



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 39.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OCTOBER 15, 2020

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

ISSUE

At their June and August 2020 meetings, the Board directed staff to think about how artists might be included in the Reimagining of transportation, and to report back on the following: a) a specific set-aside percentage of interior space on both rail and busses to accommodate the placement of Metro Art posters, with preference for local artists; and b) include \$400,000 in the FY21 Budget to accomplish Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art goals and initiatives and to work cross-departmentally to identify internal and external funding opportunities to support the projects. This report provides the requested response and policy directive updates.

BACKGROUND

Los Angeles County is recognized as one of the world’s most important creative capitals and is home to an incredible range of remarkably talented artists. Metro has been at the forefront of interweaving art and transit and transforming quotidian commutes into pleasurable journeys. Ad-hoc temporary programs have been particularly effective ways to commission local artists to create works that are relevant and responsive and which help celebrate and champion the creative vibrancy of our region.

Metro Art posters by local artists have been installed onboard buses and trains since 2003 as resources have been available. The Metro Art poster program has received over twenty-three awards and fifty-eight local artists have been commissioned to date. Over half the artists commissioned are women and over half are artists of color. Meet the Artist events are well attended and the posters have been featured in local newspapers and are often proudly hung in the offices of elected officials locally as well as in Sacramento and Washington DC. The program recently celebrated it’s fifteenth anniversary in an award winning publication designed and produced in-house by our Marketing department (Attachment B).

Recognizing the arts as a way to bring people together in ways that are inspiring, welcoming, and add humanity to our public spaces as well as the significant role the arts sector plays in our regional economy, the Board has directed that \$400,000 be allocated to commission local artists in ways that Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art, go beyond infrastructure, strategically balance Metro safety and recovery messaging, and mitigate anxieties.

Similar initiatives have been launched locally including City of Santa Monica which has allocated \$500,000 to new arts programming “in the spirit of the New Deal Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Art Project”, the City of LA which has allocated \$340,000 “to help keep working artists and performers afloat and support the creation of new public art for the city”, and recent LA County initiatives to “ensure the resilience of the arts sector and contribute substantially to the County’s overall recovery”.

DISCUSSION

The Board motion asks Metro to consider ways in which the arts might play a role that goes beyond transit infrastructure and to accommodate the placement of Metro Art posters onboard buses and trains, with a preference for local artists. The majority of onboard advertising space is reserved (90 percent) for revenue generation and the onboard advertising space available to Metro (10 percent) is very limited (and is primarily used for critical messaging to support programs like LIFE, ridership, COVID-19, Bikeshare, public safety, TAP and other priority programs). Metro continues to be committed to including art posters in the system as we have in the past. In support of the motion to Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art, staff will double the number of local artists commissioned each year for the poster program and is committed to placing their work in the Metro bus and rail system as space is available.

To be responsive to the issues and concerns of our time, and to address the Board motion, Metro Art staff has launched the series of initiatives identified in the motion. The first initiative commissions local artists to create original, culturally relevant artworks that visualize and encourage expressions of connection and care that have emerged as silver linings during this time. The posters will begin appearing onboard buses in December. With the additional funding allocation authorized by the Board, Metro Art will also commission a broader range of local artists, including musicians, dancers and digital to creatively explore annual agency priorities (e.g. Climate Change, Equity, Reimagination). Artworks will be promoted and staff will make website improvements to ensure the works are made more widely accessible online, and an imaginative curated cultural programming series of podcasts, playlists and live performances will surprise, delight and inspire in alignment with the Customer Experience Plan.

Funding for Metro Art has been tied primarily to the capital program wherein a small percentage of transit construction costs is allocated to the integration of art into transit capital projects (Attachment C) and temporary programs have been done on an ad-hoc basis. The motion establishes the first Board-directed funding for arts programming dedicated to bus and rail riders that goes beyond infrastructure, which will provide greater access to arts and culture to our diverse ridership as well as the opportunity to be more immediately responsive to Los Angeles’ vast and continually varied cultural landscape.

Metro Arts and Design staff recently successfully secured \$20,000 of external funding through a grant

awarded by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. While these funds cannot be used for temporary arts programs, they will be used to support the June Board motion to include artists in the Reimagining of Transportation through a pilot cultural asset mapping and artist-led community engagement process for projects for two current mobility corridor planning phase projects.

Metro Arts and Design staff has included the Board approved guiding principles and policy directives to uplift the customer experience and expand the role of the arts beyond transportation infrastructure into the program policy as directed (Attachment D) and is partnering with other agency departments to pursue ways of incorporating arts and culture into existing and new agency plans and initiatives such as the Customer Experience Plan, NextGen, BRT Vision & Principles Study, Long Range Transportation Plan, Equity Framework and the Recovery Task Force response to Reimagining transportation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no net impact to the FY21 Budget. Due to the financial crisis, staff is reprioritizing available resources and working cross-departmentally to identify internal and external funding opportunities to support the Board directives. In future fiscal years, when the financial outlook improves, staff will allocate resources for this program as dedicated funding.

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

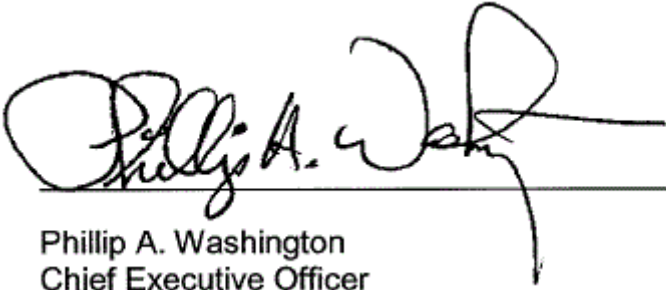
Staff will pursue the work as described above and will return to the Board in April with a report detailing pilot projects launched in response to the Board motion.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - August and June 2020 Board Directives
- Attachment B - Through the Eyes of Artists Poster Program Fifteenth Anniversary Book
- Attachment C - Transit Agency Percent for Art Programs
- Attachment D - Metro Art Program Policy Update

Prepared by: Maya Emsden, Deputy Executive Officer, (213) 922-2720

Reviewed by: Yvette Rapose, Chief Communications Officer, (213) 418-3154



Phillip A. Washington
Chief Executive Officer