

Underground city

PATH is a 27-kilometre network of pedestrian tunnels beneath the office towers of downtown Toronto. PATH, the name given to the network, is the largest underground shopping complex in the world. There are more than fifty buildings or office towers that are connected through the PATH system. It comprises twenty parking stations, five subway stations, two major department stores, six major hotels, shopping malls and a regional railway terminal.

Facts and statistics

Location: Toronto, Canada

Opening dates:

1900—first pedestrian tunnel in Toronto

1960–70s—construction of underground shopping concourses and linkages

1987—Toronto City Council becomes coordinating agency of network

Length: 27 kilometres

Management:

City of Toronto (coordinating agency)

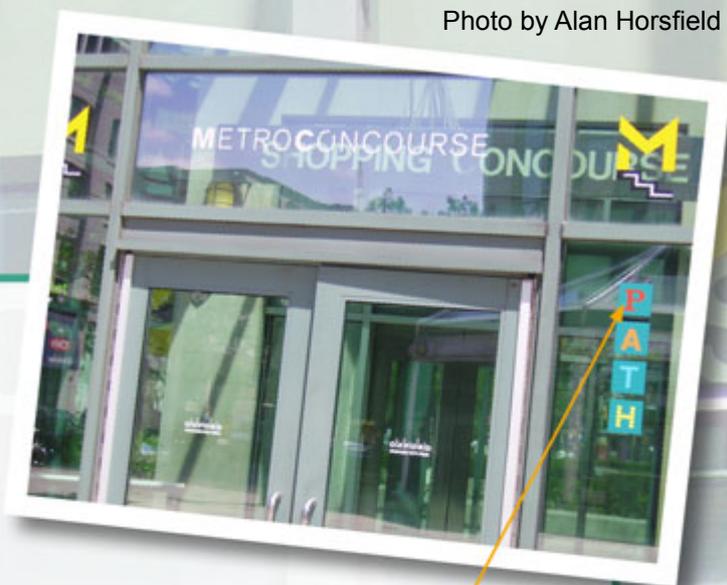
Number of stores and services:

1200

Total retail floor area:

371 600 square metres

Number of floors: 1



PATH entry point

In 1987, Toronto City Council adopted a unified signage system throughout the maze-like network. A colour-coded system with directional cues was installed in the early 1990s. Within the various buildings, pedestrians can find a PATH system map, plus cardinal directions—**P** (red) for south, **A** (orange) for west, **T** (blue) for north, **H** (yellow) for east—on ceiling signs at selected junctions.

The signage can be hard to find inside some of the connected buildings because building owners were worried about losing customers to neighbouring buildings. They insisted that the PATH signs should not dominate their buildings, or their own signage system. Many pedestrians complain that the system is hard to navigate.

In Toronto, the winter temperatures can drop to well below freezing. PATH provides a convenient method of moving around the city, as well as connecting with outlying suburbs and regions.

The City of Toronto has released a long-term expansion plan for PATH. As part of the expansion plan, there will be 45 new entry points and the concourse will be extended to 60 kilometres.

