro, has finalised the design options after an unprecedented 23,000 responses from customers, employees and specialist user groups.

The consultation, delivered using interactive online platforms and augmented virtual reality workshops, has resulted in comprehensive improvements and option selection compared to the original design, including extra seats being added, as well as final decisions on the look and feel of doors, handholds, wheelchair spaces, cycle storage, seat fabric, internal artwork and branding.

The completed design – with its new open-plan and linear seating layout – meets rail industry standards for safety and accessibility and is aimed at transforming the journey experience. This has been achieved alongside an attractive look and feel true to Metro's iconic brand heritage.

Stadler, the Swiss train manufacturing company, will start production in August. The first new trains will

enter passenger service in 2023, delivering a step-change in quality and reliability.

Metro Development Director, Neil Blagburn, said: “We’re really excited to reveal the final interior design for the new Metro train fleet.

“We’ve listened to the views of thousands of people during the consultation process and we have acted on that feedback by making changes to a range of the interior features.

“We have added 12 more tip-seats seats to the carriages, a more bespoke space for wheelchairs, and double grab poles. The poles and handrails will all be in the distinctive yellow Metro colour scheme.

“The seats will be made from a hard-wearing material and will have a sleek grey colour. They were designed by our very own in-house team and they will incorporate the iconic ‘M’ logo in the Calvert font that we use on all Metro signage.

“Lockdown meant that the entire consultation process had to be done differently, and an array of online tools were used capture a record number of responses for what is the biggest project since the Metro opened 40 years ago. Stadler said it was the most far-reaching customer consultation they had ever known.

“Now that the interior designs are finalised the next step will be Stadler starting to build the new trains. This process is scheduled to begin in August.

“It’s another step on the road towards the new Metro fleet. When the new trains start entering service it will mark the start of a bright new future for the Tyne and Wear Metro.”

The consultation process saw Nexus bring in OpenLab, the digital research team at Newcastle University, to build an interactive website providing a huge level of detail and choice provided through Stadler’s Zurich-based design team.

The website was a base for a programme of virtual events – large-scale webinars complemented by deeper online meetings with specialist users. This led to over 23,000 public responses.

The final interior design of the new trains will include:

An open-plan layout based on linear seating with stand-back areas at each door to aid circulation and create more room for passengers at busy times. The number of seats rises from 104 to 116 through the introduction of 12 tip seats in each train.

Four dedicated wheelchair spaces, matching the quantity in the current fleet, plus two multi-use areas suitable for non-folding bicycles, children’s buggies and luggage. These areas have tip seats to provide flexible space for different customer needs through the day.

A sliding step at each door to aid boarding and alighting.

Digital information screens at key locations throughout the carriage, in addition to central 'strip' screens with 'next stop' text and audio facilities. The screens will be visible from 90% of all seats and 100% of priority seats.

Feedback from the public has led to changes to some of the key features, including an increase in the number of seats from 104 to 116, by adding 12 new tip seats to the carriage design.

There was strong customer feedback requesting more seats, taking the design closer to the 128 seats available on the current trains. With 116 seats there will be a net increase of 56 seats per hour when frequency increases from five to six trains per hour through the Metro Flow project.

Areas where the public consultation process has led to design changes:

**Handrails in wheelchair areas:** The draft design featured cushioned perch positions along the walls behind the wheelchair areas. This has been changed to a horizontal handrail based on feedback from wheelchair users

**Wall finishings:** The colour of wall panels was lightened to provide greater contrast with floors, at the suggestion of Metro customer service staff.

**Double grab poles:** A double pole with two parallel vertical bars at hand height was the preferred option with passengers from three alternatives offered at consultation.

**Seat and divider decal:** A final pattern for seat coverings and glass divider decals incorporating the iconic 'M' logo was created by the Nexus Graphic Design team, based on consultation feedback.

**Colouring of floor markings:** Floor markings for wheelchair and multi-use spaces have been changed from white to yellow based on feedback, to provide greater visibility.

**Colour differentiation between poles and doors:** Customer consultation showed a preference for yellow grab poles, which will stand out visually and provide consistency with the current fleet, which is important for the visually impaired. In order to create contrast the internal face of the doors will be grey, augmented by lights and audio aids during opening and closing.

Stadler is building a total of 42 new Metro trains for Nexus, which will be delivered up to 2024. They will be responsible for servicing and maintaining these trains for 35 years, underscoring their commitment to the regional economy.

The trains, which will be 15 times more reliable and will cut energy consumption by 30%, will have modern features including improved internet connectivity, charging points, air conditioning and a step-change in accessibility.

Among new features will be an automatic sliding step at every door of the new trains, making travel easier for Metro's 50,000 wheelchair passengers as well as people with children's buggies, luggage or bicycles.

Stadler is also building a new £70m Metro depot at Gosforth as part of the new fleet project.

Find out more at [www.nexus.org.uk/newmetrotrains](http://www.nexus.org.uk/newmetrotrains)

*Photo credit: Nexus*