



Board Report

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EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE APRIL 15, 2021

SUBJECT: "UPLIFT THE HUMAN SPIRIT THROUGH METRO ART" REPORT
ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE report on initiatives launched in response to the "Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art" Board motion (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 to the Board in April 2021 on initiatives developed in response to this directive.

BACKGROUND

As Los Angeles County's cultural connector, Metro Art provides increased and equitable access to arts and culture for Metro's diverse ridership through programs that add vibrancy, identity and a sense of place.

LA County is recognized as one of the world's most important creative capitals and is home to an incredible range of remarkably talented artists and Metro has been at the forefront of interweaving art and transit and transforming quotidian commutes into pleasurable journeys. The agency has incorporated a small percentage (Attachment B) of transit construction costs to the integration of art into capital projects since the 1980s and has received significant recognition for the Metro Art program's interdisciplinary approach, broad range of artists commissioned, and its innovative, impactful community engagement. 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.

Last year the Board recognized 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, and directed funding be allocated to commission local artists in ways that "Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art." The motion formalized the role of the arts beyond transportation infrastructure through temporary exhibits such as onboard posters and digital displays, as well as programs that enrich the customer experience, advance cultural equity, and respond to

Los Angeles County's vast and evolving cultural landscape.

DISCUSSION

To be responsive to the issues and concerns of our time, and to address the Board motion, Metro Arts & Design staff commissioned local artists, poets, musicians, dancers and other creatives to develop original, culturally relevant artworks, as well as curated an imaginative cultural programming series of podcasts, playlists and live performances. Staff also 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 C).

Metro work in this area has received several accolades-from our customers and beyond. Initiatives have been well received by customers as reflected in social media feedback and through increased followers. The Governmental Alliance on Race and Equity awarded Metro Art a Culture Innovation and Implementation grant to explore ways in which artists can participate in advancing Metro's goals toward increasing racial and cultural equity in transportation.

The initiatives also recently received national best practice recognition when Metro Arts & Design staff were invited to present ways in which Metro is using the arts to respond to COVID-19 and heightened systemic inequities at the Transportation Research Board's 100th Annual Meeting. The session attracted over 100 global attendees.

Initiatives include new onboard art posters and digital displays which balance health and safety messaging with timely artworks and add a sense of humanity of the system. And online exhibitions, tours, workshops artist interviews, and cultural programming (ranging from puppet shows to poetry readings to soundscapes) are engaging communities virtually during stay at home orders. A draft visual compilation of 2020/2021 initiatives which "Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art" are outlined in Attachment D: Lookbook.

Moving forward, to assist with artist outreach and appropriately document and raise customer awareness and access to these programs one additional full-time contingent staff is necessary; funds are already included in the current and proposed FY22 budgets for this purpose and no additional funds are needed.

As LA County continues to reopen and ridership increases these programs will foster meaningful connections with the public as well as provide increased and equitable access to arts and culture for underserved communities. As the Board stated in their June directive, "the arts are a powerful means of bringing people together across borders of all kinds. Let us use this tragedy to help uplift the human spirit through art."

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Due to the financial crisis, staff reprioritized available resources and worked cross-departmentally last year to identify internal and external funding opportunities to support the Board directives. Funding for onboard and visual arts exhibition programs, partnerships, documentation and outreach is currently included in the proposed FY22 budget; in future fiscal years, when public gatherings are

considered safe, staff will allocate dedicated funding resources for expanded cultural programming and the performing arts.

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

Metro Arts & Design staff will continue to implement above initiatives and explore and implement innovative programs which provide greater access to arts and culture to our diverse ridership as well as ways in which artists can be included in the reimagining of transportation and will report back to the Board on these initiatives.

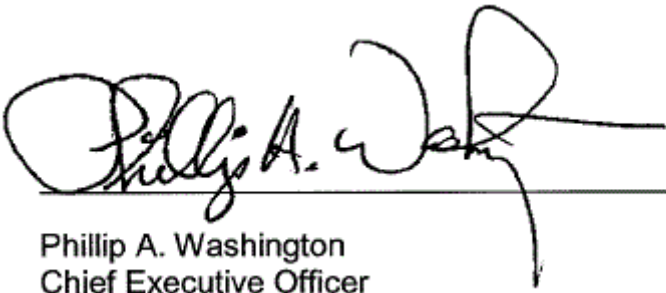
ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A - August and June 2020 Board Directives
- Attachment B - Transit Agency Percent for Art Programs
- Attachment C - Metro Art Program Policy Update
- Attachment D - Uplift the Human Spirit Through Metro Art: Lookbook

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