
Hi, I'm Leila. I've been a public transportation enthusiast for as long as I can remember. In my youthful eyes, the NYC subway map was a veritable treasure map. It was the starting point to a new adventure every day. The New York City subway system is one of the oldest in the world, and I wanted to learn more about it - so I started creating these "Geek Girl's Guide" videos. This third video in my series is all about the history of NYC subways, so you can better understand how far back this incredible system stretches. The world of public transportation isn't just for nerds - it's an integral part to understanding our modern life. Let's go below ground!

A subway is actually one of the oldest forms of transportation. Water transport dates back to 800 B.C., when the Phoenicians dug canals in what is now northern Lebanon to transport goods like bitumen, salt, and stone. But it wasn't until 1804 that the first underground tunnels were built for modern-day subways. Strangely enough, they were used to repair New York's above-ground water mains. The first underground tunnel was dug in London in 1862 for mail delivery between two post offices about 150 feet apart, but it wasn't used by passengers until 1863 when six passengers paid a penny each to ride on it. The first underground train (or subway car) was first used in London in 1863. It had small cars that could hold 15 people. The first underground line, which was built in London, was originally called the Metropolitan Railway. The first time I visited London, I visited this office - which is still there today - where people paid to ride on the railway. But let's just go back to New York for a moment. After the Civil War, New York citizens were frustrated with the poor transportation systems available to them at that time - horse-drawn buses and ferries. Then came the elevated trains - steam locomotives running along trestles high above Manhattan streets. The first elevated railway was the New York Elevated Railroad, commonly known as the Ninth Avenue El, which opened in 1868. It was constructed by a former assistant to Thomas Edison, Alfred Ely Beach, who was also responsible for the world's first subway. The first subway - also called an underground railroad - opened on October 27, 1904. Its construction took almost 10 years, and it cost over \$5 million to build. The six-track subway ran between City Hall and 103rd Street on the island of Manhattan. It was built by William Barclay Parsons under supervision of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT).

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