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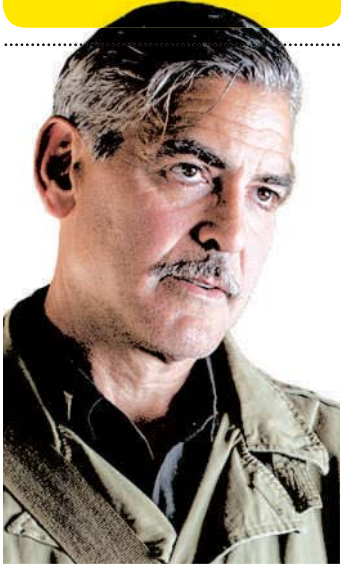
The Metro Rider's Guide. Every
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Weekend

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Wrong Floor?

I wasn't there when Metro's original interior decorators were tasked with tricking out that first fleet of railcars in 1976. Still, I'm pretty sure their thought process went something like this: "You know what would be groovy? Shag carpeting, psychedelic beanbag chairs and macrame hangings!"

Although that vision got toned down — somewhat — we've been riding around in orange and brown time capsules ever since. So it's no surprise that Metro is ready for a makeover.

There's been talk of replacing the distinctive wall-to-wall carpeting as far back as 2007, when the transit agency began testing several alternative options that wouldn't be as expensive and time-consuming to maintain. (Metro vacuums the carpeting once a week, shampoos it every two months and replaces it every five years.) But nothing seemed concrete until Metro announced in November that in response to "strongly" anti-carpet customer feedback, it was moving forward with a plan to install slip-resistant resilient flooring in all cars.

The forthcoming 7000-series cars will debut with a black surface flecked with bits of red, white and blue. And over the next two years, a similar material will be installed on all of the 5000- and 6000-series cars. Last week, Metro released photos showing one car's transformation.

It's a welcome vision for Myah Harris, 20, who thinks the carpeting just gets too gross. "On a scale of 1 to 10, it's an 11. I don't want to touch it," the Landover resident says. Many other riders I spoke to are looking forward to cleaner floors — or at least ones that can't be described with this phrase: "It's like somebody threw up on it, and rubbed it in." (That's courtesy of Jack Petsche, 30, who starts his commute at Franconia-Springfield.)

But not everyone is thrilled about the switch. As Dan Teich, 36, rode in a car with the black flooring, he offered a few adjectives for this new look: "industrial" and "Bolshevik."



By Vicky Hallett

"The carpet is distinctive, and helps set Metro apart. It's a touch of class," says Teich, who lives on Capitol Hill. "If maintenance is an issue, it has to be done, but I'm definitely going to miss it."

Maybe the new generation of interior decorators has a better solution? I asked Nicole Lanteri, who runs On My Agenda in Arlington, what she'd recommend if Metro were her client.

One rider's take on the carpeting: "It's like somebody threw up on it, and rubbed it in."

While carpeting has some appealing visual benefits — it makes a space look larger and cozier, Lanteri says — it's probably a smart idea to give it the heave-ho. The only type that could effectively stand up to the kind of wear and tear that Metro gets is wool, which is "crazy expensive," she says. (And no one wants fares to go through the roof to pay for the floor, right?)

Where Lanteri thinks Metro is taking a wrong turn is by selecting black. She'd prefer a modern gray that could hide dirt better — and wouldn't draw so much attention. "Dark isn't the way to go there," she says.

The color is also bound to leave people feeling cold, Lanteri adds. It's just not much fun. A few of the cars could be carpeted in Astroturf instead, or perked up with paint. Neon pink doors along with black floors, she says, could give the Metro a dance party feel.

And we'd have something new to make fun of 40 years from now.