



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE

FROM: MICHAEL OGILVIE

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: January 26, 2024

Council Districts: 5

SUBJECT: Approval and recommendation to VTA of design development proposal by artist Amir Fallah for the VTA light rail at Story Road station.

DATE OF ARTIST SELECTION: August 15, 2022

DATE OF CONCEPT PROPOSAL APPROVAL: October 4, 2023

ARTWORK BUDGET PER CONTRACT: \$450,000 (Project funding provided by VTA)

LOCATION: Eastridge to BART regional connector light rail station at Story Road

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Background:

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) has engaged the San José Public Art Program to manage artists/artist-led teams for the design, fabrication, delivery, and installation of two signature enhancement opportunities associated with a new 2.4-mile light rail extension in East San José.

Eastridge to BART Regional Connector (EBRC) is the last phase of the larger Capitol Expressway Transit Improvement Project that transforms San José's Capitol Expressway into a multi-modal boulevard offering Bus Rapid Transit, light rail transit, and safe connections to the regional transit system. The new light rail line will extend from the Alum Rock Station (on Capitol Avenue) to the Eastridge Transit Center (on Capitol Expressway). When complete, VTA riders will be able to board light rail at the Eastridge Station, and connect directly with BART at Milpitas Station, the northernmost BART station in Santa Clara County. At Story Road, plans include an elevated station that will be accessed by pedestrian bridge.

Public art will be an important feature of the EBRC project distinguishing VTA as a visible and significant part of the city landscape. Public art will also contribute to the vibrancy of the cityscape, promote neighborhood pride by strengthening the unique character of the individual stations as landmarks, create engaging experiences for pedestrians and transit users, and reinforce intuitive wayfinding.

In July 2021, Los Angeles based artist Amir Fallah was selected for this commission. In January 2023, at two on-line community meetings (one in English and the other in Spanish) hosted by VTA, Mr. Fallah met stakeholders to introduce himself and learn about stakeholder priorities, values, and inspirations. In April, Mr. Fallah visited San José to meet with the base project team, investigate the project site, and spend time at many of the landmarks discussed at the community meeting.

Artwork Design Proposal

Mr. Fallah’s proposal for “Interwoven” was inspired by San José’s diverse patchwork of people, cultures, and landscapes. The concept transforms the three elevator towers, and pedestrian over crossing, into a feature gateway over Capitol Expressway. Collaborating with the architects, the original metal panel design has been reimagined in a custom purple color palette, to create contrast between the light boxes and elevator towers. Standing proud of the tower cladding are sixteen glass light boxes of various sizes. The light boxes are strategically placed to be seen from every vantage point, including the roadway, sidewalks, stairs, light rail platform, and from the train itself. The vibrant and colorful images, lit from within, will have an identity both day and night.

“Interwoven” features a complex array of images that portray the intersection of landscapes and cultures that is San José. The lightbox element of the artwork includes pictures and patterning from the cultures making up the tapestry of San José, including indigenous, Mexican, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indian, and Persian. Throughout the artwork geometric designs refer to the larger theme of interconnectivity and community. A redwood tree refers to the nearby forests, a hand holding a mirror reflects a Mexican desert landscape, a detailed geometric motif commonly seen in East Asian artwork is placed alongside a traditional Mexican textile pattern. Driving south on Capitol Expressway a dreamed panoramic image, split in two, continues from the east elevator tower to the western tower.

Contributing an additional dimension to the work, Mr. Fallah commissioned four San José poets to contribute lines of poetry that will be a central component of the artwork. The poets were prompted to respond to themes of travel, journey, voyage, and wandering. From the submissions, Mr. Fallah incorporated the following selected text from the poems into the artwork:

Poet	Text	Location
Yosimar Reyes:	There Would Be No You Without Me	Center Tower (South Face)
Brandon Luu	At the close of long days	West Tower (South Face)
	At the end of long nights	East Tower (South Face)
Kanyon Sayers-Roods	Echoing ancestral paths in the dance of life	Center Tower (East face)
Quynh-Mai Nguyen	Traveling distances spanning volumes	Center Tower (West face)

The images on each panel will be hand painted on canvas by the artist, then digitally translated for printing on glass with glass enamel “frit” that will be heat fused on the glass surface. This manufactured glass allows for high-resolution imagery, is color fast, and scratch resistant.

As this is a VTA project, long term maintenance, and any costs associated with repair or conservation of these artworks will be the responsibility of VTA.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

On April 26, 2021, an RFQ was released locally and nationally via Western States Arts Federation Call for Entry platform, CaFÉ™. In addition, Public Art staff through national and regional public art organizations announced the RFQ, and nominations were solicited from arts professionals nationally. To further activate attention, staff contacted over 400 individual artists regarding the opportunity.

In addition to artist outreach, the Artist Selection Panel was a diverse group of stakeholders representing the respected arts professionals, local artists, and community representatives as follows:

Mayen Alcantara	Senior Manager at Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority https://www.linkedin.com/in/mayen-alcantara-98463a1b/
Claudia Guadagne	Principal Architect and Strategic Advisor, FMG Architects https://www.linkedin.com/in/claudia-guadagne-5140327/
Walter Hood	Artist, landscape designer, and founder and creative director of Hood Design Studio, Oakland. http://www.hooddesignstudio.com/
Rachel Lui	Representing District 8, Visual Artist, San José https://www.rachelliu.com/index/G0000mCzwyqu8Wk
Edgar Ochoa	Representing District 5, Community Engagement Program Manager, School of Arts and Culture at The Mexican Heritage Plaza, San José. https://www.linkedin.com/in/edgarxchoa/
Amy Trachtenberg	Artist, San Francisco https://amytrachtenberg.com/

Joining the panel for the shortlist process

Hassan Basma	Transportation Engineering Manager, Valley Transportation Authority
Kathleen Podrasky	Supervisor, Community Outreach and Public Engagement, Valley Transportation Authority
Ken Ronsse	Deputy Director, Engineering and Construction, Valley Transportation Authority
Mary Rubin	Senior Public Art Project Manager, San José Public Art Program
Michael Ogilvie	Director of Public Art, San José Public Art Program

Public meetings held in conjunction with this project:

<u>Date</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Convener</u>
7/2/21	Artist Short List meeting	Artist Selection	Virtual Meeting	SJPA
8/11/21	Artist Interviews	Artist Selection	Virtual Meeting	SJPA
8/25/21	Stakeholder Working Group	Public Art Overview Briefing.	Virtual Meeting	VTA
1/9/23	Community Meeting (English)	Introduce the artist and visioning input	Virtual Meeting	VTA
1/11/23	Community Meeting (Spanish)	Introduce the artist and visioning input	Virtual Meeting	VTA
8/22/23	Core team review	Selection panel concept review	Virtual Meeting	SJPA
9/13/23	Community Concept Review (English)	Stakeholders review of artist proposal	Virtual Meeting	VTA
9/13/23	Community Concept Review (Spanish)	Stakeholders review of artist proposal	Virtual Meeting	VTA
10/4/23	Public Art Committee Meeting	Concept Review	Hybrid	SJPA

/s/
 MICHAEL OGILVIE
 Public Art Director