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## The Great Metro Experiment Still Works

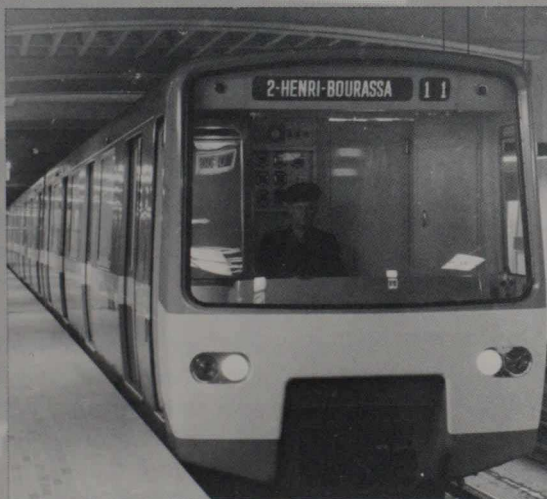
[Observations by T. V. Kelly, co-author of *Transit For the 70's*,  
special report by the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies]

The city of Montreal has three million people, a mean winter temperature of 26°, an average annual snow fall of 120 inches and a Metro.

It has been called the "First 20th Century City in North America," a phrase that is in one sense too flattering. It suggests that Montreal and its citizens have solved the many-faceted problems which were planted when cities took modern form

in the 19th century. Montreal has many urban problems, some in grievous form, but the Metro and its associated structures have offered solutions for some and at least hope that others can be solved. The core problem of the cities is, of course, the fact that their downtowns are decaying. Montreal was decaying. It is no longer.

It is possible now to move around downtown Montreal swiftly and comfortably and safely and to do so in a constantly pleasant environment. The Metro and the building complexes which rise from its principal stations make it possible to use the downtown part of the city as easily in February as in August. They have made it an underground metropolis where it is possible to live in the middle of a major city without ever feeling the cold wind or fearing the onslaught of a robber. It reflects, in the phrase of a visitor, Michael Harris of the San Francisco Chronicle, "a city in love with itself." The city paid for the Metro, and it continues to pay when there is an operating deficit, and it continues to benefit from its own munificence. The first flood of tax income from the new developments which have flourished as the Metro has grown made it possible for Montreal to finance a major part of the Metro.



The remaking of Montreal began largely when Donald Gordon, President of Canadian National Railways decided to do something constructive about twenty-two acres of ugly, open, elevated tracks coming into the heart of the city.

He invited New York developer William Zeckendorf to construct a building complex over the tracks. (Zeckendorf later lost the project to his

English partners because of a personal financial debacle.)

Zeckendorf hired Vincent Ponte, of Boston, who in turn hired such architectural giants as I. M. Pei and Mies van der Rohe and "Corny" Cobb. The result, ingenious and beautiful, now covers a great connected block of downtown Montreal; and it has created a multi-leveled city, a concept new in fact if somewhat older in theory. Ponte points out that Leonardo da Vinci drew a plan 480 years ago for putting pedestrians and wagons on different levels.

The dimensions of the planning are illustrated by the \$70 million Place Bonaventure, one of several complexes but the one which deals directly with Mr. Gordon's problem.

First there were the elevated tracks.

Now there are three levels below the tracks. On the bottom the Metro. Above that is a shopping arcade. The shopping arcade has five acres of shops, a small handsome movie house, food, flowers, and the casual necessities of life such as razor blades. Above the arcade is a huge exhibit hall in which a reception for 12,000 can be held without crowding.

Above the exhibit hall are the Canadian Na-