

Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects





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Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects

Abstract: For more than 30 years, transit art professionals have set the methodologies to achieve high standards for art and design in public transit systems. High quality art and design have proven beneficial to transit agencies by improving the customer experience and giving a sense of identity and vibrancy to transit systems, while positively contributing to the community at large. Transit art professionals, working with contemporary artists from around the country, successfully integrate art into capital improvement projects. These professionals possess accumulated knowledge based on firsthand experience and lessons learned over decades of program development and project implementation. Recommended best practices capture this knowledge as it relates to current conditions in the public art field.

Keywords: best practices, contemporary public art, percent for art, art administrator, art program manager, program guidelines, and project guidelines

Summary: The integration of public art and the emphasis on design excellence and art in transit is a global phenomenon codified in the U.S. more than three decades ago. The periodic defining and recommendation of best practices ensures the continued relevance of processes and protocols used in the field. This paper documents best practices used by experienced transit art administrators who are well versed in contemporary art and have developed comprehensive art in transit programs across the country.

Scope and purpose: This Recommended Best Practice is the first of a series of APTA documents on art intended to support APTA members as they work to improve their transit systems. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance in the development and implementation of transit art programs and incorporation of contemporary art into transit infrastructure projects. Future documents will expand upon these practices. The recommendations are presented by veteran transit art administrators representing various sized programs and agencies in regional locations and are based on their lessons learned. The intent is to ensure that transit customers are the recipients of high quality art and design that improve their transit experience.

Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects

Overview

APTA SUDS UD RP 003-11 Why Design Matters for Transit clearly outlines how aesthetics, function and durability combine to enhance the transportation experience. The document demonstrates the strong link between art and design and the value of pursuing both simultaneously. The reasons for committing to integrating high quality art into transit facilities are closely related to those for design excellence.

The visual quality of the nation's public transit systems has a profound impact on transit riders, the community at large, and the image of a city, with implications for a city's livability and economy. Well-designed public transit systems are positive symbols for cities, attracting local riders, tourists, and the attention of decision makers and attendees of national and international events. High quality public art and design improve the appearance and safety of a facility, add vibrancy to public spaces, and make patrons feel welcome, often resulting in higher usage of the facility. Excellent design and high quality art contribute to the goal that transit facilities aid in creating communities where people wish to live and work. These Best Practices provide guidance to transit agencies around the country and enable them to maximize the potential benefits of including art within their transit capital construction projects.

This document specifically addresses permanently installed transit art as part of capital projects. Arts in transit can take many other forms as well, including events, programming, and changing art installations on vehicles and in stations. These will be addressed in future recommended practice documents.





Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) initiated its support for high quality art and design in federally funded transit projects in the 1970s. At the time, the National Endowment for the Arts published *The Design Necessity*, a case study of federal design projects presented at the first Federal Design Assembly.

In early 1977, President Jimmy Carter asked agencies to support projects that contribute to the architectural and cultural heritage of local communities. Consequently, the DOT's Design, Art and Architecture Program officially supported the expenditure of funds for permanent public art in transit projects.

In 1978, Boston was one of three cities to receive DOT funds under the new program. Atlanta received support for its Hartsfield International Airport Terminal and Baltimore for the restoration of architectural details in its historic Pennsylvania Railroad Station. Greater Boston's Arts on the Line program was a joint initiative of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Cambridge Arts Council. Arts on the Line became an award-winning DOT "pilot project" for art in transit, establishing guidelines for the administration and the integration of public art in a transit system. Numerous transit art programs followed Boston, including New York, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Cleveland, St. Louis, Baltimore, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Atlanta, San Jose, Portland, and Seattle.

In June 1995, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) revised and updated its initial guidelines. FTA Circular 9400.1A updated the continued federal support for art and design and provided revised guidelines for the incorporation of high quality design and art reflecting changes in the field of public art and transit. FTA continued flexible guidelines that left the level of percent allocation (from a minimum of one half of 1% but not to exceed 5% of project costs) at the discretion of the local transit entity. The FTA acknowledged that transit agencies had continually demonstrated that the communities they serve greatly benefited from high quality design and art.

Through the past three decades, transit art has evolved as a distinct field. Transit art is installed in high-traffic, environmentally exposed environments and must address operational issues very different from those of other public art. Transit art, like transit architecture, transit engineering, or transit operations, is a specialized expertise, and it is crucial that transit arts programs be managed by arts professionals with experience in transit.

The best practice for a transit art program is to have a full-time arts professional (the Transit Art Program Manager) on the agency staff. Art is not a one-time undertaking; once art is installed, it must be maintained, and ongoing programs should introduce the public to the art on the system. The Transit Art Program Manager serves as a continuing source of expertise, maintains institutional knowledge, and serves as a liaison with agency staff, artists, and the arts community. An agency large enough to regularly construct major capital projects, or large enough to maintain a significant fixed guideway transit system, can justify this full-time staff.

This document outlines the process of establishing and managing a permanent arts program to manage transit art in capital projects. Thus, these guidelines will be most relevant to large and medium-sized agencies. However, smaller agencies can also successfully implement transit art capital projects. The same fundamental principles will apply, but the implementation will vary. A future recommended practice document will address practices relevant to smaller agencies.

Benefits of Art in Transit



Benefits of art in transit

Encourages ridership

Public artwork can add value to a public transit agency's primary goal of building ridership. Art can entice the choice rider, a major target audience for increasing ridership, as well as attract new riders.

Improves perception of transit

The presence of high quality art engenders a positive perception of transit. The public appreciates the aesthetic value that art brings to its surroundings and reacts positively to features that were expressly created to improve the transit experience.

Conveys customer care

The inclusion of art demonstrates an agency's attention to the personal experience of its riders and a concern for the well-being of its patrons. In much the same way that the immediate removal of graffiti helps maintain a secure feeling environment, the presence of art sends the message that "we care."



Enhances community livability

Art can become a galvanizing or unifying element for a neighborhood and help set the tone for adjacent development and improvements. Art helps cement the impression of permanence and can be the catalyst that helps others commit to investing resources into development infrastructure.

Improves customer experience

Public transit agencies continually work to improve service reliability, safety, competence, and desirability. A positive customer experience is critical for maintaining and increasing transit ridership. Art is a cost-effective way of heightening the customer experience and associating public transit with positive cultural images and aspirations.

Improves organizational identity

Art that is well cared for and actively promoted through informational programs and materials can enhance the image of a transit agency within its region of operation. A successful art program is one more way for transit agencies to project an overall image of competence and desirability.

Deters vandalism

Art adds a humanistic dimension to the customer environment and in doing so may deter graffiti and other forms of vandalism.

Increases safety and security

Well-lit, well-designed transit stations, that include high quality art, create an environment that provides riders with a sense of safety and security. When the public's respect for place is heightened, positive behavior results. The integration of art in public spaces sends a message that this is a valued space and in effect, the people who use the space are valued.



Recommended Best Practices

Recommended best practices

Program development

With the professional guidance of an experienced Transit Art Program Manager, a transit agency can establish a transit art program that conforms to best practices used by other transit agencies. Each agency identifies its transit art program needs and the best means of implementing and achieving its program goals and objectives. Recommended best practices include:

- Establishing an agency policy or resolution setting the percentage of the capital improvement budget to be used to integrate art into all future capital improvement projects and specifying ineligible project components. The percent for art is typically between 1% and 2% of capital project budgets, though it may be as high as 5%.
- Defining eligibility of artistic undertakings that the agency supports and ineligibility of artistic undertakings that promote specific private, corporate, business, non-profit, religious or political interests.
- Establishing flexible program guidelines based on best practices demonstrated in the transit art field.
- Creating an agency staff position for a Transit Art Program Manager and hiring an arts administration professional with experience integrating art work into capital projects.
- Engaging art professionals through the Transit Art Program Manager, who may establish an advisory group of arts professionals to provide expert advice to transit art program staff.
- Outlining acceptable methods for the selection of artists through a competitive professional peer review process.
- Defining community involvement in appropriate and specific ways to ensure understanding and appreciation of the art by the transit ridership and neighboring communities.



Program management

A transit art program should be organized as a permanent operating function of the agency and led by a qualified and experienced transit art professional. The Transit Art Program Manager develops, administers and leads the agency's transit art program. The transit agency typically funds the administration and overhead of its transit art program through its operating budget.

Transit art professionals bring a range of highly specialized and critical skills to the agency, including but not limited to:

- Ability to bridge the artistic and public sector worlds, serving as an integral conduit in planning and implementing public art.
- Knowledge of transit operations and maintenance, ensuring that the development and long term needs of the art program within the agency are addressed effectively.
- Ability to identify appropriate, impactful art opportunities, locations and materials for the project and to create specialized scopes of work and calls to artists.
- Ability to attract artists to participate in transit art programs. Without professional arts administrators, highly qualified artists will not participate in projects.
- Ability to guide artists through the complex and lengthy process of design and construction, ensuring that artists do their best work, meet critical deadlines and adhere to budgets.
- Expertise in highly specialized art fabrication and installation materials and methods.
- Ability to communicate effectively with the public, arts community, media, elected officials and stakeholders on arts related topics and to develop effective informational and educational materials.

The agency's Transit Art Program Manager is typically a member of each capital project team, serving as the art program's liaison between the artist and the project team and design professionals, engineers, fabricators, contractors and sub-contractors to integrate the art into each project.

The Transit Art Program Manager is responsible for the ongoing oversight of the agency's art collection. This oversight includes key areas such as maintenance and repairs, relocation and alterations, art law, donations, and de-accessioning.





Funding

Funding for art in transit projects varies amongst cities, states and transit authorities, as does the source of funding for the capital improvement projects which can include federal, state, county, city (local), or private or a combination of these sources. Funding for the integration of public art into a project is typically between 1% and 2% of the project's capital budget.

The capital budget "line item" for project art covers the design, fabrication and installation oversight of the artwork. In some cases, such as where the art project is not part of a larger infrastructure construction project or the installation requires specialized skills, the art line item may also cover installation costs.

Long-term care and maintenance of art is funded outside the capital budget, typically through the agency's operational budget, as is customary with other physical assets.

Project development

The Transit Art Program Manager must be involved at the earliest stages of a capital project's development to ensure integration of art into the project, as well as to determine the best time to bring the artist on board, which may vary from project to project.

Lessons learned reaffirm the importance of informed art program staff working directly with the project team and developing the opportunities, locations and materials for the artwork based on their knowledge and familiarity with transit operations and the project community. The art program staff develops and issues scopes of work and calls to artists and serves as the liaison between the artist and the project team, design professionals, engineers, fabricators, contractors and sub-contractors to integrate the art into each project.

Under certain circumstances, the Transit Art Program Manager may employ a collaborative approach by including an artist(s) with substantial experience working on large capital building projects and/or transit infrastructure projects on the project design team.

Criteria for art

Criteria for art should be clearly stated in all artist solicitations and should include the following:

Quality of the Work: High quality artwork is determined by recognized arts professionals such as curators, arts administrators and artists qualified to evaluate contemporary artist portfolios, credentials and/or proposals.

Site-specificity: An artist's concept and the physical artwork are integrated into the project and should relate to the project site, immediate landscape, urban fabric, and/or surrounding communities.

Durability of Materials: Artworks in transit systems are exposed to a variety of harsh conditions including continual heavy public use, build-up of soot and grime, a range of climate conditions and vandalism. Durable materials should be used for minimal maintenance and proven ability to withstand the challenging transit environment and specific environmental conditions of the area.

Community involvement

The extent and type of community involvement is determined by the Transit Art Program Manager and commissioning agency and will vary depending on both the project and the community. Similarly, the amount of interaction the artist is expected to have with the community will also differ. While some artists are more process oriented than others, the ultimate goal is to produce permanent artwork that will continue to engage the community for many years to come.

Community members and business representatives are typically not experts in contemporary art. However, their knowledge of their neighborhoods, history, and communities can be a helpful resource to art program staff and commissioned artists, who may not otherwise be aware of sensitive local histories or contemporary conditions.

In addition to the information provided by local residents and business representatives, local historians may be engaged to research and develop more detailed information about the character, makeup, and history of areas in proximity to a project.



Selection of artists

Best practices recommend that the process used to select artists be structured to assure a justifiable process, demonstrating appropriate use of public funds. The Transit Art Program Manager develops calls to artists and uses various avenues to reach artists throughout the country to ensure that the process is competitive and effective. The process, which will vary depending upon the nature and scope of the project, characteristics of the site, resources, and state and local statutes should include the following:

- A call to artists is designed to solicit national, regional, and/or local professional artists.
- Selection of artists based on past high quality art works and appropriateness of their work to the scope and scale of the project.
- Selection of artists by a panel of recognized arts professionals, knowledgeable about contemporary public art and what artists can contribute to a public art project. The panel may include but is not limited to contemporary art administrators, artists, art educators, and curators.
- Eligibility of artists does not include consideration of race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, or age.

The selection process can be two-phased, with finalists being chosen during the first phase and paid to develop and present specific proposals for the project in the second phase.

Art contracts

The Transit Art Program Manager provides the expertise to write and manage contracts, including artists and fabrication contracts. Their knowledge covers issues such as artists copyright, scope of services, roles and responsibilities, risk management and insurance requirements, sequence of tasks, schedules, coordination of construction, compensation, documentation requirements, maintenance instructions for the completed artwork, and procedures for alterations to or removal of the artwork.

Technical review

Art undergoes technical reviews at various design and construction phases. Reviews are organized by the Transit Art Program Manager and usually done by agency representatives with specific expertise, including but not limited to project team planners, designers, engineers and representatives from Transit Operation, Safety, Security and Maintenance. Agency engineers review engineering drawings and ensure requirements are met, such as welding certifications and tests.

When artists propose using unfamiliar materials, staff often requires a conservationist review. Transit art staff prepares artists to respond to such reviews.

Transit art program staff and arts professionals have the experience, skills and familiarity with contemporary art, materials options, and the realities of transit environments necessary to guide the design and fabrication process to help ensure the longevity and appropriate care of the art collection. It is important to ensure maintenance considerations are built into the review process.

Fabrication

The Transit Art Program Manager determines with the artists the best approaches to fabrication. In some cases fabrication will be done by the artist or the artist's chosen fabricator under contract to the artist. In others cases, fabrication may be done by an art fabricator under contract to the agency or general contractor.





Installation

In most cases, the agency's general contractor installs the artwork. The general contractor provides the footings, riggings, and other installation details required to integrate the work into the project site. The artist or fabricator's contract should provide for delivery to the construction site and inspection by all parties, before the artwork becomes the general contractor's responsibility as the liable party. Exceptions will apply when the art is best installed by the artisan/fabricator who produced the work. The art staff and often the artist are present at the site during the installation to advise on any adjustments or issues that arise, and this role should be made clear at the outset of the project.

Documentation

After installation, either the transit agency or the artist (if specified in the artist's contract), under the direction of the Transit Art Program Manager, photographically documents the art and completes a permanent record. A permanent record should include such information as general description, artistic intent, desired appearance over time, materials, fabricators, installers and maintenance recommendations.

Maintenance and Conservation

The transit agency needs to have a long-term commitment to the care and maintenance of its art collection. The Transit Art Program Manager works closely with operations and maintenance staff to ensure the longevity of the agency's art collection and determines what maintenance can be done by in-house staff and when a qualified conservator should be contracted. Most agencies establish a line item cost in the annual operation budget to ensure the ongoing maintenance of art and establish a separate fund for more comprehensive art conservation. Ongoing and periodic maintenance lessens the expense of conservation over time. The Transit Art Program Manager should be involved in any alterations to transit facilities which may affect artwork.

Education

The best practice for a transit system is to have an ongoing program to introduce the public to the art on the system. Transit art staff working with appropriate agency departments should ensure that art and artists are introduced to the public through various ongoing outreach activities. Such activities may include receptions, public inaugurations, media

coverage, exhibitions, social media, and other means. Interpretative materials such as online information, smartphone or digital applications, guidebooks, brochures and plaques are critical tools in assisting transit users and the general public to gain understanding and appreciation of the full content and meaning of artworks, beyond just their physical appearances. Digital resources such as audio tours and other downloadable information add to the possible means of educating the public about the art.





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Glossary

Arts Professional - A trained professional with expertise in the arts and artistic processes.

Best practices - Methodologies developed and generally accepted by experienced professionals in a given field.

Public art - Works of art in any media, created by an artist and planned and executed with the specific intention of being publicly accessible and in the physical public domain.

Contemporary art - The art of our time. Work created by artists and sanctioned by professionals in the art world.

Percent for Art Programs - Programs of municipalities, organizations and transit agencies whereby a percentage of capital project budgets are set aside for the integration of art into a project.

Transit Art Professional - A trained professional with expertise in the arts and artistic processes as well as the practicalities of transit and transit construction.

Public Art Policy - A formal policy adopted by a transit agency which provides an operational framework for a public art program.

Program Administrative Guidelines - Operational processes developed to implement and carry out the public art policy. Guidelines should be flexible and follow best practices in the field of public art.



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APTA Sustainable Urban Design Standards
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Resources

MTA All Agency Policy Directive
Permanent Art Program/Design Review
<http://web.mta.info/art/ArtsforTransit.pdf>
www.mta.info/art
<http://trimet.org/publicart/index.htm>
www.artsintransit.org
<http://www.metro.net/about/art/>
www.charmeck.org/city/charlotte/cats/planning/ArtinTransit

Appendix A: FTA Circular 9400.1A Design and
Art in Transit Projects, June 1995

Appendix B: APTA SUDS UD RP 003-11
Why Design Matters

Tess O'Loughlin Design

