



**Board Report**

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**File #:** 2023-0075, **File Type:** Motion / Motion Response

**Agenda Number:** 8.

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**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE  
MARCH 15, 2023**

**SUBJECT: CELEBRATE STREETS AND MOBILITY GRANTS PROGRAM**

**ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE**

**RECOMMENDATION**

RECEIVE AND FILE a status report on the development of a new potential grant program focused on activating and reimagining streets and transportation facilities with arts, culture, and recreation leading up to and during the 2028 Games.

**ISSUE**

At its September 2022 meeting, the Board approved Motion #9 by Directors Solis, Garcetti, Butts and Najarian (Attachment A) that directs the development of a potential new grant program to tap into the power of arts, culture, and recreation to help promote Metro’s Olympic goals and the agency’s broader transportation mission. This report provides a status update on the grant development efforts.

**BACKGROUND**

Arts, culture, and recreation can serve a catalytic role in drawing together community participants and institutions into the street as a shared and celebrated public space. These activities bring people from all walks of life together and enable Open Streets programs to foster “building community, cultural identity, and social engagement.”

Metro has existing programs that transform streets and transportation facilities through open streets events and art: the Open Streets Grants Program and Metro Art programs. Partnerships between Metro and art, culture, and recreational organizations help communities engage in issues affecting their lives, including transportation. Staff views these two programs as crucial building blocks for a potential new mobility-focused, Olympics-focused grants program. The grant framework outlined in this report draws upon experience and lessons learned through these projects.

**DISCUSSION**

Part A of the Motion asked staff to identify funding and develop recommendations to launch a special grant program dedicated to transforming our streets and transportation facilities into temporary centers of art, culture, and recreation to engage the communities throughout LA County in the spirit of the Olympic Games before and/or during the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In considering a future grant program, staff looked to build upon Metro's Open Street framework to develop a program that supports a competitive, regional, and equitable process, to encourage the involvement of local and community-based arts organizations and communities that have never implemented Open Streets before or are not located near Olympic venues.

### *Metro Open Streets Grants Program*

The Metro Open Streets Grant program provides funding for events that promote sustainable transportation (biking, walking, and transit), provides a chance to try transit for the first time, and build civic engagement. Several evaluation case studies have demonstrated that these events can have positive impacts on the communities, including improving air quality and shifting travel mode and behavior.

In preparing a response to the motion, staff considered potential funding sources and models for implementing a potential new grant program, and discussed these concepts with partner organizations to gain their insights. The launch of the program is dependent on the identification of funding sources. Staff is targeting a potential \$10 million grant program with multiple grant rounds conducive to the planning needed for large events and the capacity-building and iterative process needed for smaller events in underserved communities. Pending the identification of funding, staff is targeting launching the grant program in FY25 to allow the possibility that some events could overlap with the World Cup taking place between June 8 - July 3, 2026.

Staff reviewed several potential future funding sources such as:

- Federal and state funding. Initial analysis of recurring funding sources and new federal infrastructure funding did not reveal many obvious sources for arts, cultural, and recreation grantmaking by a transportation agency. This is partially because many events that could be funded by a new Metro program to temporarily activate streets and transportation facilities do not involve investments in permanent infrastructure. Events are considered operational costs, and grant opportunities for operations are scarce.
- Focused federal funding for the 2028 Games. Staff have held early discussions with federal agencies and elected officials on the need for funding to Metro to enable implementation of a successful Games Mobility Concept Plan. This potential new program is included in the project list for the Plan.
- Philanthropic funding and sponsorships. Staff have begun identifying potential

philanthropic institutions or sponsorships that would align with the overall program goals.

Staff believes that this multifaceted approach is the best way to identify funding to launch the program before and during the 2028 Games. The funding sources, once identified, may have eligibility limitations that could shape the grant program and guidelines.

### **Conceptual Grant Structure**

Part B of the motion asked staff to collaborate with the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, the City of Los Angeles (including the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and Department of Cultural Affairs), and LA28 to provide input to Metro on the development of guidelines for the new grant program;

Staff consulted with County and City agencies that are responsible for arts, culture, and recreation funding and that may be eligible for federal and state arts funding, in order to receive input on the design of a potential new Metro grants program and to explore the possibility of collaborations on funding such a program. We will continue to explore these potential partnerships.

Staff developed a conceptual structure that could be the starting point for program design if, and when, funding becomes available. This concept would be refined through additional staff analysis, conversations with partner agencies, and public outreach. Additionally, these concepts will evolve as Metro's planning for and implementation of the Games Mobility Concept advances. Staff has identified two possible categories of events:

1. Neighborhood-scale events dispersed throughout LA County - Metro could provide technical assistance for first-time applicants. Funding criteria could prioritize a ground-up approach, including community arts, culture, and recreational organizations' involvement and outreach. These events could occur anywhere in incorporated and unincorporated LA County and would not need to be near an Olympic venue. The events could be smaller open street events, play streets, neighborhood walks, or bike rides, which fund arts, cultural, and/or recreational activities that seek to enliven a corridor and/or transportation facility (which could include rail stations, mobility hubs, or multiple bus stops). The events would encourage applicants to creatively engage their community and design their own vision of success for an Olympic Open Streets activated by arts, culture, and recreation.
2. Regionally significant events near Olympic venues - these could include a planning round to ensure agencies have time and resources for community engagement as articulated in the first category. Regionally significant events could be large-scale open streets events with scalable plans to implement more frequent closures to motor vehicles along a route or a major arts/cultural/recreational event designed to reach a large audience.

### **Murals On State Highways**

In addition to calling for a new grant program, the September 2022 Metro Board Motion called for staff to “Engage with the California Department of Transportation related to opportunities for new and restored murals on the State Highway System.” Based on conversations with Highway Operations, Metro Art and Caltrans staff, staff identified significant challenges to the maintenance and governance of the murals along Caltrans right-of-way (the state highway system). Based on this history, we do not envision that a potential new program fund murals along any public right-of-way inaccessible to pedestrians, transit riders, and cyclists. However, staff will continue conversations with Caltrans and LA28 about any future opportunities and plans related to the 2028 Games.

### **EQUITY PLATFORM**

The potential grant program would provide County Residents opportunities to enjoy streets and transportation activated with art, culture, and recreation tied to themes of mobility and the Olympics. This includes and will prioritize (through grant criteria) those from historically underserved communities. Applicants will potentially need to explain how their event development will include community outreach designed to engage community members, including EFC members. This collaborative process will ensure a balanced reflection of community feedback and involvement. By providing additional scoring points during the competitive application review process for events held in historically marginalized and vulnerable communities, events and programs are more likely to be held in areas where the community has expressed the need for open space, art and culture, and opportunities to experience alternative modes of transportation.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

This new potential grant program aligns with Strategic Plan Goals 3 and 4. By introducing local communities and stakeholders to the potential for car-free and car-light mobility in the context of arts, culture, recreation, and the Olympics, Metro is leveraging its investment through this program to promote the development of transit-oriented communities. The program could potentially synergize with other governmental entities active on arts, culture, and recreation and those involved in planning the 2028 Games, contributing to Metro’s regional leadership and collaboration.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will work with internal and external stakeholders to secure funding sources. Once funding is secured staff will return to the Board to propose launching the program, including the next steps for outreach, guideline development, and grant application solicitation.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Board Motion 9

Attachment B - List of outreach meetings with stakeholders

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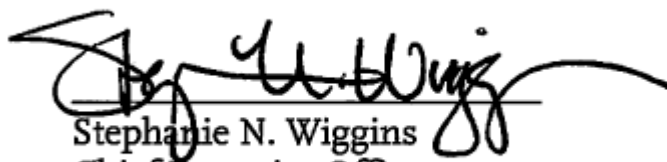
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