

## Why Cross-Sector Collaboration Now

### Arts + Transportation

January 2024

The arts and creativity are the soul of our nation. Now is the time for the transportation sector to embrace the arts, culture and design fields as essential partners and together to humanize the key challenges of our time and help us imagine better solutions. This document presents a survey of current opportunities, examples and paths forward through cross-sector collaboration with an emphasis on transportation. It is meant to spark conversations about future possibilities for collaborative transformation.

#### Key Talking Points

- Arts, culture and design provide solutions to challenges that the transportation sector has not been able to tackle alone.
- In this key moment of divisiveness and erosion of democracy, arts and culture can humanize our systems and help us create change we could previously only imagine.
- Artists bring transformative, equitable engagement to transportation projects.

### The Opportunity

This paper showcases how the arts, culture, design and transportation sectors are working together to support communities with innovative transportation solutions. These collaborations have been impactful with limited support, policy frameworks or federal resources. President Biden's 2022 [executive order](#) states that the arts "are essential to the well-being, health, vitality, and democracy of our Nation. They are the soul of America, reflecting our multicultural and democratic experience." With this executive order, it is clear that now is the time for transportation agencies at federal, state and local levels to partner with the arts on creative transportation solutions that humanize democratic futures for all Americans.

The arts provide solutions to issues that the transportation sector has not been able to tackle alone, from straightforward changes like slowing traffic with pavement painting to more complex issues like designing equitable transportation infrastructure through artistic tools for deeper community engagement with marginalized residents. The arts are essential tools to advance the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) key priorities of equity, climate and sustainability, safety, and transformation. Artists can engage with communities meaningfully to improve transportation experiences and outcomes for Americans. Transportation agencies at federal, state and local levels have worked with artists and local arts organizations as partners on individual projects. They have also brought artists onto their teams as employees or contractors to address internal operations such as agency culture, as well as external practices and community engagement strategies, as states and cities have with [artists in residence](#).

Federal agencies are promoting arts and transportation collaborations. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town program has funded 80 transportation projects nationally since 2011. Of the USDOT's 45 Reconnecting Communities pilot grant recipients, 36 are past and/or present NEA Our Town grantees, demonstrating significant national talent with arts and civic cross-sectoral collaboration expertise. 14 of these projects are engaging arts methods and have received a total of \$113,066,101. These methods range from integrating public art within new infrastructure, in the Healing Salt Lake City's East-West Divide project, to leveraging art as a tool to celebrate local culture while addressing the history of displacement, in Atlanta's Reconnecting a Torn Urban Fabric project.

There is an untapped opportunity to leverage more artists, designers and culture bearers in collaboration with transportation agencies across the country to address key issues, but this requires government support. Ultimately, the arts can support the transportation sector to contend with past harms and build toward a future where transportation promotes well-being and advances equity for all Americans.

## Arts + Transportation Focus: Equity

Artists are leaders in community engagement that centers people who have traditionally been left out of or harmed by transportation investments. Recognizing this legacy, transportation agencies and departments (DOTs) are working to prioritize equity in programs and policy. Artists' projects and tools centered on equitable participation are excellent models that can transform the transportation sector's engagement practice to advance equity goals.

[Place It!](#) is a participation based urban planning tool created by artist and urban planner James Rojas. Place It! brings community members directly into transportation planning and design by collaboratively prototyping solutions. The project facilitates storytelling of residents' lived experiences and invites them to build physical transportation models. In Monterey Park and Alhambra, California, Place It! was used to center the values of residents of Latinx and Asian descent in the design of safer and more enjoyable streets. These artist-led, fun, sensory activities motivate people to engage and increase residents' agency within and knowledge of transportation planning processes. This process centers the priorities of residents when planning

transportation infrastructure, creating plans that reflect the needs of the most marginalized users of the future transit systems.

### Place It! (national)

DOT Priority Connection	Outcomes	Artist Tools
Reconnecting Communities	By bringing more diverse voices to transportation planning, the arts help ensure transportation solutions are better shaped by the people who use them.	Hands-on activities that engage impacted community members to contribute their ideas

## Arts + Transportation Focus: Climate and Sustainability

Artists bring creative climate strategies into transportation work by engaging communities earnestly about the changes required for a climate-resilient future, making climate infrastructure projects meaningful and building trust to engender behavior change. As transportation agencies work to reduce emissions and their environmental impacts and to mitigate climate related incidents like flooding and fire, artists can support innovating new systems and policies alongside DOTs to make this work more effective.

The Minnesota State Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has [embedded artists within the agency since March 2019](#). MnDOT's Sustainability and Public Health Fellowship recently hosted artist [Sarah Petersen](#) to help the agency address state greenhouse gas reduction goals. In partnership with MnDOT's Sustainability and Public Health Division, Petersen developed a series of tools composed of community-generated content to encourage local stakeholders to connect their mobility options to climate outcomes and to consider climate-friendly behavior changes. The resulting "What if You Could" visual campaign is a series of posters, animations and coloring books born out of community workshops. The workshops and campaign suggest ways for individuals to reduce car use for short trips that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions while playfully exploring the benefits gained from driving less. Recognizing that half of all car trips in the region are under three miles, Petersen and MnDOT used the campaign to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use by informing user behavior, asking them the questions, What are fun ways to get around without driving? Can other ways of getting around help us connect to community and each other?

The campaign emphasized how individual transportation choices impact carbon pollution and the role that participants play in emissions reduction. Community and stakeholder input was shared with MnDOT to help inform transportation carbon pollution reduction strategies in line

with state goals, including reducing personal vehicle miles driven by 20% per capita by 2050, as well as educating community members about the climate impacts of transportation options.

### MnDOT, Sustainability and Public Health Artist Fellowship (Minnesota, Statewide)

DOT Priority Connection	Outcomes	Artist Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Resilient Infrastructure</li> <li>• Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction</li> <li>• Transportation Equity</li> </ul>	Artist-led information gathering from stakeholders informs the state DOT strategies to educate the community and reduce personal vehicle miles driven by 20% per capita by 2050.	Posters, animations and coloring books created from community-generated content that connect transportation choices to climate impacts

## Arts + Transportation Focus: Safety

Artists collaborate with government partners using visual communication and community input to improve transportation safety outcomes. This work advances the USDOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy to improve street safety and make all transportation systems accessible.

A [Bloomberg Philanthropies study found](#) that streets are 50% safer for pedestrians when they incorporate art into the planning and design of plazas, sidewalks and crosswalks. In Durham, North Carolina, this was evident in a collaborative community asphalt painting project led by artist Candy Clover. The [Club Crossing](#) project focused on a dangerous intersection connecting an elementary school, a park and a recreational trail. Artists submitted creative crosswalk paintings that could help guide users more safely across the street, graphically accentuate the pedestrian area to drivers and function as a visual connection across the community. Stakeholders voted for their favorite design.

Clover worked with community members to further refine the painting "Our Oasis," which captures elements of the nearby creek and surrounding natural environment with colorful fish guiding the way. Clover installed the artwork with local volunteers to cover all four crosswalks and the center of the intersection. The percent of community members who felt unsafe crossing the intersection fell from 85% to 6%. The intersection went from being a dangerous place to becoming a wayfinding landmark in the community.

## Club Crossing Project (Durham, NC)

DOT Priority Connection	Outcomes	Artist Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic Traffic Calming</li> <li>• Increased Street Safety</li> <li>• Revitalizing Underutilized Public Space</li> </ul>	Traffic calming; increased street safety	Using art to slow traffic and facilitate safer pedestrian mobility by painting crosswalks and sidewalks at a dangerous intersection

## Arts + Transportation Focus: Transformation

When transportation agencies collaborate with artists, they promote experimentation to address complex problems with new tactics. DOTs at the federal, state and local levels are embarking upon uncharted territory to prepare transportation infrastructure, technology and internal systems of problem solving to support a thriving transportation system in the decades to come. Artists are comfortable trying new things, experimenting, learning from feedback and pivoting in response to failure to create stronger paths forward. Together they can advance the USDOT's investment in transformation across the transportation sector.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, transportation agencies had to quickly implement new safety protocols and communicate those changes. Smart Growth America and Forecast Public Art launched [Arts & Transportation Rapid Response](#) by working closely with five transportation agencies across the country. One artist in the Bay Area helped destigmatize mask wearing through popups, posters and videos. In Oakland, an artist redesigned the city's Slow Streets program to reflect community and culture, transforming it into a community asset. An artist in Las Vegas used friendly visual messaging to keep essential workers and tourists safe. In rural Minnesota, an artist created a toolkit guiding in-person and virtual community engagement. An artist in Detroit designed wayfinding tools to connect the community to vital resource centers.

Transformation requires experimenting with new approaches to solve problems. When given space to experiment and come up with creative and effective solutions in collaboration with transportation agencies, artists can support the transportation sector in transforming to become more adaptive.

## Arts & Transportation Rapid Response (national)

DOT Priority Connection	Outcomes	Artist Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow for experimentation</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to collaborate</li> </ul>	<p>Rapid, creative solutions from artists can help transportation serve residents in critical times of need.</p>	<p>Quick, creative solutions to pandemic-induced transportation challenges, ranging from artistic street design elements to creative communication tools</p>

## Recommendations

### Policy Recommendations

Despite the tremendous success arts and transportation collaborations have had around the country, these cross-sector projects often require maneuvering around outdated policy that excludes the arts and that was not designed for cross-sector collaborations. Updates to transportation policy can encourage practitioners to try new collaborations with artists, reduce fears around noncompliance and engender innovation.

#### All Levels

- Incentivize innovative transportation equity activities done by artists within grants.
- Allocate a percentage of funding for arts in DOT work at all levels.

#### Federal Level

- Support simple ways for federal transportation funding to include the subcontracting of artists and of arts and culture organizations.
- Engage regional administrators and division administrators to enable the procurement of artists on transportation projects.
- Incentivize integrating arts into transportation pursuits by rewarding transportation grant applications that include artists in their projects, including resources for artists to support public engagement and planning, as well as tangible deliverables.
- Similar to recent strategies that require community engagement (Circular 4702.1B, Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients), incentivize arts and transportation cross-sector collaboration through extra-credit points in federal DOT grant programs, like grants for safety improvements or adaptive reuse infrastructure.
- Reform Federal Highway Administration rules and regulations regarding crosswalk art (specifically the symbols, shapes and colors allowed) to enable artists to help



create safer communities through painted crosswalks, which research shows increases pedestrian safety.

### State Level

- Change state level DOT procurement practices to allow reduced insurance requirements, sole-source contracting, and artists to fulfill communications and engagement budget line items. Together, these changes will enable and encourage the subcontracting of artists as well as arts and culture organizations.

### Programmatic Recommendations

- Provide opportunities to engage artists and culture bearers in transportation programs tackling inequality or programs centering community needs.
- Embed a simultaneous cohort of state level artists in residence at state DOTs to focus on internal systems change and cultural transformation on human-centered impacts.
- Create an arts and cultural heritage track within the USDOT Reconnecting Communities Institute and similar programs with a cultural component.
- Create a program that hires artists and culture bearers to work with construction authorities to mitigate the disruptive and sometimes harmful effects of the construction phase of transportation projects.

## Next Steps

There are small steps that you can take tomorrow to create a more supportive environment for cross-sector problems in your sector, and for collaborating with the arts:

### Short Term: Next Steps

- **Continue this conversation.** Share this document, bring in a speaker, connect with groups like [CAIR Lab](#), [NASAA](#), [Creatives Rebuild New York](#), [Springboard for the Arts](#), [Smart Growth America](#), [Communities First](#) and others that are advancing arts and infrastructure collaborations.
- **Collaborate with the arts.** Get to know your local arts community to explore collaborations that include local arts organizations as well as [regional arts organizations](#) and [state arts agencies](#).
- **Hire an artist.** Bring an artist into your team! You might do this by working with an arts organization that can facilitate the process or bringing an artist on directly to support short-term projects or advance long-term goals.

### Long Term: Big Dreams

- **Policy change.** Advocate for policy change at federal, state and local levels that connects the arts into transportation projects and incentivizes these collaborations.

- **Secure sustainable funding.** Impactful collaborations need to be more than pilots; they require long-term support. Help to secure sustained funding for these projects to be lasting.
- **Document impacts.** Sharing the impact of your cross-sector collaboration is a vital contribution to this growing field of practice. Consider how you can measure success using tools from across transportation and the arts, and don't leave out the power of documenting stories and experiences.

## Arts + Transportation Resources

[Arts, Culture and Transportation: A Creative Placemaking Field Scan](#), developed by Transportation for America, provides seven in-depth case studies of how arts have provided solutions to transportation problems.

Transportation for America. 2017. Arts, Culture and Transportation: A Creative Placemaking Field Scan. ArtPlace America.

[ArtPlace America Archive: Transportation Case Studies](#) is a digital hub recording ArtPlace America's 10 years of work supporting creative placemaking connected to transportation.

ArtPlace America. n.d. Transportation Case Studies.

[Arts in Transportation Strategy Sampler](#) is a comprehensive report and toolkit produced by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies highlighting arts and transportation agency collaborations.

Rhoads, M. 2022. Arts in Transportation Strategy Sampler. National Assembly for State Arts Agencies.

[Arts and Planning Toolkit](#), from Boston's Metropolitan Area Planning Council, is a digital resource on integrating arts and creative approaches into community and urban planning. The website provides tools, approaches and case studies.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council. n.d. Arts and Planning Toolkit.

[Arts + Social Impact](#), from Americans for the Arts, is a digital tool to catalogue projects at the intersection of arts and social impact issues. Click the Transportation spoke to access a fact sheet about past projects, resources and impacts.

Americans for the Arts. 2022. Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet: Transportation.

[Asphalt Art Guide](#), developed by Bloomberg Philanthropies, describes why art is important for streets and includes best practices and case studies from its grant program funding traffic-calming projects.



Bloomberg Philanthropies. 2019. "Asphalt Art Guide: How to Reclaim City Roadways and Public Infrastructure with Art." Bloomberg Philanthropies.

**[Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects](#)**, developed by the American Public Transportation Association, outlines some best practices for integrating art into transit.

American Public Transportation Association. 2013. *Best Practices for Integrating Art into Capital Projects*. American Public Transportation Association, Washington, D.C.

**[CAIR Lab Digital Resources](#)**, developed by Cross-Sector Artist in Residence (CAIR) Lab, provides resources and tools on cross-sector collaboration with the arts, as well as how to create artist-in-residence programs inside of government agencies.

Resources can be found at <https://www.cairlab.net/resources>.

**[Creative Placemaking in Rail Transit Corridors](#)** is a guide written by the American Planning Association that examines rail transit corridor project issues and the creative placemaking strategies used to solve them.

VanderSchaaf, M., & Kayzar B. 2021. *Creative Placemaking in Rail Transit Corridors*. American Planning Association.

**[FORWARD: Issue #2: Transportation](#)** is a part of Forecast Public Art's digital publication and conversation series, which highlights how artists are partnering with cities, institutions and communities to tackle transportation issues.

Forecast Public Art. 2021. *Forward. Issue #2: Transportation*.

**[Irrigate](#)** is a toolkit developed by arts nonprofit Springboard for the Arts that illustrates how to integrate local artists into creating community development solutions, using a case study from a transportation infrastructure project in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Springboard for the Arts. 2014. *Irrigate: A Toolkit for Mobilizing Local Artists to Solve Challenges in Your Community*. Springboard for the Arts.

**[The Scenic Route](#)** is an online resource for art, culture and transportation. Developed by Smart Growth America and Transportation for America, this site includes how-to guides, case studies and ongoing projects by transportation mode and provides further resources.

Smart Growth America. n.d. "*The Scenic Route*."

**Transportation Artist in Residence Network** is a current NEA Our Town-funded project led by Smart Growth America with CAIR Lab that has convened three transportation agencies' artist-in-residence program participants to assess barriers and opportunities for growing the practice.

Report forthcoming.

[Transportation for America Complete Streets Collaboration with the CDC](#) is a several-month technical assistance program designed to help state DOTs, state health partners and three localities within a state work together to make streets safer and more inviting, and offers funding to partner with artists.

Smart Growth America. 2022. "*Seeking State DOTs and Local Communities for Complete Streets Leadership Academies.*" Smart Growth America.

## Further Research Opportunities

Currently, there are ample collections of case studies about arts and transportation collaborations. These case studies detail program origin stories, problem-solving strategies, relational dynamics, collaboration models and social outcomes. Yet beyond these case studies, the body of research lacks significant data and consistent evaluation metrics that would be helpful to both the transportation sector and the arts.

Opportunities for further research that can be promoted by DOTs and the NEA include:

- Measure how transportation outcomes change as a result of arts and culture interventions in transportation projects. These outcomes include level of community engagement, level of community satisfaction, health and safety, pedestrian and multimodal uses, and behavior patterns.
- Develop standard impact measurements for arts and culture interventions that can be used across DOT cross-sector initiatives.
- Develop measurement tools to track the impact of arts and culture interventions in transportation in disadvantaged communities.
- Create a community-aggregated database of arts and transportation projects nationally to support further research.

## Addendum: Arts + Transportation Examples

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
<b>Equity</b>	<a href="#">Place It!</a> James Rojas (national, private practice) A community planning activity using storytelling and participatory design	Bring more diverse voices to transportation planning; help transportation solutions become better informed by the people who use them	Reconnecting Communities	Hands-on activities that engage impacted community members to contribute their ideas
	<a href="#">Reconnecting Santurce</a> , Puerto Rico Highway and Transit Authority (regional, San Juan, Puerto Rico) Urban revitalization of historic cultural neighborhood	Promote socioeconomic development; revitalize transportation infrastructure	Reconnecting Communities	Codesign, arts based participation
	<a href="#">Reconnect Jackson Ward</a> , City of Richmond, VA (citywide, Richmond, VA) Reconnecting historically Black and culturally vital neighborhood	Affordable housing stabilization; improve transportation access	Reconnecting Communities	Placemaking, community engagement

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
	<p><a href="#">Santo Domingo Cultural District</a>, Santo Domingo Tribal Planning Department (regional, Santo Domingo Pueblo, NM)</p> <p>Strategically redesigning a historic district into a service- and amenity-rich cultural district</p>	<p>Connect housing and transportation through cultural trails in Santo Domingo Pueblo</p>	<p>Expanding Access; Power of Community</p>	<p>Culturally relevant installations along trail</p>
<p><b>Climate &amp; Sustainability</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Community Vitality Fellow</a>, MnDOT Sustainability and Public Health Division (statewide, MN)</p> <p>Artist Sarah Petersen focuses on sustainability and public health.</p>	<p>Artist-led information gathering from stakeholders helps inform state DOT strategies to educate the community and reduce personal vehicle miles of travel by 20% per capita by 2050</p>	<p>Building Resilient Infrastructure</p>	<p>Visual posters, animations and coloring books created from community-generated content that connect transportation choices to climate impacts</p>

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
	<p><a href="#">The Cut: Eco/Systems: Land Based Initiatives</a>, Asian Arts Initiative, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Friends of the Rail Park (citywide, Philadelphia, PA)</p> <p>Redeveloping fallow railway into amenity-rich greenway</p>	<p>Mitigating negative impacts of climate change on communities through art</p>	<p>Climate Action for Resilience</p>	<p>Public art for community collaboration</p>
<p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Creative Catalyst Artist-in-Residence</a>, LADOT (citywide, Los Angeles, CA)</p> <p>Artist Alan Nakagawa focused on Vision Zero report goals to eliminate pedestrian fatalities in Los Angeles.</p>	<p>Art can build empathy between DOT staff and publics and can increase public participation in Vision Zero.</p>	<p>National Roadway Safety; Eliminating Fatalities; Expanding Participation for Allies in Action</p>	<p>Storytelling workshops with transportation engineers</p>

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
	<p><a href="#">Club Crossing Project</a>, City of Durham Transportation Department, City of Durham Cultural and Public Art Program, Durham Parks Foundation (neighborhood, Durham, NC)</p> <p>Artist Candy Clover led a community asphalt painting project to promote pedestrian safety at an elementary school intersection.</p>	<p>Traffic calming; increased street safety</p>	<p>Paint the Pavement</p>	<p>Using art to slow traffic and facilitate safer pedestrian mobility by painting crosswalks and sidewalks at a dangerous intersection</p>



DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
<b>Transformation</b>	<p><a href="#">Arts &amp; Transportation Rapid Response</a>, Transportation for America, Forecast Public Art (city and regional, across multiple geographies)</p> <p>Grant program to fund organizations to creatively address COVID related transportation challenges and systemic inequities</p>	Art supports low-income residents in navigating paths to critical resource centers	Allow for Experimentation; Provide Opportunities to Collaborate	Quick, creative solutions to pandemic-induced transportation challenges, ranging from artistic street design elements to creative communication tools
	<p>The Maintenance Post, Washington State DOT Artists in Residence (statewide, Washington)</p> <p>A newsprint publication that connects the traveling public to the often invisible labor of maintenance and preservation workers</p>	Art educates the public about the necessity of maintenance and increases its public support	Support DOT Workers	A print publication about transportation maintenance and preservation

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
	<p><a href="#">The El Paso Transnational Trolley Project</a>, Peter Svarzbein (bicity/binational, El Paso, TX, and Juarez, Mexico)</p> <p>A conceptual advertising campaign imagining the return of the iconic streetcar running between El Paso and its sister city in Mexico, Juarez</p>	<p>Creative advocacy leads to the development of a streetcar line.</p>	<p>Be Flexible</p>	<p>An arts-driven guerilla marketing campaign</p>
	<p><a href="#">Rolling Rez Arts</a>, First Peoples Fund (multistate, native reservations)</p> <p>State-of-the-art mobile arts space, business training center and mobile bank that travels to various native reservations to provide arts and culture resources</p>	<p>Supporting a geographically disconnected community by bringing resources to the reservation</p>	<p>Bring resources to people rather than trying to get many people to far-away spaces</p>	<p>Pop-up, culturally focused solution to disinvested communities</p>

DOT Priority	Art Example	Transportation Outcomes	DOT Connection	Artist Tools
	<p><a href="#">MnDOT Artist in Residence, Marcus Young</a> (statewide, Minnesota)</p> <p>Sustainability and Public Health Fellowship position within MnDOT's Transportation Artist in Residence program, which integrates artists into the transportation agency for creative approaches to planning projects</p>	<p>Creative projects to inspire DOT culture change internally</p>	<p>Transportation Equity</p>	<p>Spaces to encourage reflections on the harms caused by transportation investments: MnDOT's Land Acknowledgment Confluence Room</p> <p>Embedding artist within statewide planning: Turn Highways into Rivers, an Art Appendix</p> <p>Interdisciplinary Conversations: People, Places, Land &amp; Equity series to focus on human-centered approaches</p>

## National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization. In collaboration with the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts councils, we advance the arts as a powerful path to economic prosperity, rural resilience, good health, education success and strong communities in which everyone thrives. NASAA serves as a clearinghouse for data and research about public funding for the arts as well as the policies and programs of state arts agencies. For more information about NASAA and the work of state arts agencies, visit [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org).

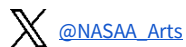
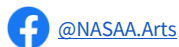


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