

# Pilot project uses AI to prevent suicide in Montreal Metro | CBC News

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## [Montreal](#)

Once indicators of distress are detected, trains can be signaled to slow down and someone could go up to the person in need and offer help, according to the Société de transport de Montréal.

## Artificial intelligence scans CCTV footage in the Metro to detect certain warning signs.



The STM described its suicide prevention pilot project as "promising" and said it hopes to implement the system in two years. (Ivanoh Demers/Radio-Canada)

The *Société de transport de Montréal* (STM) and researchers from the Center for Suicide Intervention (CRISE) are developing an artificial intelligence system as part of the public transit authority's suicide prevention strategy.

The pilot project scans closed circuit television, or CCTV, footage in the city's Metro stations to detect warning signs that a person may be in distress.

"We've analyzed the videos of all the people who attempted suicide [in the Metro] with the goal of trying to see if there are some indications that someone might be in distress," Brian Mishara, CRISE director and co-investigator of the STM AI project, told *Daybreak Montreal* host Sean Henry.

"We've got some indicators, but obviously a human cannot watch hundreds of screens all day long to try to identify those behaviors," said Mishara, who is also a professor of psychology at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM).

Once those indicators are recognized by the AI system, measures can immediately be taken to try and save the

person from hurting themselves, he says, adding that the system does not use facial recognition software.



Daybreak Montreal 11:34 STM looks to pilot AI to improve suicide prevention

A pilot project is being developed that would use artificial intelligence to scan CCTV footage in the Metro to detect certain warning signs that an individual may be in distress. Daybreak host Sean Henry spoke with Brian Mishara, the director of the Center for Suicide Intervention, or CRISE, to learn more about how this technology would work.

In a statement, the STM told CBC that the system could warn the control room in real time, possibly the metro operators directly, allowing the trains to brake in advance and special constables to be deployed to the scene.

"Someone could be sent to the station to go up to the person and say, are you OK? Do you need some help?" Mishara said.

At the moment, Mishara says that the AI can correctly recognize one out of four people who will attempt suicide.

- [Safety ambassadors begin patrolling Montreal's Metro stations to beef up security](#)
- [Suicide prevention campaign to expand to 15 Metro stations](#)

Adding barriers to prevent people from jumping off the platform is another idea, but it's an expensive solution, he says, especially as the STM seeks to cut costs to balance out its [budget shortfall](#).

The STM described the AI pilot project to CBC as "promising" and said it hopes to implement the system in two years.

It also says that the goal to implement platform screen doors has been reinstated as part of its 2023-2033 plan with \$5 million earmarked for studying the project.

**If you or someone you know is struggling, here's where to get help:**

- [Suicide Action Montreal](#): 1-866-277-3553
- [Talk Suicide Canada](#): 1-833-456-4566 (phone) | 45645 (text between 4 p.m. and midnight ET).
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (phone), live chat counselling on [the website](#).
- Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention: [Find a 24-hour crisis centre](#).
- This guide from the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#) outlines how to talk about suicide with someone you're worried about.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR