

Entrance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Formulating an Arts Policy for BART: Findings and Recommendations

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Formulating an Arts Policy for BART: Findings and Recommendations

In 2013, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) initiated steps toward the formal adoption of policies and procedures for a revitalized art program. The adoption of an art policy, and the subsequent development of art program guidelines, will build upon the District's past efforts to integrate quality art into BART facilities to improve the customer experience, infuse stations with elements of surprise and wonder, and strengthen the sense of identity and vibrancy in communities throughout the District. The policy and subsequent documents will provide a framework for integrating art into larger BART initiatives and will explore the potential for expansion of the program through innovative partnerships with art and cultural organizations, regional municipalities, and other public and private funders.

The report incorporates the insight and recommendations from BART Board and staff and from dozens of community stakeholders who were asked for advice on how to best renew and revitalize the art program.

ART PROGRAM GOALS

The BART Art Policy defines eight program goals, which align with and support BART's station modernization objectives: *Make Transit Work, Create Place, and Connect to Community.*

OVERALL

Cohesion. Create a cohesive and consistent art program.

Opportunity. Proactively seek opportunities to implement art across the District.

Partnerships. Maximize art in the system by leveraging BART's investments through partnerships with other organizations and agencies, and through grant writing and fundraising.

MAKE TRANSIT WORK

Make Transit Work. Use arts programming to further BART's functional goals and enhance public perception of BART as a transit system that works well for its riders.

Showcase Art. Maintain and make BART's art collection accessible through effective asset management and interpretive strategies.

CREATE PLACE

Integrated Design. Utilize art to elevate the design of stations and affirm the distinct identity of the surrounding community.

CONNECT TO COMMUNITY

Transparency. Establish a transparent and effective process for developing and implementing collaborative projects and programming.

Engagement. Engage with communities throughout the BART system to enhance customer relations, support BART's positive impact in communities and create visible expressions of the unique characteristics of neighborhoods around stations and along tracks.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interviews with Board members and staff revealed that the structure, funding and administration of the current art program are not widely understood. On an agency-wide basis, there seems to be only a vague awareness of the art program, a lack of understanding of its purpose and structure, and little to no knowledge of the majority of the fifty-plus station artworks currently owned by BART. Perhaps more worrying, where there is an awareness of the past experiences of art at BART, these experiences are often viewed with concern about the viability/appropriateness of art in the high impact environment of heavily trafficked stations, about the negative community response/participation the art has sometimes elicited, about deferred maintenance and intrusion of art on BART's day to day maintenance needs, and about the potential of art to distract from the primary mission of BART.

On the positive side, there is an overall and enthusiastic consensus at the Board and executive levels that a more formal and professionally managed art program can and should be a valuable asset to BART that can, in fact, support BART's vision and goals. Art and cultural activities can help attract new ridership, address vandalism and wayfinding concerns, transform stations into community assets, and create positive new connections between BART and its communities. Research completed for this report finds that clear and consistent policies and guidelines can help BART staff overcome internal ambivalence about art in transit.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

(ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE FOUND IN THE FULL REPORT)

To respond to BART staff’s historic experiences and concerns about art, and help BART build and leverage positive outside exposure to art in BART, the consultant team has developed recommendations in six program areas. The full report describes additional recommendations and how they address key issues or objectives—this summary shows core highlights that are integrated into the policy.

1. STAFFING: Per APTA Recommended practice, a full-time Arts Manager position should be created to bring vision, continuity, and leadership to the program. The Art Program Manager should be an equal participant in the planning, design, and implementation of all capital projects to ensure that artwork is strategically integrated into new and upgraded facilities.

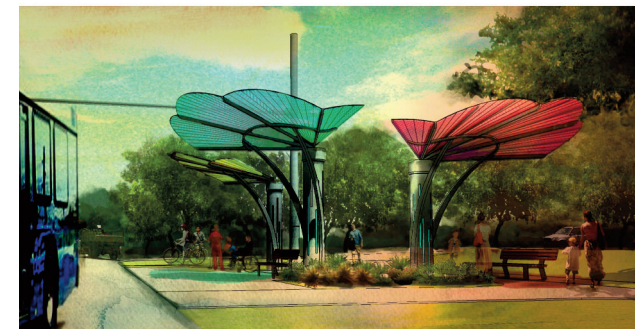
2. ADMINISTRATION: The Art Program should be an integral and respected part of a lead department in the agency. Its vision and guiding principles should be communicated, understood and complied with on an agency-wide basis in order to maintain its viability and success. Standard documents, including Requests for Qualifications/Proposals, Professional Service Agreements, Accessioning and Archival Forms and others should be developed according to industry Best Practices and incorporated into a comprehensive arts management strategy.

3. FUNDING: National Art in Transit Best Practices confirm that consistent and adequate funding is essential for a vibrant, rich and contemporary art program. The adoption of a “percent for art” policy will ensure that new capital projects and certain system upgrades include an allocation for permanent art acquisitions and related arts programming. An annual allocation from the Operating Budget will fund program staffing, community outreach and engagement, collections management, and promotion and publicity. Both capital set asides and operating allocations are critical to the ongoing success of a robust art program.

In an entrepreneurial environment that values open-source, user-generated content and the ability to “do-it-yourself,” current and future generations of BART riders come hardwired with the expectation that they will be able to contribute to and interact with an environment that is responsive to them. They prefer participation to passive experience. They regard problem solving as a satisfying creative activity.

BART’s new Art Program Manager can forge partnerships with local cultural organizations to yield user-generated programs and “hackathon” type events that engage with communities and draw innovative solutions to BART’s challenges, similar to the Prototyping Festival in Downtown San Francisco.

The Austin Capital Metro bus shelter competition, which resulted in this winning entry by Sara Partridge and Melissa Robledo, is one example of applying these concepts to a transit environment.



4. ARTS INTEGRATION: Planning for art should be included in the earliest stages of a project's development. BART staff, design consultants and contractors often view art as either an obstacle or a threat to what is typically an engineering-led design process. Art consistently competes for space with advertising, retail, signage, furnishings and other amenities, severely reducing its ability to have a meaningful impact in the stations. If done proactively, art can support BART needs such as wayfinding, attracting new riders, encouraging pedestrian access to stations instead of driving, graffiti abatement, and addressing capacity concerns.

5. TEMPORARY ARTS / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: When done alone, permanent art programs produce static objects that do not have a capacity to reflect changes in the community over time. Moreover, they foreclose ongoing opportunities to renew connections to stakeholders who may have disengaged from an overly familiar setting, to encourage positive civic and social behaviors, and to build long-lived positive partnerships with the public(s) that the agency serves.

Using art as an engagement mechanism goes beyond the mere practicalities of surveying public opinion, and ensures BART's community interface becomes more intentional and actively responsive to local identity, concerns and aspirations. Artful community engagement can give voice to the communities that BART serves, and to BART's investments, efforts, needs and issues.

6. COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT: An annual line item from the Operating Fund should be allocated for collections management and conservation. Ongoing care of BART's art collection will communicate respect for art as a cultural asset and respect for its riders through maintenance of the higher design elements of a station. It is also a necessary requirement to build trust and confidence amongst prospective partners and funders in the arts community. If done strategically, interpretation of the collection can demonstrate that BART's art program is an extension of the larger system's goals and objectives—each work is trying to achieve something for BART. Effectively, an art program that is not interpreted is a program that is not fully yielding a return on investment for BART.

Photographic lightboxes provide a unique opportunity to display work by artists who are under-represented in the field of public art, and by community groups reflecting today's pressing issues and perspectives. Temporary displays will appeal to a broad audience and draw regular attention by virtue of the artwork's changing content, imagery, and expression.



Joyce Campbell
In the Ether, 2015
LACMTA

NEXT STEPS: A PHASED APPROACH

Adopting an art policy is the first step in the goal of leveraging art to support BART's strategic goals. At the same time, it is important to set realistic expectations for what may be accomplished in the near term. A dedicated Art Program Manager will help achieve program goals and resolve existing issues, but one person can only do so much. Following are some steps that the Program Manager can take in the first year following policy adoption, to lay the groundwork for a stable, successful program:

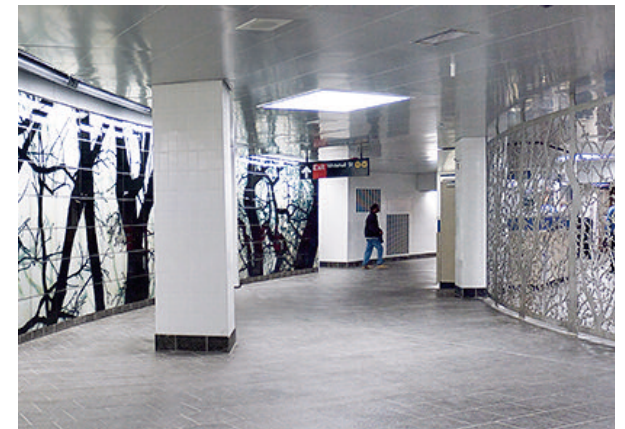
EARLY WINS: These early actions will help BART achieve greater impact from the launch of the art program and establish credibility and visibility among its various constituents:

- Conserve and interpret the current art collection
- Highlight projects already in the pipeline, especially those commissioned with the Station Modernization Program, which will elevate the profile of other key investments in state of good repair and station functionality.
- Pilot temporary and community-based programs, such as graffiti-abatement mural programs or community sponsored competitions and partnerships with other organizations.

ART MASTER PLAN: Creative and innovative place-making requires a deep understanding of the history and cultural assets of a particular location. An arts master plan will help BART gain an understanding of the assets already surrounding its stations to integrate these into its placemaking efforts, and will enable BART to establish art priorities in advance, facilitating efforts to pursue external funding opportunities as they arise and readily integrate art as fast-moving capital projects within BART advance.

Using Art to Achieve Station Modernization Goals

Art in station modernization can add value to transit infrastructure, attract and maintain new riders, contribute to a feeling of safety and security, improve wayfinding, alleviate platform crowding, and reduce graffiti and vandalism. Including artists in the design of facilities can transform stations into places conveying positive messages about transit, and the surrounding communities, as seen in this example from New York's Battery Park MTA station.



Doug and Mike Starn
See It Split, See It Change, 2008

ART PROGRAM GUIDELINES: Guidelines will address many of BART staff's past issues, concerns, and fears around art implementation. A thoughtful and thorough set of guidelines will assist staff with making the program efficient and avoid reinventing the wheel, while also demystifying the process of how art is commissioned, interpreted, promoted and maintained for the interested public. Guidelines to be established in the first year of the program include:

- Administration guidelines for siting, selecting, installing, and maintaining artwork and clarifying roles among BART departments.
- An Artists Tool Box to provide external information to artists
- Community Partnership guidelines to describe the goals and processes for community-generated art projects.

ART TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: As BART develops the master plan and guidelines, formalizing relationships with a representative group of external stakeholders through a committee will provide BART with ongoing informed input throughout the first year of art policy implementation. This will also serve to solidify BART's reputation as a proponent of the arts within the field and enable BART to connect to the intellectual, social, and possibly financial resources of external partners.