



Transportation
for America



ARTS, CULTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

A Creative Placemaking Field Scan

Commissioned by ArtPlace America



Acknowledgements

This field scan was conducted and authored by Transportation for America's Arts & Culture team, led by Ben Stone, Director of Arts & Culture, and Mallory Nezam, Arts & Culture/Outreach Associate. Interviewees with expertise in transportation planning, transportation policy, art, culture, arts administration, and design shared the knowledge that formed the bulk of this scan. Steve Davis, Smart Growth America Director of Communications, provided editorial support and layout.

ArtPlace America's Jamie Hand, Director of Research Strategies, and Danya Sherman, Research Strategies Consultant, guided the project and contributed important editorial feedback.

Author's note

Transportation For America's (T4A) Arts and Culture team leads the organization's broad efforts to help communities across the country better integrate arts, culture and creative placemaking into neighborhood revitalization, equitable development and transportation planning efforts. T4A's Arts and Culture team was commissioned by ArtPlace America to conduct this research and author this report.

Transportation for America is an alliance of elected, business and civic leaders from communities across the country, united to ensure that states and the federal government step up to invest in smart, homegrown, locally-driven transportation solutions — because these are the investments that hold the key to our future economic prosperity. t4america.org **Transportation for America is a project of Smart Growth America.**

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**Transportation
for America**



Smart Growth America
Improving lives by improving communities

ArtPlace America (ArtPlace) is a ten-year collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that works to position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities.

ARTPLACE

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Foreword

ArtPlace America focuses its work on creative placemaking, which describes projects in which art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development. The “creative” simply invites artists and arts organizations to join their neighbors as collaborators into the suite of placemaking strategies pioneered by Jane Jacobs and her colleagues, who believed that community development must be locally informed, human-centered and holistic.

In looking at who does community planning and development in America’s communities, we have found that our colleagues are generally organized into ten sectors: Agriculture & Food, Economic Development, Education & Youth, Environment & Energy, Housing, Immigration, Public Safety, Transportation, and Workforce Development. As a core part of our research agenda, we are exploring how arts and cultural practitioners are and might become partners in helping to achieve each of these sector’s goals.

The document that follows is one of several “field scans” that ArtPlace America has commissioned to begin this work. This one, conducted and authored by Transportation for America, seeks to illuminate key priorities for the transportation sector and to provide a framework for understanding the ways that arts and culture can help achieve transportation-specific goals.

Each field scan serves as a framing document for a working group tasked with taking the analysis and findings one step further, helping ArtPlace to identify the best practices that warrant formal case studies, key methods for evaluating success, and strategic framing of the material in a way that resonates with people most likely to take up creative placemaking practice in this sector. The field scan is not an end in itself, but an initial inquiry that, together with other field scans, will inform both ArtPlace’s work as well as those working at the intersection of art and community development more broadly.

Each field scan addresses two primary audiences: artists and other arts and cultural practitioners seeking to better understand and collaborate with a particular community development sector (in this case, the transportation sector); and community development practitioners who are interested in how arts and culture partners might further their work.

Our ultimate goal is for these two audiences to develop a shared language and a set of mutual goals, so that communities will benefit from these powerful, cross-sector synergies.

JAMIE HAND

Director of Research Strategies

ArtPlace America

INTRODUCTION

RECENT HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & DESIGN

Transportation systems can and should be a powerful tool to help people access opportunity, drive economic development, improve health and safety, and build the civic and social capital that binds communities together. Unfortunately, a historic, top-down, technocratic approach to transportation planning and design has failed to achieve these goals for everyone. This has resulted in transportation systems that do not equitably serve communities of color, low-income people, and other disadvantaged communities.

It's not hard to see the evidence...



Buford Highway, Atlanta, GA. Photo by Steve Davis, Smart Growth America.

People of color, especially African Americans, are disproportionately killed while walking on streets that are dangerous by design.¹ The interstate highway network, begun in earnest in the 1960's, was designed to accelerate out-migration from cities, often prioritizing white commuters at the expense of the inner-city neighborhoods of color that those roads either obliterated or cut in half. These sorts of structural problems persist today in part because the field of state or local transportation professionals, and their governing bodies, rarely include a representative percentage of people of color, hindering efforts to provide culturally-specific solutions to these disparities.^{2,3} But it goes beyond representation — it's also due to our historic top-down approach to transportation planning that has rarely engaged the public in a meaningful way.

But there's reason for optimism.

Eager to find a better way, scores of communities are looking to new, creative, collaborative approaches as they plan and build new transportation projects, and artists have a role to play in helping transportation professionals achieve the broader goals of transportation investment. They can help create more collaborative processes that build greater public support — support which is needed more than ever during a time in which technology is rapidly reshaping how people get around, funding is uncertain, and the political climate is unpredictable.

Many artists are doing this through a process called **creative placemaking**. This term refers to projects in which “art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development.”⁴ Transportation for America defines creative placemaking in the context of transportation as follows:

*Creative placemaking harnesses the power of arts and culture to allow for more genuine public engagement — particularly in low-income neighborhoods, communities of color and among immigrant populations — in the development of transportation projects. Forget the traditional, staid public meeting format and instead imagine artists engaging community members using multiple languages to generate meaningful dialogues, capturing their creativity and local knowledge to better inform the ultimate design of the project. Done right, creative placemaking can lead to both a better process and a better product...The end results are streets, sidewalks and public spaces that welcome us, inspire us and move us in every sense of that word.*⁵

This intersection of art, culture, and transportation is not new, however. Art in transit programs have led to public art in subway stations, on commuter rail platforms, at bus stops, and in other transportation infrastructure for decades.

1 Smart Growth America. (2016). Dangerous by Design. Retrieved from <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

2 Valerie Wilson Economic Policy Institute. (2014, May 9). The Great Recession and the Decline of the Black Middle Class. Retrieved from www.equitycaucus.org/sites/default/files/Share%20of%20Transportation%20Industry%20Jobs%20for%20People%20of%20Color%20%28Valerie%20Wilson%20and%20Transportation%20Learning%20Center%29.pdf

3 Transportation Equity Caucus. (n.d.). Why Equity in Transportation Matters. Retrieved from <http://equitycaucus.org/MakingtheCase/WhyEquity>

4 ArtPlace America. (2017, June 06). Introduction. Retrieved from www.artplaceamerica.org/about/introduction

5 Transportation for America. (n.d.). The Scenic Route: Getting Started with Creative Placemaking and Transportation. Retrieved from <http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/>

But in many cases, the artist's role is an aesthetic contribution through a sculpture or mural; these projects merely bring artists into the process long after community engagement, planning, and design are complete.

While beneficial, this “cherry on top” approach misses the opportunity to engage the artist's creativity from the very beginning of a project. This field scan demonstrates how groups are taking a more comprehensive approach: when artists join a project team at the outset, they can contribute to the process of identifying the problem, organizing support, and collaboratively finding a solution. Thus, this field scan encompasses a broad scope of artistic practices that includes process-oriented approaches in addition to the more familiar forms of public art like murals and sculptures. These types of practices include performance, music, storytelling, digital media, social practice and more.¹

About this field scan

A field scan is a survey and analysis of key trends and practices within a certain field of practice. This field scan is a summary of the ways in which artists are currently contributing to place-based transportation projects. Although it includes a discussion of art in transit and public art programs (both defined later in this document), the field scan **focuses primarily on artistic projects directly addressing a transportation challenge and produced in partnership with others working on that challenge.** The field of public art is also shifting in this direction, due to changes in artistic practice and in funding, so that now many public art programs address various stages of transportation projects in collaboration with other partners.

The seven typologies are introduced in full on the following page:

1 Kennedy, R. (2013, March 23). Outside the Citadel, Social Practice Art Is Intended to Nurture. The New York Times, Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2013/03/24/arts/design/outside-the-citadel-social-practice-art-is-intended-to-nurture.html

SEVEN CHALLENGES, SEVEN SOLUTIONS

THE ROLE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

This field scan explores seven of the most pressing challenges facing the transportation sector today, and identifies how arts and culture contribute to solutions:

1. Generating creative solutions for entrenched transportation

problems. Arts and culture can help develop better projects that attract greater community support by imagining bold transportation solutions that are unconstrained by traditional processes.

2. Making streets safer for all users. Arts and culture can make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists by using creative methods to help transportation professionals empathize with all users.

3. Organizing transportation advocates. Arts and culture can help equip communities to organize and advocate for more equitably distributed transportation investments.

4. Engaging multiple stakeholders for an inclusive process. Arts and culture can help shepherd transportation projects through the community input process more quickly and smoothly by facilitating meaningful participation early and often in the planning process.

5. Fostering local ownership. Arts and culture can help accomplish local goals including improving health, encouraging walking and biking, or increasing transit ridership by incorporating community-sourced artistic and design elements into transportation projects to foster local stewardship and use.

6. Alleviating the disruptive effects of construction. Arts and culture can help overcome the disruption of construction and mitigate the impact on businesses, residents, and visitors by using artistic interventions to create a more accessible and inviting environment.

7. Healing wounds and divisions. Arts and culture can help remedy the divisions created by urban highways and other detrimental transportation infrastructure by physically and culturally reconnecting communities.

The seven characterizations in this field scan, outlined on the previous page, complement the eight approaches to creative placemaking originally identified in *The Scenic Route: Getting Started with Creative Placemaking in Transportation*, our 2016 interactive guide to the topic, intended to introduce the concept to transportation planners, public works agencies and local elected officials. While those eight approaches in *The Scenic Route* serve as a “how-to guide” of actionable steps that communities can take to incorporate creative placemaking into transportation projects, the seven typologies in this field scan do more to illustrate and explain the impact of these approaches on the transportation challenges that communities are trying to solve.



The Scenic Route, published in 2016 by Transportation for America, was intended as an introductory guide to the practice of creative placemaking for transportation professionals and other local elected officials. View the guide at: <http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org>

While the bulk of this scan focuses on the current state of affairs, it concludes with forward-looking implications and lessons for both the transportation and arts sectors. These lessons are drawn largely from interviews with leading experts in both fields, and therefore represent some of the best thinking for future action, helping the two sectors collaborate on the transportation challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow.

Transportation for America recognizes that the full definition of transportation is more expansive than the scope of this field scan; we did not examine air travel or airports, ports or water travel, or the transportation of goods. Instead, we focused on transportation by foot, bicycle, personal vehicle, rideshare, bus, light rail, trolley, and heavy rail. We also excluded recreational transportation such as bike trails and walking paths, except in cases where these contributed to people’s abilities to access resources or reach destinations. Finally, we acknowledge that the benefits of some practices discussed in this field scan are disputed; for example, as new transit spurs transit-oriented development and increases property values, involuntary residential and commercial displacement may be an unintended consequence. Therefore, new or improved transit may be viewed skeptically because of the potential for displacement.

A note on audience

This field scan is primarily intended for a transportation audience. The explanations of artists’ contributions to transportation projects, description of case studies, and recommendations on future action are geared towards explaining to transportation professionals how arts and culture can contribute to delivering transportation projects more smoothly and quickly, improving safety, building community support, and solving other challenges. Secondly, this field scan is intended to introduce an arts audience to the challenges and opportunities faced by the transportation sector, so that artists may more effectively engage with transportation projects.

Glossary of relevant terms

In our attempt to produce a field scan that is accessible to and useful for transportation professionals, advocates, concerned community members, artists, and others, we've done our best to avoid using technical jargon. However, some of the terms we've used may not be familiar to all, or may be understood differently by different disciplines. To avoid confusion, we've provided definitions and explanations of a few key terms below. This list also defines the parameters that the field scan covers:

Active transportation: Sometimes referred to as non-motorized transportation, this includes all forms of transportation that are human-powered, including walking and cycling.

Art in transit: Transit authorities around the country have implemented art in transit programs to incorporate public art into transit infrastructure because, as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority explains, “aesthetic enhancement at stations and facilities could be an integral component of broader community outreach and partnership building efforts.”¹

Arts and culture: We use these terms to cover a broad range of practices and professionals, including visual art, storytelling, performance, design, formally trained artists, self-taught artists, and people who use creative practice but may not self-identify as artists. For the field scan, we investigated projects that include photographers, dancers, painters, architects, graphic designers, performance artists, social practice artists, and many others.

Creative placemaking: Coined by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2010, creative placemaking is a relatively new term that has a growing following in both the arts and community development fields, but the concept is far from new – artists have been involved in community development, planning, and design for decades if not centuries. ArtPlace defines creative placemaking as “projects in which art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development.”² Similarly, Transportation for America (T4A) defines creative placemaking as “an approach that deeply engages the arts, culture, and creativity, especially from underrepresented communities, in planning and designing projects so that the resulting communities better reflect and celebrate local culture, heritage and values.”

Level of service: This term refers to a scoring system included in the Highway Capacity Manual and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) “Green Book” that primarily grades the quality of car traffic on streets based on traffic speed and flow. This is the primary way that traffic engineers measure the performance of all streets, regardless of their type; whether the street is intended to serve as a commercial corridor or main street with busy foot traffic, where congestion is expected or even desired; or a road that connects two disparate places where traffic is intended to move fast and free-flowing.

Mobility: Mobility refers to a holistic approach to transportation systems that focuses on efficient movement rather than a focus on what specific mode of travel is being used.

Mode: Otherwise known as a mode of transport, this primarily refers to the four means of travel (by air, water,

1 SEPTA. (n.d.). Art in Transit Program. Retrieved from <http://septa.org/art-in-transit/>

2 ArtPlace America. (2017, June 06). Introduction. Retrieved from www.artplaceamerica.org/about/introduction

land, or space), as well as the specific form of travel used (rail, bus, car, bicycle, walking, airplane, etc.).

Percent for art: Many art in transit and public art programs are financially supported by percent for art ordinances, which mandate the use of a percentage of an infrastructure or development project's total cost for public art. These ordinances vary in terms of the percentage amount, the types of funds that qualify, and the level of government (local, regional, and/or state) at which they are created and enforced (local, county, state).

Performance measures: This term refers to the ways in which transportation agencies measure the performance of a transportation system or the investments that are made. As T4A's *Measuring What We Value* report states, "over the past 50 years, transportation agencies have focused on tracking a narrow set of goals – typically system condition, safety and sometimes traffic congestion. While these goals are important, they measure the state of the transportation system, not the impact of the system on people's lives...Measuring the impact of transportation investments in a way that resonates with the public is critical going forward."¹

Phases of transportation projects: Though they vary greatly depending on a projects' scope, funding sources, and location, all transportation projects include multiple phases. These phases frequently begin with long-term planning and include community engagement; a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which includes the consideration of various alternatives; project planning and design; implementation/construction; and maintenance.² Many transportation projects eventually require redesign, which can restart this process.

Public art: As the name implies, public art is simply art in the public realm. Public art may be **site-specific**—meaning its design, materials, and/or meaning are intrinsically connected the place where the art is located—or created without site context in mind, resulting in pieces that can be relocated over time. Public art may be temporary, as is the case with performance, events, or ephemeral sculpture, or it may be permanent, as is the case with many sculptures and murals.³

Transit: Transit is synonymous with public transportation, which the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) defines as "transportation by a conveyance that provides regular and continuing general or special transportation to the public, but does not include school bus, charter, or intercity bus transportation or intercity passenger rail."⁴

Vision Zero: Created in Sweden two decades ago, Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries. The strategy acknowledges the preventability of these fatalities and injuries, and the required interdisciplinarity of the strategy, which must include engineers, law enforcement, public health professionals, and others.⁵

1 Transportation for America. (2015, February). *Measuring What We Value: Setting Priorities and Evaluating Success in Transportation*. Retrieved from <http://t4america.org/maps-tools/performance-measures-report/>

2 Additional information on the NEPA process as it relates to transportation projects may be found here: www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/tdmalts.asp

3 For more information on public art, visit Americans for the Arts' Public Art Network at www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network

4 U.S. Federal Transit Administration. (2015, August 06). National Transit Database (NTD) Glossary. Retrieved from www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/national-transit-database-ntd-glossary

5 Vision Zero Network. (n.d.). What is Vision Zero? Retrieved from <http://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/>

Methodology

Transportation for America set out to examine how artists are contributing to solving today's transportation challenges and to making the most of transportation opportunities. Building off our previous research and writing for *The Scenic Route*, our first step for this field scan was to conduct a literature review.

We also interviewed 30 professionals representing the fields of art, arts administration, design, and transportation about the role that artists play or could play in addressing transportation challenges and opportunities.¹ In addition to external interviews, we interviewed members of T4A's internal staff, which is comprised of former elected officials, transportation officials from all levels of government, and experts on policy, planning, and advocacy. Their responses, along with our review and analysis of hundreds of art and transit projects, led to our formation of seven arts and culture **typologies**: explanations of how arts and culture contribute to transportation processes and outcomes.

For each of the seven typologies we include a few short examples and a longer case study. For these seven featured case studies, we selected projects that exemplify the practice of artists working to improve local transportation systems and the quality of life for those that use and are affected by it. Our initial list of more than 100 projects was derived from projects funded by ArtPlace America and the National Endowment for the Arts, from our interviews, from our literature review, from projects with which T4A is directly involved, from projects featured in *The Scenic Route*, and from projects we have visited in person.

The case studies featured in this field scan are intended to provide diverse examples of projects from different regions, taking place in communities of varying size and demographic composition, using a range of tactics on a range of phases of projects. Our project review and analysis was far from exhaustive; many outstanding examples did not make it into the field scan. The case studies that do appear within are meant to be introductions to projects, which warrant deeper and more technical evaluation than was possible within the scope of this field scan.

1 Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by interviewees are the interviewees' and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of their organizations or agencies.



SEVEN CHALLENGES, SEVEN SOLUTIONS

THE ROLE OF ARTS & CULTURE IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

In this section, which forms the bulk of our findings, we explore seven transportation challenges which planners, designers, advocates, elected officials and others are commonly trying to solve. We explain the reasoning behind each goal, analyze the related transportation challenge, propose a solution, and then identify the role that arts and culture play in contributing to the solution. We then illustrate the role arts and culture plays in the real world with a number of project examples, including a longer case study of an exemplary creative placemaking project.

Photo by Chris Nowak, Michigan Fitness Foundation

Solution #1

Generating creative solutions for entrenched transportation problems

Arts and culture can help develop better projects that attract greater community support by imagining bold transportation solutions that are unconstrained by traditional processes.



Transportation projects generally start with an idea that is expected to solve a specific mobility challenge, and all too often, the genesis of a project is political. Often utilitarian in their approach, transportation professionals use historic precedent, regulatory policies, funding restrictions, limited community input, and engineering analyses to generate these ideas. Rather than sparking new, innovative ideas, these cumbersome constraints often lead to rehashed ideas that follow conventional standards, adhere to the status quo, and are designed to win approvals rather than to inspire community members and find new ways to solve old problems.

The United States faces a variety of complex transportation challenges, including disruption from ridesharing services, the potential for displacement that can arise from certain investments, a mix of apprehension and excitement about the potential impacts of automated (i.e., self-driving) vehicles, infrastructure that has reached the end of its functional lifespan, and an alarming uptick in pedestrian fatalities on American roads.^{1,2}

1 NACTO. (2016, June 22). NACTO Policy Statement on Automated Vehicles. Retrieved from <https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NACTO-Policy-Automated-Vehicles-201606.pdf>

2 Schaper, D. (2017, March 30). Distraction, On Street And Sidewalk, Helps Cause Record Pedestrian Deaths. National Public Radio. Retrieved from www.npr.org/2017/03/30/522085503/2016-saw-a-record-increase-in-pedestrian-deaths

Despite the appetite in many regions for levying local taxes to support transit, federal funding for such projects may soon decrease and without a federal match the future is uncertain for many of these projects.

These challenges require new and imaginative approaches, which may need to be bolder than political and fiscal restraints allow. John Robert Smith, former chair of Amtrak's board of directors and former Mayor of Meridian, Mississippi, stated that today's transportation solutions must be "bottom-up, bold, and persistent" in order to be successful. These sorts of solutions rise above the regulatory bureaucracy and expert-driven approaches that often define the transportation field and limit creative problem-solving. They also have the potential to inspire greater community support, leading to projects that are more likely to be funded and appreciated.

Challenge: How can transportation planners and advocates imagine unprecedented transportation solutions?

Dreaming up unprecedented transportation solutions is no simple task; presenting them in a manner that inspires excitement and support is an additional challenge. While engineers are certainly creative problem solvers, transportation professionals generally aren't encouraged to create new and inspiring solutions – they are trained to follow predictable manuals and standards. If the power of imagination is to be used to generate inventive transportation solutions, transportation planners and advocates need assistance from those who specialize in imagination, creativity, and inspiration.

Solution: Arts and culture can help imagine bold transportation solutions that are unconstrained by traditional processes, leading to projects that attract greater community support.

Artistic practice, whether used by artists, designers, transportation planners, or advocates, can help generate new ideas. Creating imaginative, inventive projects allows leaders to test ideas, to present new concepts to the public for review, and to shift conversations away from constraints and towards solving problems.

Neil Greenberg, a transit professional based in Detroit, decided to use this approach to invent a fictional commuter rail system for Michigan. Freshwater Railway, launched as a website in August 2011, claims to connect Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. As the website, which is still live, states, "Freshwater Railway is Southeast Michigan's Regional Rail System. With the new Coast-to-Coast Line, Michigan's big cities are at your fingertips."¹ The website contains fare information, train schedules and routes, and no clear indication that this system does not actually exist, nor is there a true plan to create it. Instead, the project was devised to "charge past the usual barriers to transit."²

Mr. Greenberg further explains his motivations for creating Freshwater Railway as follows:

Freshwater Railway... portrays high-quality transit as a living, breathing slice of reality. Instead of eye-popping price tags and tired political subplots, Freshwater Railway shows a transit system as, well, a transit system. With meaningful visual aids, the whole concept takes on a new dimension. Undertones about transit change from "why can't we" to "how can we."

1 Freshwater Railway Corporation. (2011). Freshwater Railway. Retrieved from www.fwrail.org/index.htm

2 Greenberg, N. (2011, December 20). Mapping Detroit's Future: Critical Mass Transit Imagined. Model D Media. Retrieved from www.modeldmedia.com/features/criticalmasstransit1211.aspx

I am mounting three central arguments that, perhaps, can guide us in a productive direction. One, that the average Southeast Michigander will only get behind transit when there's something credible to get behind. Two, that looks matter – transit does not have a favorable reputation around here; it will only succeed if we treat it as a consumer product. Three, that transit is a complex business with a lot of moving parts.

Similarly, the Harrison Center for the Arts' Pre-Enactment Theater in Indianapolis aims to present an invented future for a community as if it were present day reality. The project, which will launch in late 2017, focuses on the Monon 16 neighborhood. Actors and art installations depict the neighborhood as the healthy and stable place that residents would like it to be. This performance-based work "will help neighbors plan for the future by re-envisioning the Monon 16 area 'the way it ought to be;' ...rather than dwelling on the past through 're-enactment', [they] will 'pre-enact' a new, vibrant commercial corridor that serves as hope for the future."¹

1 Harrison Center for the Arts. (2017, January 12). Pre-Enactment Theater is coming to Monon 16! Retrieved from <http://harrisoncenter.org/pre-enactment-theater-is-coming-to-monon-16/>

Case Study: El Paso Transnational Trolley El Paso, Texas

What began as a sort of arts-driven guerilla marketing campaign for the fictional return of a historic streetcar in the border communities of El Paso, TX and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, is becoming a reality; a demonstration of the power of art to capture the imagination of a community and help them look at old problems in different ways and imagine creative solutions.

Unlike San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico, which are separated by 20 miles, El Paso, TX and Juárez, Mexico sit adjacent to one another, separated only by the width of the Rio Grande and the invisible international border between the United States and Mexico. Until 1846, El Paso was in fact part of Juárez and Mexico, and the two independent cities today form the world's largest binational metroplex, with thousands of daily crossings by foot, car, and bus; billions of dollars of trade; and five border crossings connecting the two cities and region. For generations, residents on both sides of the border have crossed frequently for work, school, recreation, and to visit family; more than 80% of El Pasoans identify as Latinx.



Historical photograph, courtesy of Peter Svarzbein.

Until 1974, these border crossings were facilitated by an international streetcar system that connected the downtowns of both cities. As in many American cities, the streetcar system ran President's Conference Committee (PCC) streetcars, with a sleek Art Deco design that was introduced after the Great Depression, to lure new car owners back onto public transportation. Thanks to the region's dry climate, the streetcars have remained in relatively good shape for the past four decades. Now that drug cartel-related violence in Juárez has drastically decreased, interest in exploring improved border crossings has increased.

The iconic streetcars, stored in the open desert at the edge of El Paso, and stories of their transnational past, served as the inspiration for Peter Svarzbein's Masters of Fine Arts thesis project at New York's School for Visual Arts. In 2012 Mr. Svarzbein, a native of El Paso, created the El Paso Transnational Trolley, which could be described as part performance art, part guerrilla marketing, part visual art installation, and part fake advertising campaign.

The project began with a series of wheatpaste posters advertising the return of the El Paso-Juárez streetcar, and continued with the deployment of Alex the Trolley



Photo courtesy of Peter Svarzbein.

Conductor, a new mascot and spokesperson for the alleged new service. Alex appeared at Comic Cons, public parks, conferences, and other public spaces to promote the return of the streetcar, while additional advertisements appeared across El Paso, sparking curiosity and excitement for the assumed real project.

Eventually, Svarzbein admitted that the project was a graduate thesis masquerading as a streetcar launch, but rather than graduating and moving on, he decided to move back home to El Paso. When Svarzbein learned that the City of El Paso planned to sell the historic PCC streetcars, he lobbied the city to cancel the sale, and instead return the streetcars to the streets of El Paso. After gathering thousands of signatures in support of the project and with synergy from the City of El Paso and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Commissioner, Ted Haughton, the El Paso trolley won a \$97 million grant from the TxDOT. It is now slated to begin service in El Paso in 2018. The third phase of the project will include a connection to the Medical Center of the Americas, while the second will include the much anticipated transnational connection to Juárez. Not long after this funding was awarded, Svarzbein rode the wave of public support for the fictional project to win a seat on El Paso's City Council.

The El Paso Transnational Trolley Project's website quotes artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña:

An artist thinks differently, imagines a better world, and tries to render it in surprising ways. And this becomes a way for his/her audiences to experience the possibilities of freedom that they can't find in reality.

Clearly, Svarzbein credits his creative campaign with helping to get the project off the ground and building the community support needed to win funding, claiming that "there is a sort of responsibility that artists have to imagine and speak about a future that may not be able to be voiced by a large amount of people in the present. I felt that sort of responsibility. If I couldn't change the debate, at least I could sort of write a love letter to the place that raised me."

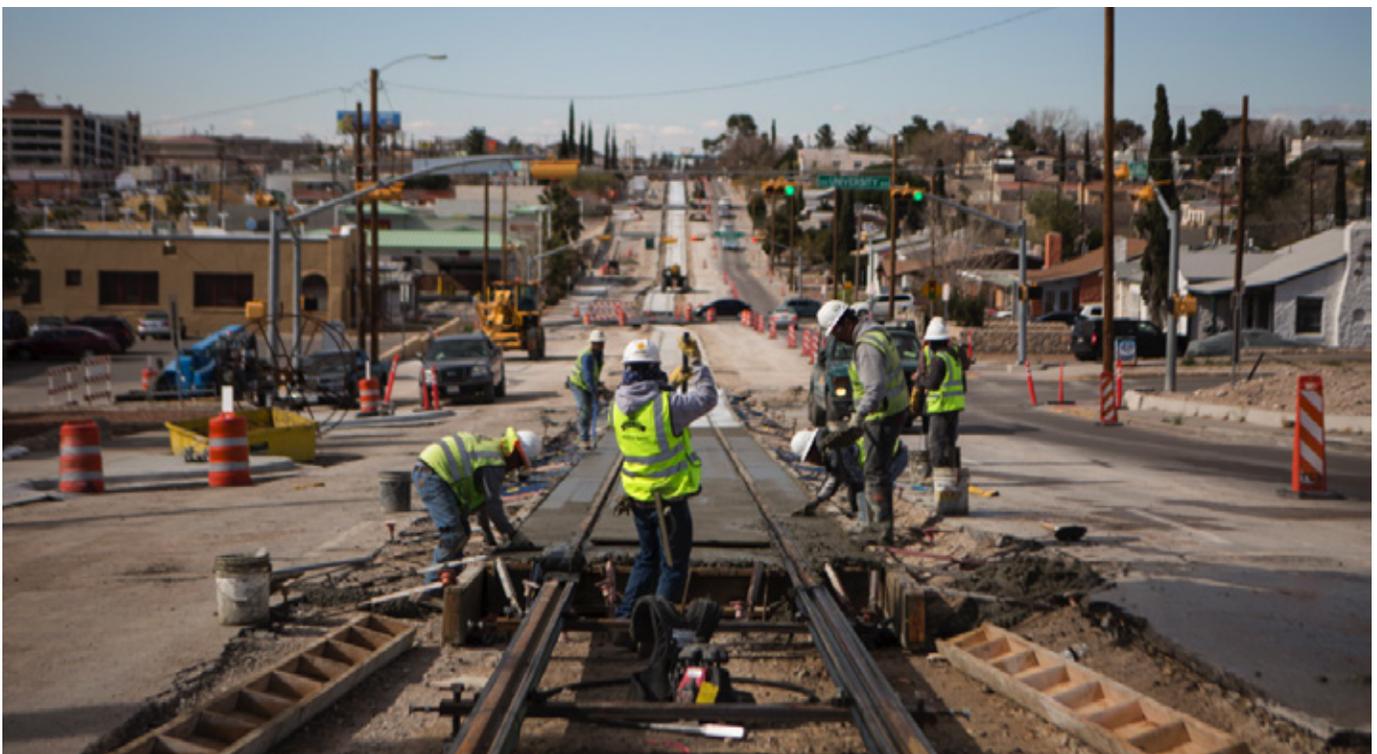


Photo courtesy of Peter Svarzbein.

Solution #2

Making streets safer for all users

Arts and culture can make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists by using creative methods to help transportation professionals empathize with all users.



For years the transportation sector has transformed the standards of the engineering profession to accommodate automobiles and prioritize their movement as the chief goals for street design. So unsurprisingly, many transportation decisions are inherently focused on the automobile: determining the number of vehicles that a street can accommodate before traffic congestion becomes an issue (otherwise known as level of service, described in the glossary), choosing to add lanes or entrances to highways, and deciding how to deal with parking.

An exclusive focus on the automobile and the experience of the driver is an abdication of the holistic task of the traffic engineer, which is “the safe and efficient movement of people and goods along roadways,” and can lead to decisions that actually promote more driving at the expense of those who choose to get around by foot, bicycle, or transit.^{1,2} Traffic engineers must balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders — an especially tricky balance to reach when much of the road system has historically prioritized drivers, as have traditional engineering metrics like level of service.

1 Snyder, T. (2011, May 31). Study: Building Roads to Cure Congestion Is an Exercise in Futility. StreetsBlog USA [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://usa.streetsblog.org/2011/05/31/study-building-roads-to-cure-congestion-is-an-exercise-in-futility/>

2 Pande, A., & Wolshon, B. (2016). Traffic Engineering Handbook (7th ed.). Institute for Traffic Engineering. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Challenge: How can street design and related policies be more responsive to the needs and concerns of all users?

Answering these questions is imperative to ensuring that the performance of streets and other transportation elements are measured in a manner that provides a broad picture of all modes of travel and all users. If civil engineers and transportation planners are being asked to consider deviating from their normal design processes, then hearing stories of how street design impacts users may play an important role in changing their approaches. Storytelling can also bridge the gap between transportation professionals and the transportation users who are impacted by their decisions; since transportation professionals are not always users of the systems they design, they may lack a full understanding of how these systems are truly used. Storytelling can help transportation professionals feel empathy for users, helping the professionals understand how manuals and guidelines may need to be changed.

Solution: Arts and culture can make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists by using creative methods to help transportation professionals empathize with all users.

Trained to convey information through visual art, dance, movement, music, and other expressive forms, artists are natural storytellers who have frequently applied these skills outside of galleries and performance venues, as the following examples illustrate. Recognizing the challenge for seniors to cross neighborhood intersections in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin due to short crosswalk durations and quick light changes, theater artist Anne Basting and Sojourn Theater created performances at three intersections as part of the *Islands of Milwaukee* project in May of 2014. The performers invited local government officials to cross alongside neighborhood elders to experience the challenge of traveling the intersection as the clock quickly counted down. Among the list of participants were three area mayors, three city and county officials, and a state senator. As a result of the performances, which allowed elected officials to experience the problem firsthand, crosswalk countdown clocks were adjusted to meet the needs of the older population.

From 2016-2017, Alan Nakagawa served as the first artist in the inaugural Catalyst Artist-in-Residence Program with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), asked to “enhance the presence and appreciation of creativity within civic departments and public services by stimulating ‘outside the box’ thinking, planning, and execution of traditional and/or new services.”. Nakagawa primarily focused on LA’s Vision Zero efforts; he felt that convincing civil engineers to buy into the concept of designing for zero pedestrian fatalities required storytelling.¹ However, the engineers that Nakagawa encountered admitted that they had been trained to avoid telling their stories, and instead to be objective and data-driven. Nakagawa ran storytelling workshops for LADOT’s engineers, which led to LADOT’s chief engineer giving a conference presentation on LA’s Vision Zero work that included stories about the ramifications of dangerous roads and their impact on people who are hit, the people who hit pedestrians, and their extended networks. Nakagawa and his team recounted that it was the first time they had seen “a room full of engineers cry,” thanks to the power of storytelling. Seleta Reynolds, LADOT’s General Manager, added that artists have helped LADOT staff learn communication, storytelling, and listening skills, which has helped drive a culture shift within LADOT to design and build streets that are safer and better serve everyone’s needs.

1 Nakagawa, A. (n.d.). L.A. Dot Zine 1.0. Retrieved from www.collagecollage.com/LA%20Dot%20Zine%201.0.html



A ghost bike memorial in LA. Courtesy of Alan Nakagawa.

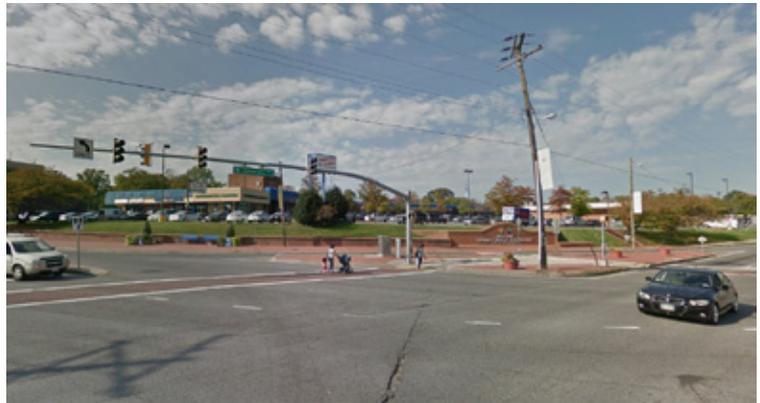
Beyond directly influencing engineers, Nakagawa has also participated in more public-facing projects including Ghost Bike memorials.¹ Ghost Bikes are part of an international movement that uses white-painted bikes to memorialize cyclists who have been killed in traffic; Nakagawa has worked with cycling advocates to have the City of Los Angeles formally recognize the Ghost Bike memorials, thereby ensuring that the city does not remove the memorials.

¹ GhostBikes.org. (n.d.). Ghost Bikes - Los Angeles. Retrieved from <http://ghostbikes.org/la>

Case Study: New Hampshire Ave – This Is a Place To... Takoma Park, Maryland

This stretch of Hew Hampshire Avenue is a typical auto-oriented street designed to move commuters through a place quickly, making walking and biking for residents not just difficult but unsafe. With an invite from the city, a dance group harnessed the power of arts and culture to shift the narrative of a place defined by its transportation challenges.

Adjacent to Washington, DC’s northeast border lies the city of Takoma Park, a multi-ethnic community bounded on the east by New Hampshire Avenue, a six-lane state highway and heavily trafficked artery. Developed in the 1940s and 50s to prioritize vehicular commuting traffic over pedestrians, it poses an obstacle to social connection and is dangerous for those who walk along it or cross it. In the last decade, a large number of new residents from India, El Salvador, China, Ethiopia, and other countries have moved to the corridor and opened small businesses along the avenue. The corridor boasts multiple Halal butchers, a weekly farmer’s market run by the Latino community, and the oldest sari store in the United States.



Residents cross New Hampshire Ave. at University Blvd. Google Street View imagery.

These new residents walk and ride public transit more frequently than legacy residents of Takoma Park, and the auto-centric design of the avenue is dangerous for residents trying to navigate the busy thoroughfare. As such, this has also limited its potential to thrive economically as the main street or commercial hub of the community.

Working to improve the visitor and resident experience and safety along New Hampshire Avenue, the Housing and Community Development Department of the City of Takoma Park invited community-engaged dance company Dance Exchange, led by Executive Artistic Director Cassie Meador and founded by renowned artist Liz Lerman, to develop a project that could shift the narrative of a place defined by its transportation challenges. Building on work the City of Takoma Park had already begun through the “New Ave” initiative, Dance Exchange’s *New Hampshire Ave: This is a Place to...* project used both a “traveling” strategy that encompassed the length of the corridor, and a “gathering” strategy that drew together participants around the avenue’s central green space, as detailed in the National Endowment for the Art’s



Photos courtesy of Ben Carver.

How to Do Creative Placemaking.^{1,2}

Participants included residents, community leaders, property managers, and business owners. Dance Exchange and their partners invited city staff and the people who live and work along the corridor to explore and share about their relationship to each other and the avenue, using the tools of dance, visual art, sculpture, installation, photography, storytelling, performance, dance-making, and the project's signature colorful chairs out along the avenue. The project kicked off in 2014 with a one-day community festival along New Hampshire Avenue where attendees created dances about their journeys to, and life along, the Avenue. Throughout the course of over a year, *New Hampshire Ave: This is a Place to...* explored the project's six main questions: What brings us to this place? What traditions do we carry here? Which do we leave behind? How do our diverse experiences and journeys to the corridor shape the place today? What keeps us here? What do we hope for the future of the avenue?

Concurrently, Dance Exchange held a series of workshops for staff of the Takoma Park Housing and Community Development Department that focused on improving the ways in which the city talks to residents during planning processes. Through techniques that included Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (CRP), the workshops focused on incorporating local cultural feedback in a planning process, the pressing challenges and opportunities within city management and planning, and the opportunities for creative practices within city administration and planning.³



Photo courtesy of Ben Carver.

By sharing new narratives about New Hampshire Avenue through arts-based workshops and performances, Dance Exchange revealed to partners, including the City of Takoma Park's Housing and Community

1 City of Takoma Park, MD. (n.d.). New Hampshire Avenue Initiative. Retrieved from <https://takomaparkmd.gov/initiatives/new-hampshire-avenue-initiative/>

2 National Endowment for the Arts. (2016, November). How to do Creative Placemaking: An Action-Oriented Guide to Arts in Community Development. Retrieved from www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/How-to-do-Creative-Placemaking_Jan2017.pdf

3 Dance Exchange. (n.d.). Critical Response Process. Retrieved from <http://danceexchange.org/projects/critical-response-process/>



Photo courtesy of the Dance Exchange.

Development and Planning departments, the underlying human story of what the Avenue means for those who use it most. These workshops and artistic interventions were meant to be shared between citizens and city staff to plant the seeds for new processes. Amanda Newman, who served as Dance Exchange’s resident artist, communications coordinator, and youth programs facilitator, recalls that when they began the project the notion of creative participation by city staff was uncommon, but that the artistic interventions “were not for the city staff, but *with* the city staff [emphasis added].”

These human stories revealed the need to create a safer and more inclusive experience for those who are not simply passing through the corridor. As Cassie Meador, Artistic Director at Dance Exchange explains:

In Takoma Park, the design of transportation impacted the identity [of the corridor] and the way that people used the space, even though that’s only a small element of what makes up the place. New Hampshire Ave is a lot of things, but people living and working beyond the Ave more often define it by the transportation elements.

For Meador, this project finally made people’s stories and experiences central to the city’s understanding of the Avenue in Takoma Park. The artists reflected that through this multi-pronged process of creating relationships, excavating stories from residents and business owners, and exploring new “cultures of feedback” between city planners and citizens, it remains challenging to measure concrete outcomes. One potential lesson is that projects aiming to dramatically change culture — like a shift to planning that prioritizes the interests and needs of resident users — may require longer timelines. That city staff participated in art-making alongside neighbors, and responded positively to CRP training suggested that the culture of feedback in planning processes were evolving through this project.



Courtesy of Nguyễn K. Nguyễn City Planners.

Solution #3

Organizing transportation advocates

Arts and culture can help equip communities to organize and advocate for more equitably distributed transportation investments.



Access to quality transportation options has proven to be one of the best tools in the fight to eradicate poverty in the United States. In 2015, Harvard University researchers analyzed the factors that pose the biggest barrier to economic mobility and concluded that “commuting time has emerged as the single strongest factor in the odds of escaping poverty,” beating out crime rates and school test scores.¹

1 Bouchard, M. (2015, May 07). Transportation Emerges as Crucial to Escaping Poverty. New York Times. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/upshot/transportation-emerges-as-crucial-to-escaping-poverty.html

A lack of quality transportation options costs low-income communities by taking up both time and money. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American household spends more on transportation than food, healthcare, entertainment and clothing; transportation expenses are second only to housing.¹ Many low-income individuals face a difficult choice between taking on the expenses of car ownership or relying on a slow and unreliable transit system to commute. Low-income individuals and families also spend a greater share of their income on transportation than their higher income counterparts.²

1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, August 29). Consumer Expenditures--2016. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm

2 Pew Charitable Trusts. (2016, March 30). Issue Brief: Household Expenditures and Income. Retrieved from www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2016/03/household-expenditures-and-income

As just one illustration, In St. Louis, 23.5 percent of Black households do not have access to a car as compared to 5.2 percent of White households, according to the East-West Gateway Council of Governments.¹ What's more, "while St. Louis ranks 19th in the country in terms of population...it ranks only 68th in terms of transit coverage and access to jobs by transit." These facts were also highlighted in the "Forward Through Ferguson" report from an independent group of local leaders appointed by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon after the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson. That report identified a critical need to address public transportation funding and planning, citing transit disinvestment as a prime contributor to inequity in the region.²

Adding a further burden to low-income communities is the fact that they on average have a higher rate of pedestrian fatalities. In other words, the streets in poor neighborhoods are more dangerous for pedestrians.³ Adults with disabilities are more than twice as likely as adults without disabilities to have inadequate transportation (31 percent versus 13 percent) according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and more than a half million people with disabilities in the U.S. never leave home because of transportation difficulties according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics.^{4,5}

Challenge: How can disinvested and disconnected communities win new transportation investments that will improve their mobility and safety?

Advocates working at the local, regional, state, and federal level are attempting to provide answers to this question. From cycling advocates pushing for safer, protected bike lanes to be built in disinvested communities, to regional efforts to win funding for transit projects that will serve disconnected communities with low rates of car ownership, there is a growing acceptance of the role transportation improvements play in creating more equitable cities, towns, and communities.

Solution: Arts and culture can help equip communities to organize and advocate for more equitably distributed transportation investments.

Communities that are self-organized and politically connected are more likely to receive transportation improvements. Winning transportation improvements requires accessing limited funding, rising to the top of the list of needed transportation improvements, and navigating an often complex planning and political process. As a result, communities that organize around specific transportation projects are more likely to succeed.

In some cases, organizing efforts focus on convincing people to vote in favor of transportation ballot measures. A record number of transportation measures appeared on ballots in the 2016 election, and voters nationally passed about 70 percent of these measures, which will create new taxes to support transportation

1 Development Strategies. (2012, May). St. Louis County Housing Study. Prepared for the Office of Community Development, St. Louis County Department of Planning and the East West Gateway Council of Governments. Retrieved from www.onestl.org/media/site/documents/reports/housing/St%20Louis%20County%20Housing%20Study.pdf

2 Ferguson Commission. (2015, October 14). Forward Through Ferguson: A Path Toward Racial Equity. Retrieved from <http://forwardthroughferguson.org/report/executive-summary/>

3 Smart Growth America. (2016). Dangerous by Design. Retrieved from <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

4 U.S. Centers for Disease Control. (n.d.). CDC Promoting the Health of People with Disabilities. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/AboutDHPProgram508.pdf

5 U.S. Department of Transportation - Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2003, April). Issue Brief: Transportation Difficulties Keep Over Half a Million Disabled at Home. Retrieved from www.rita.dot.gov/bts/sites/rita.dot.gov/bts/files/publications/special_reports_and_issue_briefs/issue_briefs/number_03/pdf/entire.pdf

improvements.¹ Videographers, performers, and storytellers played a key role in some of these campaigns. In Indianapolis, the Latino Youth Collective produced videos shedding light on the crucial role that buses play in the everyday lives of many community members.² Neighborhoods in southeast Portland, Oregon, will soon have improved bus rapid transit (BRT) service thanks in part to videos produced by hip hop artist Solomon Starr that explain youths' reliance on buses to get to school and around the city.³

In Baltimore, Bikemore, a cycling and pedestrian advocacy organization, focuses on both organizing and educating communities on street improvement options. As Bikemore's Executive Director Liz Cornish pointed out, while communities organizing to demand transportation improvements is great, "every neighborhood doesn't have equal knowledge of the menu of options" that could be used to calm traffic and make streets safer for active transportation. To address this issue in west Baltimore's Auchentoroly Terrace neighborhood, Bikemore partnered with local artist Graham Coreil-Allen to organize members of his community to generate ideas for how to create better pedestrian access from the neighborhood to a major park that is currently cut off from the community by an eight-lane road. Coreil-Allen provided creative suggestions, and worked with community volunteers to paint an artistic crosswalk, which showed Baltimore City Department of Transportation that the neighborhood wanted a safer crossing so badly that they were willing to take matters into their own hands.

In Tucson, Arizona, community members recognized the need to begin conversations to promote the use of public transit, which led to the creation of a series of events called *Transit Talks*. A collective of artists — Elizabeth Burden, Kim Eisele, Sarah Gonzales, Josh Schachter, Denise Uyehara — worked with the Tucson Bus Riders Union and other transit advocates to plan and implement the project. Lead artist Elizabeth Burden writes that in Tucson, "buses and bus stops are undervalued resources because of the disparate geographies of riders and the perceived otherness of 'bus people.'"⁴ *Transit Talks* became a series of four artistic projects that engaged public transit riders to express why they ride public transit, to describe what it's like to ride public transit, and to collect feedback from users as data to paint a richer picture of the user experience of transit in Tucson. The project included user-generated poetry and video at bus stops, a website featuring rider photos and profiles, an educational website breaking down local transportation funding, and posters placed on transit posing questions for riders to text feedback. *Transit Talks* became a rallying cry for transit users — a central organizing point to communicate about and advocate for the prioritization of this resource.

1 Washington Newslines. (2016, November 9). Voters Approve Record Number of State and Local Transportation Investment Ballot Measures. Retrieved from www.artba.org/newsline/2016/11/09/voters-approve-record-number-of-state-and-local-transportation-investment-ballot-measures/

2 Latino Youth Collective. (n.d.). Home Page. Retrieved from www.wearecollective.org/

3 Starr, S. (2016, March 15). Division Street Stories-Justice Pass. YouTube. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=n93Y4P7WutQ

4 Burden, E. (n.d.). Social Civic Practice: Selected Works. Retrieved from <http://elizabethburden.com/works.html>

Case Study: Boogie Down Rides The Bronx, New York

An artist-led bicycling and art project in the Bronx brought bicyclers and advocates together to highlight the need for more bicycle infrastructure in the borough.

A joint report released by the New York City departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and the New York City Police Department found that from 1996 to 2005, Hunts Point in the south Bronx was one of three locations citywide with a high rate of fatal bike crashes, while central Bronx was noted as one of the top three areas with a concentration of injuries to cyclists.¹ While some safe bicycle infrastructure has since been added in this area, other boroughs received overwhelmingly more bicycling-related development. According to data from New York City's Department of Transportation, since 2006, the city has added roughly two times the mileage of bike lanes in Brooklyn (102.8 miles) than the Bronx (56.5 miles), even though Brooklyn is only 1.6 times the size of the Bronx. Even within the Bronx itself, the majority of the dedicated bike lanes are concentrated in the north and east Bronx, while the south Bronx has historically experienced a higher rate of poverty and unemployment, and more limited infrastructural investments.^{2,3}

Given comparatively low ridership, it's challenging for the Bronx to argue for the need for plentiful bike lanes and bike parking. The "Cycling in the City" report released by the New York City Department of Transportation in January 2017 found that while New Yorkers borough-wide are riding bikes with more frequency, the percentage growth of riders in the Bronx in the past year (+19 percent) pales in comparison to that of its neighbors (Manhattan +98 percent, Brooklyn +83 percent, Queens +59 percent, Staten Island +22 percent.)⁴ "To meet this challenge," Executive Director of advocacy group Transportation Alternatives Paul Steely White told Streetsblog NYC, "New York City needs equitable acceleration and expansion of the bike network in the Bronx and Staten Island, as well."⁵



Promo graphic courtesy of Boogie Down Rides.

When artists and south Bronx residents Elizabeth Hamby and Hatuey Ramos-Fermín were invited by the arts organization No Longer Empty to participate in *This Side of Paradise* in 2012, an exhibition in a vacant building in the south Bronx, they focused their lens on transportation and bicycling. The artists presented

1 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City Department of Transportation, & New York City Police Department. (n.d.). Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City: 1996-2005. Retrieved from www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/bicycletfatalities.pdf

2 New York City Department of Transportation. (2017, January). Cycling in the City: Cycling Trends in NYC. Retrieved from www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/cycling-in-the-city.pdf

3 Gonzalez, E. (2004). *The Bronx*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

4 Ibid.

5 Fried, B. (2016, May 06). All of DOT's Bike Metrics Should Be Published on NYC's Open Data Portal. Streetsblog NYC. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://nyc.streetsblog.org/2016/05/06/all-of-dots-bike-metrics-should-be-published-on-nycs-open-data-portal/>



Photos courtesy of Boogie Down Rides.

“IRT”, a multi-model installation and public engagement project exploring transportation issues in the Bronx. The artists quickly connected to active transportation advocates, public health professionals, residents, and built a network, organizing a calendar of over 20 events like Bronx-based rides, workshops, and celebrations, including the festival Boogie on the Boulevard. Hamby and Ramos-Fermin wanted to hit the ground hard with “an aggressive calendar of events to build visibility in the community,” Hamby said. When asked how art helped centralize a focus around cycling in the borough, she explained that “because of the utility of streets and the way that we use them in our daily lives, they can become invisible as public spaces. When you put a frame around transportation — like an art project — it makes that connection a lot more legible.”

Boogie Down Rides not only convened residents during the duration of the project but also intentionally served as a catalyst for ongoing advocacy. A Bronx cyclist named Mel Rodriguez who formed an advocacy group called Bike the Bronx in 2010, said he “joined the Boogie Down Rides planning committee because he believes the month-long series could lead to longer-lasting changes.”¹ A ride on the South Bronx River Greenway motivated community members to work with the artists to create a set of recommendations. Those recommendations were presented in a video of interviews with riders during the South Bronx River Greenway ride, including adding signage, curb cuts, ramps, striping, repairing sidewalks, recalibrated traffic signals, artwork along routes, and creating pedestrian bridges.² Elizabeth Hamby explains that as a result of the rides, the local chapter of Transportation Alternatives reignited, and that the capstone event of the programming, *Boogie on the Boulevard*, was a key component of helping the NYC DOT think about the redesign of Grand Concourse, an historic thoroughfare in The Bronx.³

Ultimately, the project served as a catalyst that galvanized Bronx riders around a central rallying cry of the *Boogie Down Rides* manifesto: “Bicycling together creates a temporary mobile community.” This community of Bronx cycling advocates has grown well beyond the run of the initial project. “The most important thing the project achieved,” says Hamby, “was a network of people who can collectively advocate for anything they want.”

1 Wall, P. (2012, April 17). Cyclists Plan a Month-Long Celebration of Bronx Biking for May. DNA Info. Retrieved from www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20120417/south-bronx/cyclists-plan-month-long-celebration-of-bronx-biking-for-may

2 Boogie Down Rides. (2012, September 13). South Bronx River Greenway Ride. YouTube. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_Pgxx_k_o

3 Transportation Alternatives. (n.d.). Home Page. Retrieved from www.transalt.org/

Solution #4

Engaging multiple stakeholders for an inclusive process

Arts and culture can help shepherd transportation projects through the community input process more quickly and smoothly by facilitating meaningful participation early and often in the planning process.



Contrary to the past practice of designing transportation projects in a top-down manner without community engagement (or only token engagement), transportation projects today nearly always include some level of community participation, partially because they generally require community support to successfully navigate local political processes and funding competitions. This shift is certainly also due to the fact that the Federal Transit Administration’s Circular 4702.1B, which responds to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, requires all funding recipients to create a “public participation plan.”¹

1 U.S. Federal Transit Administration. (2012, October 01). Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients. Retrieved from www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/title-vi-requirements-and-guidelines-federal-transit

Though these federal requirements offer “wide latitude to determine how, when, and how often specific public participation activities should take place, and which specific measures are most appropriate,” transportation professionals are not necessarily equipped or trained to run successful community meetings and engagement processes and as a result, the quality of community engagement processes varies widely.¹

Even when community engagement processes are quantitatively robust and include numerous meetings, the quality of the process cannot be guaranteed. As LaShawnda Crowe Storm, an Indianapolis-based artist and organizer, asked rhetorically, “if 500 people show up, but the meeting is shoddy, does that mean we engaged? If only 200 people show up but those 200 are engaged in the meeting, that’s impactful.” The timing, location, and format of meetings can have a major impact on their success. “Wednesday night 6 p.m. meetings are designed for someone who works nine-to-five, not the person who works two jobs,” Crowe Storm further explained. “If you’re not honest about the conditions in which people live, and you don’t work within the context of that community, then what’s the purpose doing the work anyway?”



From an Envision Nolensville Pike event. Photo by Rochelle Carpenter, T4America.

A community outreach campaign that was incorrectly presumed to be successful had a major impact on Nashville’s Amp bus rapid transit project, the city’s first planned rapid transit line. The Amp, which was slated to become a signature project of Mayor Karl Dean’s administration, was defeated by organized opposition despite a lengthy community engagement process. Public support for the project was never broad or deep enough to overcome the opposition because the project’s backers never fully explained to communities that were not served by the Amp that it was just a first step in a much bigger regional plan. By missing this specific concern, combined with a range of other oversights and factors, the project’s opponents succeeded.²

Challenge: How can transportation professionals build more meaningful relationships with community members so that all voices are included and have a chance to impact the planning processes?

Many public engagement processes take the form of evening meetings that only accommodate certain types of learners and contributors. Many residents are intimidated by the standard community meeting format, and without properly trained moderators, the loudest residents will overshadow quiet participants. It is therefore imperative to find innovative and creative methods to solicit input from a wide variety of voices. This approach can help avoid community meeting-burnout by injecting a sense of play and fun into the engagement process.

Developing a clear definition for community engagement is a crucial step in improving this process. In many cases, informing, outreaching to, and engaging with communities are all thought to be synonymous. However, these different approaches range on a spectrum from one-sided interactions all the way to collaborative interactions that build trust. Informing communities is the least in-depth form of engagement,

1 U.S. Federal Transit Administration. (2012, October 1). Circular FTA C 4702.1B - Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients. Retrieved from www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Title_VI_FINAL.pdf

2 Corless, J. (n.d.). Taking Creativity to the Streets in Nashville. Barr Foundation. [Web log post]. Retrieved from www.barrfoundation.org/blog/taking-creativity-to-the-streets-in-nashville

and generally takes the form of a newsletter or email that keeps communities up to speed on projects. Outreaching to communities asks for feedback, but is generally done with when a specific decision on a project needs to be made, and therefore only allows for restricted community participation that may raise issues of trust. True community engagement is a process through which transportation professionals work in partnership with communities from start to finish on a number of projects and regularly discuss concerns and priorities outside the scope of a specific project to build trust over time.

Solution: Arts and culture can help shepherd transportation projects through the community input process more quickly and smoothly by facilitating meaningful participation early and often in the planning process.

In South Nashville, along the wide urban highway of Nolensville Pike, lives a thriving community of immigrants and refugees primarily comprised of Latinx, Kurdish, Somali and Sudanese populations. Nolensville Pike, however, is a congested, auto-oriented, typical arterial highway with eroded or non-existent sidewalks, few crosswalks, insufficient bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and no bus shelters, where travel outside of a car is unpleasant and often dangerous.

Led by trusted community organization Conexión Américas, community members of different ages and backgrounds worked together to design and build a temporary bus shelter to test ideas and start a conversation about improving transportation infrastructure, produce an oral history project in which high school students interviewed longtime residents about their memories and experiences with transportation, and run a month-long series of Creative Labs at which community members discussed, in culturally-specific settings, the assets and shortcomings of the Nolensville Pike corridor. These three projects are detailed in *Envision Nolensville Pike*, a plan for the arts-driven plan calling for the equitable redevelopment of the corridor's transportation infrastructure.¹

A similar process characterized the City of Boston's GoBoston 2030 transportation planning community engagement initiative, which featured a public Visioning Lab.² This space for Bostonians to share their ideas about the future of transportation in the city relied deeply on the arts. Posters helped illustrate key transportation data. Music, dancing, and visual arts served as integral elements of the central Visioning Lab event to encourage new ideas and collaboration. Prior to the Visioning Lab, locals were invited to upload photos depicting a better transportation future in the form of sketches, renderings, and found images. The feedback gathered from the theme walls informed the goals of GoBoston 2030.



Questions asked by citizens as part of GoBoston 2030. Photo courtesy of the Interaction Institute for Social Change.

¹ Nashville Civic Design Center. (n.d.). *Envision Nolensville Pike: Community, Creativity and Imagination in Placemaking*. Retrieved from www.civicedesigncenter.org/projects/envision-nolensville-pike-community-creativity-and-imagination-in-placemaking.2079977

² City of Boston. (2017, March). *The People's Voice: Visioning - Engaging Everyday People in the Visioning Process*. Retrieved from www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/document-file-03-2017/go_boston_2030_-_the_peoples_voice_visioning_spreads.pdf

Case Study: Jade-Midway Placemaking Projects Portland, Oregon

When roughly 14 miles of a bus rapid transit line was proposed along Division Street in East Portland, the effort was greeted with interest in an often-neglected area of the city, but also concern about the possibilities of displacement and development poorly engaged with the unique local culture. To address those concerns, community members throughout the Jade and Division Midway districts were engaged through arts and culture projects to recalibrate the plan to better serve community needs.

Arts-based engagement has helped build a positive dialogue between local agencies and the community to ensure that a new planned bus rapid transit line serves the residents of ethnically diverse, low income districts in the eastern part of the city. The Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) and the Division-Midway Alliance, two nonprofits located respectively in the Jade and Midway districts along Division street in Portland, have been empowering residents, businesses, and students through arts and culture to actively shape the evolving BRT project.

This area is home to many immigrant and refugee families that give the area a rich ethnic and cultural diversity, yet it has historically lacked strong, safe transportation infrastructure. In a corridor with members from such diverse backgrounds, creative tactics allow the community to advocate, express, and communicate their desires and interests related to this new transportation proposal to ensure that the final project will best serve their communities' needs, reflect what makes their community unique, and be embraced by the people and communities it serves.



Photo courtesy of Kamala Kingsley.

To further build local capacity, the organizations built a placemaking steering committee comprised of eight civic, nonprofit, and government members to guide creative placemaking plans in the district, and ultimately strengthen coalitions. APANO also launched a creative placemaking project grant program, funding the creation of projects in the district led by cultural workers. These cultural workers then participated in a cohort known as the resident artist collaborative, in which they receive training to help prepare to produce community-engaged artworks.



Photo courtesy of Kamala Kingsley.

By building public awareness and political pressure through arts and cultural projects, APANO and the Division-Midway Alliance helped to pause construction of the BRT planning process until the Portland Bureau of Transportation, mass transit agency TriMet, Metro, and others made formal Community Benefits Agreements and agreed to mitigation measures to ensure that the new vital transit service will transform the community in a positive way.^{1,2}



Photo collage courtesy of Tamara Lynn / Living Stages.

1 TriMet, known as the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon, is the Portland, OR region's transit agency. Oregon Metro is the Portland region's Metropolitan Planning Organization serving Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties.

2 A Community Benefits Agreement or CBA is a contract between a community organization and a real estate developer that requires the developer to provide certain amenities or mitigation in exchange for community support of the developer's project.

Solution #5

Fostering local ownership

Arts and culture can help accomplish local goals and foster local stewardship by incorporating community-sourced artistic and design elements into transportation projects.



Decisions about the design of transportation systems are often made without consideration to local cultural or history, and applied across an entire system, leading to bus or light rail stations that look and feel the same regardless of the neighborhood in which they're located. While these systems may function well, their lack of contextual specificity prevents them from creating a sense of belonging within the local community. They might serve their intended function, but their design – or lack of it – turns them into isolated archipelagos that stick out like a sore thumb, rather than highlighting and elevating the context they are placed in.

Instead of becoming beloved community assets, new transportation assets may alienate the local community by interjecting public spaces, plazas, and stations that were designed without local participation or reflection. The emerging field of community engaged-design has recently begun to respond to these issues by “working in partnership with people and organizations from low-income communities and low-income communities of color to improve the quality of the built environment and to build local power and capacity.”¹

1 Surdna Foundation. (n.d.). Community Engaged Design in America - About Us. Retrieved from <http://communityengageddesign.org/about-us/>

In addition to these mental and emotional barriers between communities and the transportation systems intended to serve them, physical barriers often exist as well. Frequently, the spaces between transit hubs and surrounding residences and businesses are ignored when the hubs are designed, as these connections are “outside of transit agencies’ traditional sphere of concern – operating buses or trains – and thus demand sustained coordination with other governmental actors.”¹ These in-between spaces may include unsafe street crossings, dark alleys, and actual or perceived danger. Sometimes, the walk to the transit hub is just boring, with blank facades or vacant space turning what could be a pleasant walk into a monotonous slog.

Challenge: How can transportation systems reflect communities’ culture and preferences to ensure local ownership and use of these systems?

There is a growing understanding that providing access to new transportation choices does not necessarily address issues of equity. Naomi Doerner, the City of Seattle’s transportation equity program manager and co-founder of transportation equity conference *The Untokening*, pointed out that addressing fairness and inclusion in the transportation planning process, especially in regards to the design of public spaces like bus shelters and train stations, is key to producing spaces that reflect and serve the needs of everyone in the local community and avoiding making the same past mistakes again.² “There’s a real trend towards understanding how transportation decisions create inclusionary and exclusionary spaces,” Ms. Doerner said. Transportation systems designed with culturally and locally relevant elements are more likely to be loved and therefore used.

Solution: Arts and culture can help accomplish local goals like improving health, encouraging walking and biking, or increasing transit ridership by incorporating community-sourced artistic and design elements into transportation projects to foster local stewardship and use.

The goal of much site-specific art in transit is to create transportation infrastructure that visually represents communities’ ideas, cultures, and stories. Gabe Klein, former Commissioner of both Washington, DC’s and Chicago’s Departments of Transportation, believes that every transportation project should include elements of public art, because it provides an opportunity to give communities a voice in a project; while communities can’t “dramatically change the design of a bridge, they can have input on the public art” that is included in station area design, which gives the public a sense of ownership over these spaces.

Michelle Traver, of Portland, Oregon’s TriMet, has a similar perspective on incorporating art into transportation efforts, stating that “artists provide more of a sense of a human hand and heart; they humanize space by making transportation elements more than just public utilities.” Ms. Traver acknowledges that not all public art achieves this goal; some works of public art beautify capital improvements but do not necessarily connect to local history or community culture. However, Portland’s MAX light rail stations are full of examples of site specific works that relate to their surrounding places, people, and history, including Valerie Otani’s *Voices of Remembrance*, a work of public art that references the Japanese internment camp that was built during WWII at the site that become the MAX Yellow Line Expo Center station. The work of art includes traditional torrii gates, internee ID tags, vintage news articles, community maps, and space for

1 Accuardi, Z. (2017, April 5). Transit is Made for Walking. TransitCenter. Retrieved from <http://transitcenter.org/2017/04/05/transit-is-made-for-walking/>

2 Untokening. (n.d.). Home Page. Retrieved from www.untokening.org/

community gathering and reflection. Rather than simply beautifying the station, the art addresses a difficult topic, and publicly acknowledges this dark chapter of the city's and country's history. More than a decade after its completion, the station continues to serve as a destination for community tours and the focus of community healing.¹

In Baltimore, the *Transit* project sought to expand local ownership over two elements of transportation infrastructure: bus shelters in southeast Baltimore and the Penn Station plaza, the space outside Baltimore's main transportation hub, in central Baltimore. Southeast Baltimore has undergone major demographic changes, with an influx of primarily Latinx immigrants. In an attempt to creatively build connections between new residents, older residents, and the bus system which is heavily used by both groups, a team led by the Creative Alliance and Spanish artists *mmmm...* created and built a unique bus shelter from steel and wood that consists of three capital letters – BUS – which have the same meaning in both English and Spanish, and now serve as a starting point for sharing public space across cultures. At the Penn Station plaza, a concrete space designed primarily for cars to pick up and drop off train passengers, *parkour* artists performed and taught the French movement style that consists of moving efficiently and often acrobatically through urban spaces. These performances and lessons brought new life to the desolate plaza, providing a newfound sense of ownership of the plaza for neighborhood youth and elders alike who attended weekly workshops and monthly performances throughout the spring of 2014. The ephemeral nature of this work of art allowed it to be produced with far fewer signoffs than a work of permanent art would have required, thereby allowing a new approach to activation to be quickly tested.



Voices of Remembrance in Portland, photo courtesy of TriMet.

Not a typical mural project, *En Route*, a project between the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Fulton County Arts & Culture, The TransFormation Alliance and led by the arts organization WonderRoot, presented a series of community conversations that led to the development of murals at four MARTA stations across Atlanta. Over a 12-month process of community input, the murals ultimately lent the community a sense of ownership over these existing stations, and more intentionally integrated the stations into the community landscape.

The Indianapolis-based project *Moving Stories* sourced stories from bus riders and shared them through images and quotes displayed in buses, as well as with interactive components on social media. *Moving Stories*,



The Transit project, photo courtesy of mmmm...

1 TriMet. (n.d.). Public Art on MAX Yellow Line. Retrieved from <https://trimet.org/publicart/yellowline.htm>

created in partnership with IndyGo (The Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation), the Arts Council of Indianapolis, as well as CityWrite and Writing Futures at Marian University, both under the direction of English Professor Mark Latta, helped riders to understand their bus as a third place, a social space where riders feel a sense of connection.¹



From Moving Stories in Indianapolis. Photo courtesy of IndyGo.

1 Butler, S. M., & Diaz, C. (2016, September 14). "Third places" as community builders. Brookings Institution. [Web log post]. Retrieved from www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/09/14/third-places-as-community-builders/

Case Study: Santo Domingo Heritage Trail Arts Project Kewa Pueblo, New Mexico

After years of transportation disinvestment that disconnected this pueblo from nearby economic hubs and pathways for tourism, the rich artistic and cultural assets of the pueblo guided and informed the process to create a safe pedestrian trail connecting the town, the pueblo housing developments, and a new commuter rail station.

Located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico, the pueblo of Santo Domingo (also known as the Kewa Pueblo) is situated along historic roads of commerce and served as a trade center in the early 1920s. Despite the changes to the area over the years, the native population has maintained its traditional social and religious structures and cultivated a rich culture of artistry, specifically in jewelry, basket weaving and pottery-making. After years of transportation disinvestment that disconnected the pueblo from nearby economic hubs, unemployment has risen and roughly a quarter of residents live below the poverty line. Local artists, who account for nearly 75 percent of the population in the pueblo, rely on selling their artistic wares as a main source of income. Yet they are hampered by a lack access to public transportation and the lack of connections to nearby economic hubs and pathways for tourism into the town.



Photo courtesy of the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative.

In 2010, the development of a new Rail Runner Express commuter train station nearby presented an opportunity for the tribal community to improve its connection to the station and reconnect to the rail corridor that links Santa Fe with Albuquerque. This connectivity could link locals to better jobs and educational opportunities outside the reservation, in addition to supporting to local creative economy. Simultaneously, the new developments could increase tourism into the area and stimulate the local economy. However, this commuter station was built without safe pedestrian access to the station for both residents and tourists. Joseph Kunkel, Executive Director of the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative explains that “public transportation, trails and sidewalks are often basic infrastructures that cities and suburbs almost take for granted. Rural communities can become even more disenfranchised because they do not often have this basic infrastructure.”

In community meetings, tribal members articulated the need for a safe pedestrian trail on the two-mile stretch between the town, the pueblo housing developments, and the commuter station. Because the community already boasted its own rich artistic assets, this was the tool used to develop the connective trail both for the safety and cultural experience of residents as well as visitors.

Atkin Olshin Schade Architects and Olin Studio worked with Kunkel and local artists to develop a plan for an arts trail to feature eight sculptural nodes created by local artists and designed in conjunction with

community members, to connect housing to the transit center and out to a new arts market.¹ With the need for employment and the strength of local creative assets in mind, the team hired pueblo artists to design large-scale nodes for the trail that would be visible even by riders on the train. All designs underwent a community vetting process that included pueblo members and tribal leadership.

The community also worked with designers Tony Atkin and Laurie Olin to deepen the culturally-specific experience of the trail, and considered this aesthetic to be part of maintaining the safety of the walkway



Graphic courtesy of the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative.

The team staged charrettes with volunteers and the Santo Domingo Planning Department to explore at the possibility of using these node designs to explain Santo Domingo culture, history and the surrounding landscape.

In addition to connecting residential areas of the pueblo with the commuter station, the Arts Trail will lead to the redeveloped Santo Domingo Trading Post, envisioned to serve as an art market where locals will sell their wares to visitors. This facilitates an economic and cultural exchange between both groups and an opportunity to begin to craft a more sustainable platform for exchange that may contribute to more equitable transportation planning processes.

¹ Epstein, B. (2014, August 2). The Santo Domingo Heritage Trail Arts Project. Retrieved from <http://greenfiretimes.com/2014/08/the-santo-domingo-heritage-trail-arts-project/>

The result was an artistic walkway that helped address the shortcomings of an underdeveloped transportation plan for a historically disinvested population in a historically disinvested geography. This last mile of connectivity provides valuable access to a community that critically needed it.¹ However, just the completion of a walkway between these sites would not have been enough. The integration of art into the walkway will make the experience of traveling from home to the Rail Runner station to be uplifting, rather than burdensome; empowering, rather than a constant reminder of systemic neglect; welcoming and safe, rather than a haphazard afterthought; and, in the end, a walkway by and for the people who need it most. Likewise, visitors will be able to more easily reach Santo Domingo and experience it in a way that is culturally enriching and even educational. Arts and cultural tools allowed the tribal community to rewrite its relationship to transportation infrastructure that failed to meet the needs of the population, and instead foster ownership in new transportation infrastructure that serves the pueblo.



Photos courtesy of the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative.

¹ The “last-mile” refers to the beginning or end of an individual trip made primarily by public transportation, often completed by other modes transportation, like walking or bicycling.

Zellner, M., Massey, D., Shiftan, Y., Levine, J., & Arquero, M. J. (2016). Overcoming the Last-Mile Problem with Transportation and Land-Use Improvements: An Agent-Based Approach. *International Journal of Transportation*, 4(1), 1-26. doi:10.14257/ijt.2016.4.1.01 Retrieved from www.sersc.org/journals/IJT/vol4_no1/1.pdf

Solution #6

Alleviating the disruptive effects of construction

Arts and culture can help overcome the disruption of construction and mitigate the impact on businesses, residents, and visitors by using artistic interventions to create a more accessible and inviting environment.



Transportation construction can create considerable disturbance which negatively impacts nearby businesses — often the very businesses that new projects are intended to help. While nearby businesses stand to benefit long-term from new transportation assets, they need to survive (and even thrive) during the period of disruption to make that possible. All too often, retail establishments with already slim profit margins are unable to survive multiple years of disturbance, especially in dense areas where parking is already in limited supply and access may be challenging.

New light rail and bus rapid transit projects often gather support from the small business community because of the new customers the systems will bring. But what happens if those same small businesses are no longer in operation once the construction dust has settled?

Challenge: How can the construction of transportation projects avoid producing negative impacts on local businesses?

At a minimum, construction should be mitigated to ensure that negative impacts on surrounding businesses are minimized. But so much more can be done beyond this bare minimum of “do no harm.” Done right, construction can present opportunities to temporarily strengthen businesses and deepen a sense of place and community pride. Generally viewed as an obstacle, construction can present some interesting opportunities. Busy roads may be closed to vehicular traffic, construction workers on site will need places to eat, and excavation may provide a spectacle as infrastructural history is uncovered. However, without careful management and intent, these opportunities will be overshadowed by the traffic and access problems, noise, dust, and negative perception of the construction corridor.

In Seattle, the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund (RVCDF), a community development financial institution (CDFI), recognized that the construction of a new light rail line beginning in 2002 would pose serious problems for small businesses. RVCDF supplied low-interest loans and technical assistance to affected businesses, and as a result, 85 percent of pre-construction businesses remained open through seven years of construction. The light rail construction also served as an organizing tool: RVCDF still offers these loans and technical assistance, while the MLK Business Association formed during the same construction period to promote and organize businesses along the new light rail route.¹

Solution: Arts and culture can help overcome the disruption of construction and mitigate the impact on businesses, residents, and visitors by using artistic interventions to create a more accessible and inviting environment.

In response to concerns over construction of the Red Line, a proposed light rail line connecting east and west Baltimore through downtown and surrounding suburbs, Baltimore-based Urbanite Magazine launched a design competition for artists and designers to respond to the question “how can we turn this arduous construction process into something positive for the city of Baltimore?”² The winner, the *Red Line Construction Song & Cookbook* by artists C. Ryan Patterson and Jann Rosen-Queralt, proposed “a ‘survival pack and manual’ filled with recipes, songs, suggestions and notices for social gatherings and other tools to overcome the physical and mental gridlock caused during the construction process.”³ While the Red Line was eventually canceled by the State of Maryland and construction therefore never occurred, the agencies leading the project had agreed to use the *Construction Song & Cookbook* to drive traffic to the impacted corridor to help businesses and Baltimoreans deal with the construction.

1 Conexión Américas & Transportation for America (2017, May 24). Envision Nolensville Pike II: Recommendations for Achieving Inclusive Development. Retrieved from <http://t4america.org/2017/05/24/avoiding-displacement-making-vital-nashville-corridor-function-better-everyone/>

2 Urbanite LLC. (2011, September 30). October 2011 Issue. Retrieved from <https://issuu.com/urbanitemagazine/docs/october2011>

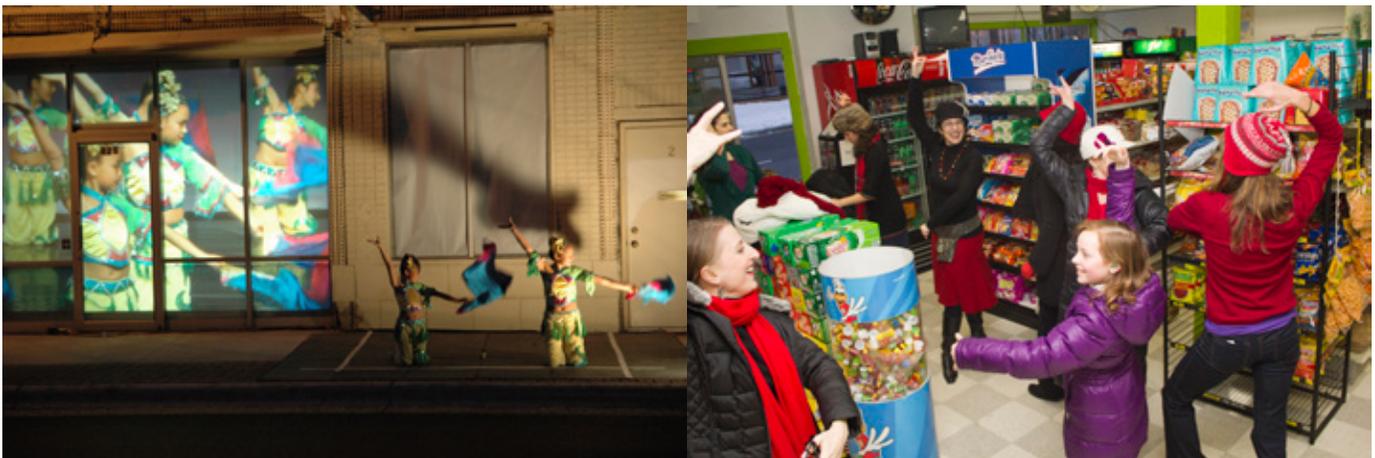
3 Rosen-Queralt, J. (2011). The Redline Construction Song & Cook Book. Retrieved from <http://cargocollective.com/cryanpatterson/The-Redline-Construction-Song-Cook-Book>

Case Study: Irrigate St. Paul, Minnesota

Though the new Green Line light rail line would finally connect the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul with rail transit, business owners, local leaders, and advocates raised red flags about construction disrupting the corridor's businesses as well as immigrant and communities of color. To mitigate these negative effects, Springboard for the Arts and other local organizations created a series of artistic interventions that did more than merely prevent painful disruptions; they helped the corridor thrive during a period of vulnerability.

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have long been culturally, economically, and geographically linked, but until 2014 they lacked a meaningful, modern rail connection. The Green Line, originally known as the Central Corridor, was a new light rail line planned to run primarily along University Avenue between Minneapolis and St. Paul, home to a large number of immigrants and communities of color. With a disruptive construction project planned, civic leaders feared that months of negative press, dust, and noise might bankrupt businesses and lead to a black eye for the project before it ever opened.

In response to this concern, Springboard for the Arts, a nationally recognized community and economic development organization based in St. Paul, the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Coalition, and the City of St. Paul created Irrigate, a "community development strategy that mobilizes the skills and creativity of local artists to create innovative, meaningful, authentic solutions to local challenges."¹ Springboard trained 600 artists from the neighborhoods around the rail line to collaborate with businesses and organizations along University Avenue. 220 of the artists completed 150 creative placemaking projects over 36 months that were designed bring attention, customers, joy and beauty to the spaces and businesses adjacent to the construction.



Relight the Victoria, left, by artist Nick Clausen, courtesy of Springboard for the Arts, shared by Jun-Li. Right, Flamenco Christmas on the Green Line: A Processional of Song and Dance by Deborah Elias, photo by Rudy Arnold.

1 Springboard for the Arts. (n.d.). Irrigate: Artist-led Creative Placemaking. Retrieved from <https://springboardforthearts.org/programs/irrigate/>

Irrigate projects included musical and theatrical performances in businesses, artistic installations in construction fencing, dance workshops, interactive musical benches, murals, street theatre and performances, and much more. These projects generated more than 51 million positive earned media impressions, which spread stories about the people, neighborhoods and businesses sharing University Avenue and helped to connect new and old customers to the businesses during construction.¹ As Nancy Homans, Policy Director for the City of St. Paul explained,

While the City of Saint Paul tried feverishly to garner positive coverage for the benefits of transit that the Central Corridor would bring to the community, their positive message was consistently diluted in the media by negative stories about the impact of construction. As Irrigate projects began popping up along the Corridor...the magic of art started a different conversation. Irrigate's public process engaging artists from the community to support local businesses provided a nimble and creative way to influence the narrative and change community perceptions of the value of community development.

Businesses reported that Irrigate projects helped them maintain visibility and reach new customers, and Springboard felt that the project helped to change the narrative of the corridor, build social capital among neighbors and businesses, and increase the prosperity of small businesses in the corridor.²

As with many of their successful projects, Springboard published a toolkit for communities who want guidance on running a similar program during construction. Irrigate has also been featured on ArtPlace's website,³ in a documentary video⁴, and in T4A's Scenic Route Guide.⁵



Opening day on the Green Line. Flickr photo by Michael Hicks. www.flickr.com/photos/mulad/14238058898/

1 Springboard for the Arts. (n.d.). Irrigate Earned Media Impact Report 2011-2014 (Rep.).

2 Springboard for the Arts. (2014). Irrigate: A Toolkit for Mobilizing Local Artists in your Community to Solve Problems. Retrieved from www.funderscollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Irrigate-Toolkit.pdf

3 ArtPlace America. (2017, February 23). Irrigate - Springboard for the Arts. Retrieved from www.artplaceamerica.org/funded-projects/irrigate

4 Springboard for the Arts. (2014, August 28). YouTube. Retrieved from www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQmUICGjKrk

5 Transportation for America. (2016, February 10). The Green Line: How Arts Improved the Planning & Construction Processes. Retrieved from <http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/placemaking-in-practice/minneapolis-green-line/arts-improve-process/>

Solution #7

Healing wounds and divisions

Arts and culture can help remedy the divisions created by urban highways and other detrimental transportation infrastructure by physically and culturally reconnecting communities.



Beginning with the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, the interstate highway system began to be constructed across the United States, funded largely by the federal gas tax, which covered 90 percent of the cost. While most of the interstate system’s mileage was built to connect states to other states, and urban areas to one another and to their suburbs, highways were also built through densely populated urban areas.

While the federal tax on gasoline to fund the interstate system logically placed the financial burden of building the system on its users, it also relinquished control of the planning process from municipalities to states and eventually to the federal government. The state highway engineers responsible for designing the system “lacked a holistic view of freeways’ place within the larger urban organism” and considerations of land-use planning and multi-modal transportation options were largely absent from their plans. Furthermore, interstate builders’ desire to quickly complete as many miles as possible while ample funding was available “drove them to start with the inexpensive low-hanging fruit: suburban segments (which required minimal displacement of existing homes and businesses) and routes through lower-income central city neighborhoods

(where land costs were lower and organized political opposition was weaker).¹ By the time builders were ready to move on to the more expensive segments, the program was winding down, meaning that the interstate system disproportionately disrupted urban lower-income communities of color, who had no voice in the planning of the highways.

These urban highways negatively impacted the property values, connectivity, and aesthetics of the communities through which they were built. “We now know — overwhelmingly — that our urban freeways were almost always routed through low-income and minority neighborhoods, creating disconnections from opportunity that exist to this day,” said former United States Secretary of Transportation, Anthony Foxx.² He knew from direct experience, having grown up in a neighborhood in Charlotte that was boxed in by interstates built during this era. Furthermore, there is a wide body of research that indicates the negative health impacts of living within close proximity to a highway, including heart disease, lung cancer, and strokes.³

Challenge: How can the problems created by these sorts of intrusive historic transportation infrastructure be remedied?

Transportation professionals now have the opportunity to right the mistakes committed in the 1950s and 60s. Numerous elevated highways and overpasses that divide neighborhoods in cities across the country have already been torn down, and considerations of local communities’ needs and desires are slowly — but unevenly from state to state — being taken into account. Meanwhile, communities across the country have reclaimed spaces under elevated highways, over sunken highways, and adjacent to interchanges. Planners and transportation professionals are increasingly aware of their responsibility to address these urban scars, and of the role of arts and culture can play in reclamation.

As Mark VanderSchaaf, Regional Planning Director at the Twin Cities’ Metropolitan Council, asserted during a discussion of Interstate 94’s negative impact on Minneapolis’ historically African American Rondo neighborhood, “by bringing community-based arts and cultural activities into transportation and land use processes, our cities can begin not just to prepare for a better future, but perhaps to heal the wounds remaining from earlier planning errors.”⁴

Solution: Arts and culture can help remedy the divisions created by urban highways and other detrimental transportation infrastructure by physically and culturally reconnecting communities.

In 2016, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) launched the Ladders of Opportunity Every Place Counts Design Challenge, and awarded technical assistance to Spokane, Philadelphia, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Nashville to help develop plans to reclaim urban interstates and find creative ways

1 Brown, J. R., Morris, E. A., & Taylor, B. D. (2009). Paved with Good Intentions: Fiscal Politics, Freeways and the 20th Century American City. Access Magazine. Retrieved from www.accessmagazine.org/fall-2009/paved-good-intentions-fiscal-politics-freeways-20th-century-american-city/

2 Halsey, A., III. (2016, March 29). A Crusade to Defeat the Legacy of Highways Rammed through Poor Neighborhoods. Washington Post Retrieved from <http://wapo.st/1UYIGcK>

3 University of Southern California Environmental Health Centers. (n.d.). References: Living Near Busy Roads or Traffic Pollution. Retrieved from <http://envhealthcenters.usc.edu/infographics/infographic-living-near-busy-roads-or-traffic-pollution/references-living-near-busy-roads-or-traffic-pollution>

4 Vanderschaaf, M. (2016, February 16). A View From the Field. Transportation for America. Retrieved from <http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/what-is-creative-placemaking/a-view-from-the-field/>

to mitigate and heal the damage they had wrought.¹ Through workshops led by planners, designers, and artists, the challenge aimed to:

- Encourage communities to reimagine existing transportation projects via innovative and restorative infrastructure design that corrects past mistakes; reconnects people and neighborhoods to opportunity; and reinvigorates opportunity within communities.
- Empower communities and decision-makers to work together to develop context-sensitive design solutions that reflect and incorporate the input of the people and communities they impact.²

While the results of this planning effort have yet to be implemented, artists and designers in numerous other cities have contributed to similar reclamation projects. In San Jose, in the Sunset680 project, artists refurbished a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 680 to reconnect two neighborhoods and to better connect the residents to the amenities present on either side. Completed in 2016, the project also focused on providing locally-relevant programming to attract residents to use the bridge and to learn how to reclaim a vacant space at one terminus of the bridge for productive use as a community space.³

Greensboro, NC followed a similar path to reconnect neighborhoods to downtown. Formed in 2001 in response to Greensboro's faltering economy, Action Greensboro developed *Over.Under.Pass* in 2012 as a creative means of reclaiming an abandoned railroad underpass to provide a safe and enticing connection between historically African American neighborhoods in south Greensboro and the employment and cultural hub of downtown. The project succeeded by enlisting local artists Jim Gallucci and Scott Richardson to enliven the underpass with sculpture and light installation, and the space now attracts commuters and recreational users.⁴

Tucson, AZ's Diamondback Bridge, which is a sculptural Diamondback snake, connects two segments of the popular Aviation Bike Path over a busy road and created an iconic symbol for the city's robust cycling network.⁵

In Nashville, reclamation of Interstate 40 began before the USDOT design challenge with the Gateway to Heritage project, consisting of historical murals and markers created by local artists James Threalkill and Michael McBride, landscaping, and a plaza that recounts Jefferson Street and north Nashville's African American musical and cultural history.⁶

Similarly, in Orange, New Jersey, *Unearthing the Future: The Art*



One of the underpasses in Greensboro's *Over.Under.Pass* project. Photo courtesy of the National Endowment for the Arts.

1 U.S. Department of Transportation. (2016, December 28). U.S. DOT Ladders of Opportunity - Every Place Counts Design Challenge Summary Report. Retrieved from www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/CNU.USDOT_Report_FINAL.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 ArtPlace America. (2016, December 13). Sunset Bridge Project. Retrieved from www.artplaceamerica.org/funded-projects/sunset-bridge-project

4 National Endowment for the Arts. (n.d.). Exploring our Town - Greensboro, NC Over.Under.Pass. Retrieved from www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/overunderpass

5 Tucson Art Information. (2007, April 5). Diamondback (Rattlesnake) Bridge. Retrieved from http://tucsonart.info/public_art/r/rattlesnake-bridge.shtml

6 Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee. (n.d.). Jefferson Street/Gateway to Heritage Project. Retrieved from www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Capital-Projects/Jefferson-Street.aspx

of Reverse Archaeology convened archaeologists and artists to archive and interpret the effect of Interstate 280, which barreled through the center of Orange in the late 1960s. The project uses oral history, ethnography, plays, murals and visual art exhibitions to gather the stories of surrounding the highway, including narratives from pre-construction and questions about the future of the area.



Diamondback Bridge in Tucson. Photo courtesy of Americans for the Arts.

Case Study: Chicano Park San Diego, California

After the neighborhood was cut in half by the construction of Interstate 5 in the 1960s, local artists and community members came together to reclaim the disruptive piece of transportation infrastructure and create a park featuring murals, performance space and cultural programming that serves the needs of the community.

For decades, the Chicano community in Barrio Logan, San Diego, thrived as a tightly knit, self-reliant neighborhood. Mexican-Americans began settling in the area as early as the 1890s and have attempted to convince the city to build a park and community space in the neighborhood for decades. In the 1930s, the neighborhood saw an increase of Mexican immigrants arriving to work as laborers, cannery workers, welders, pipefitters, and longshoremen as the city's new zoning laws allowed for the influx of auto junk yards and industrial development. As the neighborhood began to change, residents found it even more important to make the park a priority.

In the mid-1960's, the neighborhood was abruptly bisected by the construction of Interstate 5, an eight-lane freeway that split Barrio Logan in half, disconnecting it from itself. The freeway displaced long-time residents, and became a barrier between residents and businesses in this deeply connected community. Community members viewed the freeway construction as a further step in line with years of disinvestment.

In 1969, the State of California finally awarded the City of San Diego a 20-year lease on a 1.8-acre plot of land and passed a state law stipulating that any unused parcel of land near highways could be used as a community recreation area.¹ The site was to be prepared for public use. Despite these plans, on April 22, 1970, neighborhood residents spotted bulldozers and learned that the location for the proposed park was being used to construct a parking lot for a State Highway Patrol station. Neighbors quickly occupied the construction site, and after twelve days, Assistant City Manager Meno Wilhelms announced that city and state officials had agreed to negotiate with the protesters and the newly formed Chicano Park Steering Committee. Eventually the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) halted construction and the land was returned to the community.

Visual artist Victor Ochoa, a co-initiator of the Chicano Park artistic transformation, reflects back on the role of artists organizing around the site. He recalls how Salvador Torres, the lead artist behind the Chicano park murals, “would go out and do watercolors and sketches of the partially constructed highway pillars and almost treated them like sculptures. Us artists were organizing in Logan Heights well before the bridge was built.”



Photo by Flickr user [kellinahandbasket](https://www.flickr.com/photos/kellinahandbasket/212301013) / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kellinahandbasket/212301013>,

1 City Planning Park Project Near Bridge. (1969, November 9). San Diego Union, p. G8.

The park that local artists and community members created is a reclamation of disruptive transportation infrastructure to better serve the needs of the community, and now serves as a symbol of Chicano autonomy. Chicano Park is internationally recognized for its large-scale murals that depict Chicano and Mexican history and identity, directly painted by local Chicano artists, a sculpture of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, and a kiosk resembling an Aztec temple that serves as a stage for performances and events.¹ Since the artists have hoped the park would eventually stretch along the underside of the Coronado Bridge all the way to the San Diego Bay, murals are sequentially painted in the direction of the waterfront.² The artistic components of the space establish a sense of place, elevate local culture, and convert the infrastructure into an outdoor museum. Chicano Park was listed on the California Register of Historical Resources in 1997, and on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

The park's current organizers explain that "Chicano Park becomes the paramount icon of our [community's] aspiration to control something meaningful in our lives – Chicano Park symbolizes our sacred right to self-determination."³ The Barrio Logan neighborhood continues to commemorate an annual Chicano Park Day on April 22, celebrating the initial occupation of the park site.



Photo by Flickr user Kyle Mahan / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kindofblue115/4854965920>.

1 National Park Service. (2012). National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - Chicano Park (San Diego). Retrieved from www.nps.gov/nr/feature/weekly_features/2013/CA_12001192.pdf

2 Rios, M. (n.d.). Addressing Inequity at Barrio Logan. Retrieved from www.urbanecology.org/addressing-inequity-barrio-logan/

3 Anguiano, M. (n.d.). The Battle of Chicano Park: A Brief History of the Takeover. Retrieved from www.chicano-park.com/cpscbattleof.html

Advice for Collaboration

In our interviews with experts from the transportation and arts sectors, we asked for advice for artists and transportation professionals considering collaboration. Below are several selected responses we received:

What should artists know before working with transportation professionals?

Jim Walker, CEO, Co-founder, and Lead Artist, Big Car: Artists should think holistically about transportation projects, even when they're not invited to. Rather than only paying attention to the part of a transportation meeting that focuses on public art, artists should think about how they can contribute to other aspects of the conversation.

Gabe Klein, Co-founder, CityFi: It's critical to understand the role of different transportation professionals on projects to determine who to partner with — engineers are more focused on project delivery and performance levels, while planners are focused on project quality and community connections.

Naomi Doerner, Transportation Equity Program Manager, City of Seattle: In transportation projects, no never really means no, regardless of how much one hears it; to collaborate with transportation professionals, it helps to focus on shared concerns and values; transportation timelines may be quite long and quite different from the timelines associated with ephemeral art, so it may help to focus on process.

Sara Zimmerman, Technical Assistance Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership: Understanding the very specific language used in the transportation field will help with collaboration; explaining how art can help achieve transportation goals will help collaboration; transportation professionals are sometimes sensitive about people not "getting" their work, so artists will have to prove that they in fact "get" it.

Michael Rohd, Executive Director, Center for Performance and Civic Practice: Communicating about artist assets in non-arts terms can help: we find 'expression' more useful than performance, 'problem solving' often translates more clearly than improvisation; 'collaborate' is a cross-field way to talk about building community.

Joung Lee, Policy Director, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials: Transportation professionals will still need the numbers and empirical evidence, in addition to the qualitative proof points that arts and culture can provide.

What should transportation professionals know before working with artists?

Alan Nakagawa, Creative Catalyst Artist in Residence, Los Angeles Department of

Transportation: There are many different types of artists and approaches to art-making. Since artists carry a wide range of skills and work with a wide range of media, those who are interested in public engagement will be most impactful in transportation projects. Just as one wouldn't hire an electrical engineer to design a bridge, one shouldn't hire a more traditional studio artist who prefers to work solo to suddenly run a community meeting.

Elizabeth Hamby, Assistant Director of Public Housing and Health, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:

Artists can help examine information and design context-sensitive solutions rather than cut-and-paste strategies; artists who come from the local community can serve as experts on local context as well as experts on their art form.

Jim Walker: Transportation professionals need to recognize that artists can contribute more than just the beautification of infrastructure.

Cassie Meador, Executive Artistic Director, Dance Exchange: Bring arts and culture professionals in earlier, not just for the public interface moment. There are new ways of thinking, responding, listening and activating that have value and can be brought in earlier.

Chris Appleton, Co-founder and Executive Director, WonderRoot: It's about both creating a seat at the table and doing it early on in the process, not just when you want a piece of public art dropped down to make transit investment look good. This is about using arts and culture strategies to enhance and deepen the impact of the transit investments.

Conclusion

Through our interviews and research conducted for this field scan, as well as through T4A's work on several arts-driven transportation projects, we uncovered a number of areas where further research and/or support are needed:

(1) Artists and transportation professionals, and anyone else advocating for incorporating artistic practice into transportation projects, would benefit greatly from finding ways to measure and quantify the success of these types of collaborations. With a primary focus on delivering projects on time and under budget, transportation professionals need to see evidence that artistic interventions can have a positive impact on their goals. This evidence needs to be communicated through a more fully developed set of metrics that quantitatively and qualitatively measure the impact of these projects.¹ These metrics would additionally spare project managers from having to reinvent measurements, and provide a more commonly understood set of benefits.

(2) Training programs for artists on transportation language and decision-making processes (like work flow and funding structures) would help prepare artists to successfully contribute to transportation projects. Similarly, training for transportation professionals on artistic practice, arts language, design thinking, social practice, and community art would help transportation professionals collaborate with artists. While the number of programs and workshops designed to train artists to work towards community development outcomes has grown in recent years, there are currently no such programs directly focused on transportation projects, which frequently involve more technical specifications, complex processes, and funding rules, making a targeted training program all the more necessary.

(3) Finally, both artists and transportation professionals, as well as the general public, stand to benefit from thoughtfully considering the ramifications of new and emerging technologies on transportation systems and on the public realm in the near future. Immense opportunities and challenges are quickly approaching, and creative responses to these technological innovations and shifts could ensure that the right questions are being asked, the necessary perspectives are being considered, and the best systems and policies are being produced. Case studies related to artists engaging with new transportation technologies, such as automated vehicles, and mobility-on-demand services like rideshare and bikeshare apps were not included in this field scan because artists, for the most part, have not yet engaged with this emerging field. However, many artists expressed an interest in creatively engaging.

In conclusion, this field scan is intended to contribute to the burgeoning discussion about the role of arts and culture in solving transportation challenges and spark new conversations. In July 2017, ArtPlace America and Transportation for America convened a working group to discuss the findings in this field scan. The working group, comprised of representatives from local, regional, state, and federal government agencies, the arts, philanthropy, design, engineering, advocacy, and other fields related to the projects and approaches described in this document, used the field scan as a starting point to explore next steps and additional resources needed to move this intersectional work forward. A summary of the working group's discussions is

1 Jay Inslee for Washington. (n.d.). Transportation and Transit Investments: Critical to Building a Working Washington & Safer, More Mobile & Connected Communities. Retrieved from www.jayinslee.com/policy/policy-pdfs/Transportation-Priorities.pdf

included as an appendix to this document.

Interview List

- Chris Appleton, Co-founder and Executive Director, WonderRoot and Creative Placemaking Committee Chair, Atlanta Transformation Alliance
- Emiko Atherton, Director, National Complete Streets Coalition
- Jay Banasiak, Mass Transit Director, Sun Transit
- LaShawnda Crowe Storm, Indianapolis-based artist and community organizer
- Sara Daleiden, Founder and Director, MKE<->LAX
- Liz Cornish, Executive Director, Bikemore
- Naomi Doerner, Transportation Equity Program Manager, City of Seattle
- Maya Emsden, Deputy Executive Officer, Creative Services, LA Metro
- Letitia Fernandez Ivins, Creative Services Manager, LA Metro
- Ben Fyffe, Assistant Director, El Paso Museums and Cultural Affairs Department
- Stephanie Gidigbi, Policy, Capacity, and Systems Change Director, SPARCC Initiative
- Elizabeth Hamby, Assistant Director of Public Housing and Health, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Neil Hrushowy, Manager, City Design Group, Citywide Planning, City and County of San Francisco
- Jamison Hutchins, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator-Engineering, Indianapolis Department of Public Works
- Gabe Klein, Co-founder, CityFi
- Joseph Kunkel, Executive Director, Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative
- Joung Lee, Policy Director, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- Dana Lucero, Senior Planner, Creative Community Building, Oregon Metro
- Cassie Meador, Executive Artistic Director, Dance Exchange
- Alan Nakagawa, Creative Catalyst Artist in Residence, Los Angeles Department of Transportation
- Victor Ochoa, Artist, Chicano Park
- Greg Raisman, Traffic Safety Program Specialist, Portland Bureau of Transportation
- Seleta Reynolds, General Manager, Los Angeles Department of Transportation
- Michael Rohd, Executive Director, Center for Performance and Civic Practice
- John Robert Smith, Policy Advisor, Smart Growth America
- Peter Svarzbein, City Representative District 1, El Paso City Council
- Michelle Traver, Public Art Administrator, TriMet
- Shin-Pei Tsay, Executive Director, Gehl Institute
- Phyllis Viola Boyd, Executive Director, Groundwork Indy
- Jim Walker, CEO, Co-founder, and Lead Artist, Big Car
- Sara Zimmerman, Technical Assistance Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Appendix: Transportation Working Group

Working group convening summary

By Mallory Nezam, Transportation for America, and Danya Sherman, ArtPlace America

This was originally published on t4america.org on August 2, 2017, following the working group meeting.

In July 2017, a group of twenty four transportation officials, engineers, planners, artists, policymakers, and advocates from around the country gathered together in Indianapolis to sweat and scheme about how to use arts and culture to build support for equitable transportation infrastructure.

T4A and ArtPlace America co-hosted this working group, which was graciously hosted by [Big Car Collaborative](#) and the [Harrison Center for the Arts](#), two of many incredible organizations working at the intersection of arts, culture, and community development in Indy.

We chose Indianapolis partly because Indy voters approved a 0.25 percent income tax hike back in November 2016 to drastically improve bus service. The new tax will raise more than \$54 million annually for the construction of three bus rapid transit lines, new buses, increased route frequency and new sidewalks and bus shelters. But the devil is in the details, and Indy-based transportation, community development and arts organizations and individuals are keen on ensuring that these new investments serve existing residents by centering community input through arts and culture. Local organizations like Transit Drives Indy, LISC, House Poem, Big Car, IndyGo, and others have invested in creative placemaking practices to tackle transportation and its role in improving access and quality of life for everyone in the Indianapolis region.

During our time in Indianapolis, the working group visited a few sites including a complete streets project at [Maple Crossing](#), part of [Great Places 2020](#), and Big Car's [Artist & Public Life Residency](#), an artists' housing and community land trust development. We also heard from leaders of creative placemaking projects around the country; working group participants Amanda Newman, Joseph Kunkel, Alan Nakagawa, and Peter Svarzbein shared stories from their roles as the creative instigators behind incredible arts-driven transportation projects in Takoma Park, MD, Kewa Pueblo, NM, Los Angeles, CA, and El Paso, TX, respectively. We ended our time together by breaking into four groups — federal, state and regional, local municipal, and local advocacy — to brainstorm specific ideas and initiatives to further support the adoption of arts and cultural strategies as crucial to solving challenges within the transportation sector.

Several themes emerged as the working group participants reflected on the field scan:

The need to define “community engagement”

Considering how arts and culture can help transportation agencies better engage communities is just one, narrow aspect of how creative work can help produce better transit infrastructure. There are also varying degrees and definitions of community engagement. While to some it may conjure images of an inaccessible public sector official sitting behind a desk while community members yell at them, others see community engagement as a more significant power shift where transit planning is led by residents themselves. Many working group members agreed that approaching transportation planning through arts and culture helps us go beyond the cursory or surface-level community engagement that is all too common.

Leading with equity and inclusion

The inclusion of arts and cultural strategies doesn't automatically lead to transportation projects that serve everyone fairly or reflect the diversity of all stakeholders. Equity must be part of the DNA of any project. One participant identified the need to be clear about what ethnic and socioeconomic communities a project is intended to serve and what kinds of cultural heritage the arts and transit project would lift up: If the neighborhood is predominantly African American, yet the arts presented are culturally European, what message does this send regarding the project's audience? Another participant suggested that because some communities have experienced a history of disinvestment - notably communities of color, immigrant communities, and lower- or mixed-income communities - an equitable approach to transportation investment will actually require disproportionate investment to level the playing field.

Making a stronger argument for how arts and culture impact key transportation priorities: safety, congestion, schedule, and cost

The transportation field operates with these four considerations at the core, and participants noted that we must effectively demonstrate how arts and culture impact these concerns to be taken seriously. Others felt that the inclusion of arts and cultural approaches should and could actually help shift which considerations are important and what transportation professionals actually evaluate as success, moving away from impersonal quantitative metrics to a more holistic picture that includes the quality of experience. Yet, other participants prioritized the importance of continuing to identify the key traditional transportation stakeholders who need to understand and advocate for the impact of creative placemaking, and create tools that can empower these allies.

Changing arts and culture from being a “nice to have” to a “need to have”

Many in our field have been working for decades to build beautiful public art at transit stops and on bus and train lines. However, the group noted that an area for growth is the opportunity to impress upon transportation leaders that apart from this more visible form of the arts, arts and culture can play a vital role in the actual transportation planning processes, implementation, policymaking, and more.

Making better use of a variety of forms of expertise, including lived experience, technical knowledge, and political power in our planning, design, and maintenance of transit infrastructure

We spent a lot of time discussing the different barriers to better integrating cultural approaches to transportation. Engineers may not feel comfortable with or be encouraged to communicate transparently with residents; residents may feel unmotivated to share their experiences after past histories of being negatively impacted or disrupted by new transportation projects. Participants discussed how to overcome these kinds of barriers, articulating that this kind of synergy is required to get us to better community outcomes and that arts and culture can help lead the way.

Working group participants

- Geoff Anderson, President and CEO, Smart Growth America
- Chris Appleton, Executive Director, Wonderroot
- Emiko Atherton, Director, National Complete Streets Coalition
- Scott Bogren, Executive Director, Community Transportation Association of America
- Rochelle Carpenter, Senior Policy Analyst, Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Stephanie Gidigbi, Policy, Capacity, and Systems Change Director - SPARCC Initiative, Natural Resource Defense Council
- Tedd Grain, Deputy Director, Local Initiatives Support Corporation Indianapolis
- Neil Greenberg, Manager of Service Development and Scheduling, Detroit Department of Transportation
- Susie Hagie, Landscape Architect, Region 1, Colorado Department of Transportation
- Sabina Haque, Artist
- Scott Hercik, Transportation Planner, Appalachian Regional Commission
- Joseph Kunkel, Executive Director, Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative
- Joung Lee, Director of Policy, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- Dana Lucero, Senior planner, Creative Community Building, Oregon Metro
- Alan Nakagawa, Creative Catalyst Artist in Residence, Los Angeles Department of Transportation
- Amanda Newman, Fellow, Health for America
- Peter Svarzbein, Artist
- Anthony Taylor, Founder, Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota
- Shin-Pei Tsay, Executive Director, Gehl Institute
- Sarita Turner, Associate Director, PolicyLink
- Jim Walker, CEO, Co-founder, & Lead Artist, Big Car
- Patricia Walsh, Manager of Public Art Programs, Americans for the Arts
- Orson Watson, Consultant
- Sara Zimmerman, Technical Assistance Director, Safe Routes to School

