



APTA SUDS-UD-RP-007-13, Rev. 1

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APTA Urban Design Working Group

Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects

Abstract: Creative art and design bring a vital spark to a place and create meaningful experiences while engaging customers and communities. Integrating art into transit capital projects results in stations, facilities and places that welcome, inspire and move customers. These recommended best practices capture lessons learned and the knowledge and experience of transit art professionals who have developed and delivered capital projects that have successfully integrated art and design, building character and quality of place.

Keywords: art administrator, art program manager, best practices, capital projects, contemporary public art, creative placemaking, percent for art, program guidelines, project guidelines

Summary: The integration of public art and the emphasis on design excellence and art in transit is a global phenomenon codified in the U.S. The periodic defining and recommendation of best practices ensures the continued relevance of processes and protocols used in the field. This paper documents best practices used by experienced transit art administrators who are well-versed in contemporary art and have developed comprehensive art in transit programs across the country.



Foreword

The American Public Transportation Association is a standards development organization in North America. The process of developing standards is managed by the APTA Standards Program's Standards Development Oversight Council (SDOC). These activities are carried out through several standards policy and planning committees that have been established to address specific transportation modes, safety and security requirements, interoperability, and other topics.

APTA used a consensus-based process to develop this document and its continued maintenance, which is detailed in the [manual for the APTA Standards Program](#). This document was drafted in accordance with the approval criteria and editorial policy as described. Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

This document was prepared by the Sustainability and Urban Design Working group as directed by the Sustainability Steering Committee.

This document represents a common viewpoint of those parties concerned with its provisions, namely transit operating/planning agencies, manufacturers, consultants, engineers and general interest groups. The application of any recommended practices or guidelines contained herein is voluntary. APTA standards are mandatory to the extent incorporated by an applicable statute or regulation. In some cases, federal and/or state regulations govern portions of a transit system's operations. In cases where there is a conflict or contradiction between an applicable law or regulation and this document, consult with a legal adviser to determine which document takes precedence.

This document supersedes APTA SUDS-UD-RP-007-13, which has been revised. Below is a summary of changes from the previous document version:

- Updated introduction
- Updated content for benefits of art in transit and recommended best practices
- Additional resources added



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Introduction

This introduction is not part of APTA SUDS-UD-RP-007-13, “Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects.”

APTA recommends the use of this document by:

- individuals or organizations that operate transit systems;
- individuals or organizations that contract with others for the operation of transit systems; and
- individuals or organizations that influence how transit systems are operated (including but not limited to consultants, designers and contractors).

Scope and purpose

This recommended practice is the first of a series of APTA documents on art intended to support APTA members as they work to improve their transit systems. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance in the development and implementation of transit art programs and the incorporation of contemporary art into transit infrastructure projects. Future documents will expand upon these practices. The recommendations are presented by veteran transit art administrators representing various-sized programs and agencies and are based



on their lessons learned. The intent is to ensure that transit customers are the recipients of high-quality art and design that improve their transit experience.

Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects

1. Overview

APTA SUDS UD RP 003-11, “Why Design Matters for Transit,” clearly outlines how aesthetics, function and durability combine to enhance the transportation experience. That document demonstrates the strong link between art and design and the value of pursuing both simultaneously. The reasons for committing to integrating high-quality art into transit facilities are closely related to those for design excellence.

The visual quality of a public transit system has a profound impact on transit riders, the community at large and the image of a city, with implications for a city’s livability and economy. Well-designed public transit systems are positive symbols for cities, attracting local riders, tourists, and the attention of decision-makers and attendees of national and international events. High-quality public art and design improve the appearance and safety of a facility, add vibrancy to public spaces and make patrons feel welcome, often resulting in higher usage of the facility. Excellent design and high-quality art contribute to the goal of transit facilities aiding in creating communities where people wish to live and work. The best practices in this document provide guidance to transit agencies and enable them to maximize the potential benefits of including art in their transit capital construction projects.

This document specifically addresses permanently installed transit art as part of capital projects. Art in transit can take many other forms as well, including events, programming, and changing art installations on vehicles and in stations. These will be addressed in future recommended practice documents.

2. Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation initiated its support for high-quality art and design in federally funded transit projects in the 1970s. At the time, the National Endowment for the Arts published “The Design Necessity,” a case study of federal design projects presented at the first Federal Design Assembly.

In early 1977, President Jimmy Carter asked the U.S. Department of Transportation agencies to support projects that contribute to the architectural and cultural heritage of local communities. Consequently, the DOT’s Design, Art and Architecture Program officially supported the expenditure of funds for permanent public art in transit projects.

In 1978 Boston was one of three cities to receive DOT funds under the new program. Atlanta received support for its Hartsfield International Airport Terminal and Baltimore for the restoration of architectural details in its historic Pennsylvania Station. Greater Boston’s Arts on the Line program was a joint initiative of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Cambridge Arts Council. Arts on the Line became an award-winning DOT “pilot project” for art in transit, establishing guidelines for the administration and integration of public art in a transit system. Numerous transit art programs followed Boston, including in New York, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Cleveland, St. Louis, Baltimore, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Atlanta, San Jose, Portland and Seattle.

In June 1995, the Federal Transit Administration revised and updated its initial guidelines. FTA Circular 9400.1A updated the continued federal support for art and design and provided revised guidelines for the incorporation of high-quality design and art reflecting changes in the field of public art and transit. FTA continued flexible guidelines that left the level of allocation (from a minimum 0.5% but not to exceed 5% of project costs) at the discretion of the local transit entity. The FTA acknowledged that transit agencies had repeatedly demonstrated that the communities they serve greatly benefited from high-quality design and art.

In the past three decades, transit art has evolved as a distinct field. Transit art is installed in high-traffic, environmentally exposed environments and must address operational issues very different from those of other public art. Transit art—like transit architecture, transit engineering or transit operations—is a specialized expertise, and it is crucial that transit art programs be managed by arts professionals with experience in transit.

The best practice for a transit art program is to have a full-time art professional (the transit art program manager) on the agency staff. Art is not a one-time undertaking; once art is installed, it must be maintained, and ongoing programs should introduce the public to the art on the system. The transit art program manager serves as a continuing source of expertise; maintains institutional knowledge; and serves as a liaison with agency staff, artists and the arts community. An agency large enough to regularly construct major capital projects—or large enough to maintain a significant fixed-guideway transit system—can justify this full-time staff addition.

This document outlines the process of establishing and managing a permanent arts program to manage transit art in capital projects. These guidelines will therefore be most relevant to large and medium-sized agencies. However, smaller agencies can also successfully implement transit art capital projects. The same fundamental principles will apply, but the implementation will vary. A future recommended practice document will address practices relevant to smaller agencies.

3. Benefits of art in transit

3.1 Encourages ridership

Public artwork can add value to a public transit agency’s primary goal of building ridership. Art can entice the choice rider, a major target audience for increasing ridership, as well as attract new riders.

3.2 Improves perception of transit

The presence of high-quality art engenders a positive perception of transit. Transit riders appreciate the aesthetic value art brings to their surroundings and react positively to features that were expressly created to improve the transit experience.

3.3 Conveys customer care

The inclusion of art demonstrates an agency’s attention to the personal experience of its riders and a concern for the well-being of its patrons. In much the same way that the immediate removal of graffiti helps maintain the feeling of a secure environment, the presence of art sends the message “We care.”

3.4 Enhances community livability

Art can become a galvanizing or unifying element for a neighborhood and can help set the tone for adjacent development and improvements. Art helps cement the impression of permanence and can be the catalyst that helps others commit to investing resources into development infrastructure.

3.5 Improves customer experience

Public transit agencies continually work to improve service reliability, safety, competence and desirability. A positive customer experience is critical for maintaining and increasing transit ridership. Art is a cost-effective way of heightening the customer experience and associating public transit with positive cultural images and aspirations.

3.6 Improves organizational identity

Art that is well cared for and actively promoted through informational programs and materials can enhance the image of a transit agency within its region of operation. A successful art program is one more way for transit agencies to project an overall image of competence and desirability.

3.7 Deters vandalism

Art adds a humanistic dimension to the customer environment and in doing so may deter graffiti and other forms of vandalism.

3.8 Increases safety and security

Well-lit, well-designed transit stations that include high-quality art create an environment that provides riders with a sense of safety and security. When the public's respect for place is heightened, positive behavior results. The integration of art in public spaces sends a message that this is a valued space and in effect that the people who use the space are also valued.

4. Recommended best practices

4.1 Program development

With the professional guidance of an experienced transit art program manager, a transit agency can establish a transit art program that conforms to best practices used by other transit agencies. Each agency identifies its transit art program needs and the best means of implementing and achieving its program goals and objectives. Recommended best practices include the following:

- Establishing an agency policy or resolution setting the percentage of the capital improvement budget to be used to integrate art into all future capital improvement projects and specifying ineligible project components. The amount allocated for art is typically between 1% and 2% of capital project budgets, though it may be as high as 5%.
- Defining eligibility of artistic undertakings that the agency supports and ineligibility of artistic undertakings that promote specific private, corporate, business, nonprofit, religious or political interests.
- Establishing flexible administrative guidelines based on best practices demonstrated in the transit art field.
- Creating an agency staff position for a transit art program manager and hiring an arts administration professional with experience integrating artwork into capital projects.
- Engaging arts professionals through the transit art program manager, who may establish an advisory group of arts professionals to provide expert advice to transit art program staff.
- Outlining acceptable methods for the selection of artists through a competitive professional peer review process.
- Defining community involvement in appropriate and specific ways to ensure understanding and appreciation of the art by the transit ridership and neighboring communities.
- Ensuring early art program involvement in early project planning, preliminary engineering, scope development, and development of overall project technical documents.

4.2 Program management

As with other key functions at a transit agency, a transit art program should be an integral part of the agency and led by a qualified and experienced transit art professional. The transit art program manager develops, administers and leads the agency's transit art program.

Transit art professionals bring a range of highly specialized and critical skills to the agency, including but not limited to the following:

- Ability to bridge the artistic and public sector worlds, serving as an integral conduit in planning and implementing public art.
- Knowledge of transit operations and maintenance, ensuring that the development and long-term needs of the art program within the agency are addressed effectively.
- Ability to identify appropriate, impactful art opportunities, locations and materials for the project and to create specialized scopes of work and calls to artists.
- Ability to attract artists to participate in transit art programs. Without professional arts administrators, highly qualified artists will not participate in projects.
- Ability to guide artists through the complex and lengthy process of design and construction, ensuring that artists do their best work, meet critical deadlines and adhere to budgets.
- Expertise in highly specialized art fabrication and installation materials and methods.
- Ability to communicate effectively with the public, arts community, media, elected officials and other stakeholders on arts-related topics, and to develop effective informational and educational materials.

The agency's transit art program manager is typically a member of each capital project team, serving as the subject matter expert and liaison between the artist and the project team and design professionals, engineers, fabricators, contractors and subcontractors to integrate the art into each project.

The transit art program manager is responsible for the ongoing oversight of the agency's art collection. This oversight includes key areas such as asset management, maintenance and repairs, relocation and alterations, art law, donations, and deaccessioning.

4.3 Funding

Funding for art in transit projects varies among cities, states and transit authorities, as does the source of funding for the capital improvement projects, which can include federal, state, county, city (local), private or a combination of these sources. Funding for the integration of public art into a project is typically between 1% and 2% of the project's capital budget, though it may be as high as 5%.

The capital budget "line item" for project art covers the design and fabrication of the artwork. In some cases, such as where the art project is not part of a larger infrastructure construction project or the installation requires specialized skills, the art line item may also cover installation costs.

Long-term care and maintenance of art is funded outside the capital budget, typically through the agency's operational budget, as is customary and required with other physical assets.

4.4 Project planning and development

The transit art program manager must be involved at the earliest stages of a capital project's planning and development to ensure integration of art into the project, as well as to determine the best time to bring the artist on board, which may vary from project to project.

Lessons learned reaffirm the importance of informed art program staff working directly with the project team and developing the opportunities, locations and materials for the artwork based on their knowledge and familiarity with transit operations and the project community. The art program staff develop and issue scopes of work and calls to artists and serve as the liaison between the artist and the project team, design professionals, engineers, fabricators, contractors and subcontractors to integrate the art into each project.

Under certain circumstances, the transit art program manager may employ a collaborative approach by including artists with substantial experience working on large capital building projects and/or transit infrastructure projects on the project design team.

4.5 Criteria for art

Criteria for art should be clearly stated in all artist solicitations and should include the items in this section.

4.5.1 Quality of the work

High-quality artwork is determined by recognized arts professionals such as curators, arts administrators and artists qualified to evaluate contemporary artist portfolios, credentials and/or proposals.

4.5.2 Site-specificity

An artist's concept and the physical artwork are integrated into the project and should relate to the project site, immediate landscape, urban fabric and/or surrounding communities.

4.5.3 Durability of materials

Art in transit systems is exposed to a variety of harsh conditions, including continual heavy public use, buildup of soot and grime, a range of climate conditions, and vandalism. Materials should be chosen for minimal maintenance and proven ability to withstand the challenging transit environment and specific environmental conditions of the area.

4.5.4 Community engagement

The extent and type of community involvement is determined by the transit art program manager and commissioning agency and will vary depending on both the project and the community. Similarly, the amount of interaction the artist is expected to have with the community will also differ. While some artists are more process-oriented than others, the ultimate goal is to produce permanent artwork that will continue to engage the community for many years to come.

Community members and stakeholders' knowledge of the character, makeup and history of their neighborhoods is a valuable resource to art program staff and commissioned artists, who may not otherwise be aware of sensitive local histories or contemporary conditions.

4.6 Selection of artists

Best practices recommend that the process used to select artists be structured to ensure a justifiable process, demonstrating appropriate use of public funds. The transit art program manager develops calls to artists and uses various avenues to reach artists throughout the country to ensure that the process is competitive and

effective. The process, which will vary depending upon the nature and scope of the project, characteristics of the site, resources, and state and local statutes, should include the following:

- **A call to artists:** This is designed to solicit national, regional and/or local professional artists.
- **Selection of artists:** Selection should be by a panel of recognized arts professionals, knowledgeable about contemporary public art and what artists can contribute to a public art project.
 - The panel may include but is not limited to contemporary art administrators, artists, art educators and curators.
 - Selection of artists should be based on past high-quality works and appropriateness of their work to the scope and scale of the project.
 - Eligibility of artists does not include consideration of race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation or age.

The selection process can be two-phased, with finalists being chosen during the first phase and paid to develop and present specific proposals for the project in the second phase.

4.7 Art contracts

The transit art program manager provides the expertise to write and manage contracts, including artists and fabrication contracts. Their knowledge covers issues such as artist copyright, scope of services, roles and responsibilities, risk management and insurance requirements, sequence of tasks, schedules, coordination of construction, compensation, documentation requirements, maintenance instructions for the completed artwork, and procedures for alterations to or removal of the artwork.

4.8 Technical review

Art undergoes technical reviews at various design and construction phases. Reviews are organized by the transit art program manager and are usually done by agency representatives with specific expertise, including but not limited to project team planners; designers; engineers; and representatives from the transit operation, safety, security and maintenance departments. Agency engineers review engineering drawings and ensure that requirements such as welding certifications and tests are met. When artists propose using unfamiliar materials, this often requires a conservationist review. Transit art staff guide and prepare the artists in responding to such reviews.

Transit art program staff and arts professionals have the experience, skills and familiarity with contemporary art, materials options and the realities of transit environments necessary to guide the design and fabrication process to help ensure the longevity and appropriate care of the art collection. It is important to ensure that maintenance considerations are built into the review process.

4.9 Fabrication

The transit art program manager determines with the artists the best approaches to fabrication. In some cases, fabrication will be done by the artist's chosen fabricator under contract to the artist, agency or general contractor, when they have demonstrated fabrication experience.

4.10 Installation

In most cases, the agency's general contractor installs the artwork. The general contractor provides the footings, riggings and other installation details required to integrate the work into the project site. The artist or fabricator's contract should provide for delivery to the construction site and inspection by all parties, before the artwork becomes the general contractor's responsibility as the liable party.

Exceptions will apply when the art is best installed by the artisan/fabricator who produced the work. The art staff and often the artist are present at the site during the installation to advise on any adjustments needed or issues that arise, and this role should be made clear at the outset of the project.

4.11 Documentation

After installation, either the transit agency or the artist (if specified in the artist's contract), under the direction of the transit art program manager, photographically documents the art and completes a permanent record. A permanent record should include such information as general description, artistic intent, desired appearance over time, materials, fabricators, installers and maintenance recommendations.

4.12 Maintenance and conservation

The transit agency needs to have a long-term commitment to the care and maintenance of its art collection. The transit art program manager works closely with operations and maintenance staff to ensure the longevity of the agency's art collection and determines what maintenance can be done by in-house staff and when a qualified conservator should be contracted.

Most agencies establish a line-item cost in the annual operation budget to ensure the ongoing maintenance of art and establish a separate fund for more comprehensive art conservation. Ongoing and periodic maintenance lessens the expense of conservation over time. The transit art program manager should be involved in any alterations to transit facilities that may affect artwork.

4.13 Education, ongoing information and engagement

The best practice for a transit system is to have an ongoing program to introduce the public to the art on the system. Transit art staff working with appropriate agency departments should ensure that art and artists are introduced to the public through various ongoing outreach activities. Such activities may include receptions, public inaugurations, media coverage, exhibitions, social media and other means.

Interpretive materials such as online information, smartphone or digital applications, guidebooks, brochures, and plaques are critical tools in assisting transit users and the general public to gain understanding and appreciation of the full content and meaning of artwork, beyond just their physical appearance. Digital resources such as audio tours and other downloadable information add to the possible means of educating the public about the art.

Related APTA standards

APTA SUDS-UD-RP-003-11, “Why Design Matters for Transit”

Resources

APTA: Why Design Matters for Transit. https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Standards_Documents/APTA-SUDS-UD-RP-003-11.pdf

Boston Arts on the Line History (nation's first transit art program), history. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_on_the_Line

Boston Arts on the Line History (nation's first transit art program), YouTube documentary. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvqy9xYGY5Y>

FTA: Art in Transit: Making it Happen. <https://libraryarchives.metro.net/dpctl/usdot/1996-art-in-transit-making-it-happen.pdf>

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro, Art Policy. <https://art.metro.net/metro-art-policy/>

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro, Art program website. <https://art.metro.net/>

New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, MTA All Agency, Policy Directive. <http://web.mta.info/art/ArtsforTransit.pdf>

New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Arts & Design, website. <http://www.mta.info/art>

Portland TriMet, Public Art Policy. <https://trimet.org/publicart/pdf/public-art-policy.pdf>

Portland TriMet, Public Art Program, website. <https://trimet.org/publicart/>

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit, Public Art Policy. https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/docs/Art_Policy_Revised_Final_2.pdf

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Art on BART program, website. <https://www.bart.gov/about/planning/art-program>

St Louis Metro Arts in Transit website. <http://www.artsintransit.org/>

TCRP: Transforming the Transportation Customer Experience through Contemporary Artistic Practice. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0361198118791377>

USDOT: Design, Art and Architecture in Transportation. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Design_Art_Architecture_in_Transportatio/MzcjDBk16kUC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=1977+%22good+design,+art+and+architecture+in+transportation+facilities+and+services%22+brock+adams&pg=PA1&printsec=frontcover

USDOT: Aesthetics in Transportation. https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/lCtA4dR7UdMC?hl=en&gbpv=1

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USDOT: Way to Go the Benefits of Quality Design in Transportation.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Way_to_Go/AwCPBCDEzVQC?hl=en&gbpv=1

Definitions

administrative guidelines: Operational processes developed to implement and carry out the public art policy. Guidelines should be flexible and follow best practices in the field of public art.

arts professional: A trained professional with expertise in the arts and artistic processes.

best practices: Methodologies developed and generally accepted by experienced professionals in a given field.

contemporary art: The art of our time. Work created by artists and sanctioned by professionals in the art world.

percent for art programs: Programs of municipalities, organizations and transit agencies whereby a percentage of capital project budgets are set aside for the integration of art into a project.

placemaking: A holistic process of engaging communities in defining and designing public spaces to meet their needs and to create a sense of place.

public art: Works of art in any media, created by an artist and planned and executed with the specific intention of being publicly accessible and in the physical public domain.

public art policy: A formal policy adopted by a transit agency that provides an operational framework for a public art program.

transit art professional: A trained professional with expertise in the arts and artistic processes, as well as the practicalities of transit and transit construction.

Abbreviations and acronyms

DOT Department of Transportation
FTA Federal Transit Administration

Document history

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First published	—	—	—	—	June 28, 2013
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