

Taking the guesswork out of interior design

By Steve Hirano, Editor

When transit properties specify the fabric for the seating on their buses, do they really know what the end product will look like? Only if it's their standard color and design. If they want to try something a little different, they have to use their imagination about the aesthetic outcome, don't they?

Not any more. **BusTex Corp.**, a start-up company in Denver, designed Web-based software that will allow bus buyers to get a digitized view of the interior of a vehicle with any combination of fabric designs and pole colors (see screenshots).

No design sense?

"A lot of people in transit don't have a clue when it comes to interior design," says **Pauline Booth**, BusTex's president. She believes her previewing system will encourage greater use of bold patterns and colors in seating fabric. "We want to encourage people to go for something different," she says, "instead of all these institutional colors like gray, which makes people feel like they're cattle being herded around."

Booth stumbled somewhat accidentally onto the idea of previewing bus interiors. Her foray into transit began as an agent for British fabric manufacturer **Furtext**, in Yorkshire, England. "I thought it would be cool to show the customer what the fabric would look like on the bus," she says.

A few years ago, she took a photo of the interior of a **Chance Coach Opus** ordered by **Long Beach Transit** in California and used some computerized cutting and pasting to show the interior decked out in a variety of fabrics. "It



Transit authorities can preview their fabric selections for bus seating by clicking on various combinations of fabric patterns and pole colors. Eventually, BusTex Corp. plans to offer previewable flooring and sidewall designs and colors.

certainly takes a lot of the guesswork out of choosing fabrics," she says.

Jim Ditch, director of maintenance and facilities at Long Beach Transit, says the ability to preview the fabric on the seats is a great advantage, especially for transit people who don't have strong interior design sensibilities.

"We want to attract ridership with appealing interiors, but we rely on people who may or may not have good taste," Ditch says. "If we could have a digital photo of what the interior will look like, we can show the results to the transit board and everyone else."

The key, Ditch adds, will be providing transit properties with a limited number of tasteful options. "I don't know how many different fabrics

there are, probably thousands," he says. "We need someone to limit the options to three or four." At that point, BusTex's user-friendly point-and-click software will make the design process "kinda fun," he says.

Interest is growing

Booth says transit properties have shown interest in the Furtext fabrics as well as the computerized previewing. "I've even been asked if I could apply the same technique to the *outside* of the bus," she says. For now, she's focusing on the interior — not just the seating and poles, but the sidewalls and flooring as well. BusTex offers a comprehensive interior design package for the transit industry, she says.

To test the preview software, visit www.bustexcorp.com.