



Board Report

File #: 2020-0471, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

Agenda Number: 45.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AUGUST 20, 2020

SUBJECT: REPORT ON MOTION TO “UPLIFT THE HUMAN SPIRIT THROUGH METRO ART”
ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE a report and approach to “Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art” in response to the June 2020 Board motion (Attachment A).

ISSUE

At their June 2020 meeting, in a motion titled “Uplifting the Human Spirit Through Metro Art”, the Board directed staff to return with a report on how Metro can a) Integrate Metro Art programs into our trains, busses; b) Champion artistic experimentation including provocative works that are responsive to the issues and concerns of our time; and c) Think about how artists might be included in the Reimagining of transportation. This report provides the requested response.

BACKGROUND

As the Board discussed during the June 2020 Board meeting, we are currently in the midst of a pandemic and a civil rights movement. Metro staff were asked to leverage the arts as a way to bring people together in ways that are inspiring, welcoming, and add humanity to our public spaces and to strategically implement arts programming to balance Metro safety and recovery messaging, mitigate anxieties, and to reimagine the future of transportation in our region.

Metro has incorporated a small percentage (Attachment B) of transit construction costs to the integration of art into capital projects since the 1980s. The agency has received recognition for the Metro Art program’s interdisciplinary approach, broad range of artists commissioned and community engagement in the process. Strong support has been demonstrated by funding awarded by federal, state and local sources as well as the respect and care given the works by the public. Over half of the artists Metro Art has commissioned are artists of color.

DISCUSSION

The Board motion asks Metro to consider ways in which the arts might play a role that goes beyond

transit infrastructure.

Periodically, and when resources and space are made available, Metro Art has exhibited artwork in unused advertising spaces throughout the system, including the fleet. Examples have included Poetry in Motion, Through the Eyes of Artists neighborhood posters, More People Than You Know portrait series, and Art on TAP. Metro Art Presents and the experimental MetroLab series have provided opportunities for musicians, dancers, poets and other arts and cultural practitioners to connect with communities and to cultivate ridership. These programs have been effective additional ways to commission local artists to create works that are both relevant and responsive.

To address the Board motion in the immediate term we will work to reprioritize available resources to quickly and effectively integrate arts and culture into current agency Transit Operations and Recovery plans.

Immediate initiatives to be implemented in the next six months might include:

1. Champion artistic expression of local visual artists through posters within Metro's allocation of advertising spaces, including on buses and trains, when/where space is available
2. Partner with community based cultural organizations to interpret and document this pivotal moment
3. Curate cultural programming to foster connections with the public, and
4. Commission local artists to creatively convey 'new manners', safety messaging and mobility stories to surprise and delight riders

One additional full-time contingent staff will be necessary to explore external funding opportunities, write grant proposals and develop, manage, conduct outreach, document and communicate about these pilot initiatives. Current staff are at capacity as a result of significantly increased transit infrastructure project delivery schedules.

Moving forward, these pilot projects will inform an updated Metro Art policy that will formalize the role of the arts beyond transportation infrastructure, utilizing the following guiding principles:

1. Put people first
 - a. Uplift customer journeys and local communities through artistic expression
 - b. Provide paid opportunities for artists at all levels of their careers
 - c. Engage riders and stakeholders through shared sense of ownership
 - d. Provide workforce development and career pipeline opportunities
2. Connect to creative communities throughout LA County
 - a. Celebrate connections to diverse local arts and cultural destinations
 - b. Present curated partnerships and sponsorships
 - c. Foster and facilitate arts tours and highlight creative communities
 - d. Facilitate creative outreach and engagement.
3. Champion innovation

- a. Collaborate with internal departments to integrate the arts across transportation modes and initiatives
- b. Leverage strategic funding opportunities
- c. Support artistic experimentation
- d. Explore new technologies and advance best practices

In response to the broader Board Motion regarding Reimagining transportation, Metro Art staff will seek to partner with other agency departments to pursue ways of incorporating arts and culture into existing agency plans and initiatives such as NextGen, BRT Vision & Principles Study, Long Range Transportation Plan, Customer Experience Plan, Equity Framework and the Recovery Task Force response.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Item is presented for information only with no financial impact at this time. Staff will reprioritize available resources and work cross-departmentally to identify internal and external funding opportunities to support pilot projects.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The information in this Report supports Metro's strategic goals of delivering outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system (goal #2) and enhancing communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity (goal #3). This work aligns with Metro's Equity Platform, specifically Pillar Two: Listen and Learn, and Pillar Three: Focus and Deliver. Arts-based strategies will be utilized to improve relationships, partnerships and actions to advance more equitable transportation outcomes. Community-driven conversations will be used to develop best practices, inform strategic community-focused partnerships, and build capacity to better address the needs of historically underserved communities.

NEXT STEPS


Staff will pursue the work as described above and will return to the Board in six to eight months with a report detailing pilot projects launched in response to the Board motion, lessons learned, and an updated Metro Art policy that formally expands the role of the arts beyond transportation infrastructure to uplift the customer experience.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - June 2020 Board Directive
Attachment B - Transit Agency Percent for Art Programs

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