

Linking Art & Culture Through Transportation

BART as a Connector for Communities and Art & Cultural Organizations

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Disclaimer

This study has been prepared for Bay Area Rapid Transit, Oakland, CA. The student author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy (MPP) at Mills College. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring client organization, or any other organization or agency.

Executive Summary

In August 2015 Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) adopted a comprehensive Art in Transit policy with the desire to “enrich rider experience, strengthen station identity, connect communities, and support a distinctive sense of place at stations and beyond.” (BART, 2015) Currently BART is looking to develop programming that uses the transportation agency as a link, connecting the community that BART serves with local art and cultural institutions. While the overall goal of the program is to increase both BART ridership and engagement at cultural institutions, there are many added benefits that are the result of increased community involvement with the arts such as increased health outcomes, higher rates of volunteerism, and overall civic mindedness.

Taking lessons learned from case studies that each used the arts in different, innovate ways to engage the public, this MPR suggests three policies for implementation that will allow BART to improve access to institutional offerings, increase their ridership, and increase the participatory involvement in the communities it serves.



Based on major takeaways from the case studies, BART should fully leverage the partnerships that are already in place through the BARTable program and transform it into a discount program where anyone who presents a valid BART ticket or clipper card for that day at a participating institution receives a discount on admission. By expanding the current program in this way, BART will be able to increase ridership as well as engagement with the local arts organizations by providing an incentive to take BART to access the institutions. In addition, the

discount program will help to diversify the audience members at participating institutions as the socioeconomic breakdown of BART riders is, on average, lower than of those that attend these organizations regularly.

In combination with the discount program, BART should develop an interactive app that will help to draw more participants in and increase interest in the program. The app will have a location services aspect that will allow the user to search, based on their current location, all nearby discounts. It will also have an interactive scavenger hunt feature that will allow discount users to find and enter clues at participating institutions in order to unlock higher discounts and additional participating organizations.

Finally, in order to bring participatory programming directly to its riders, BART should consider starting a pop-up performance series held directly in their stations. Starting with just two-weekends a year, these pop-ups would be in partnership with local non-profit arts organizations. The performances would be site-specific and designed to take place within a BART station. Audience members would be required to purchase a BART ticket in order to attend the performance. Once the first performance was finished, the audience would board a train to another station where they would view another site-specific performance. These performances would increase the accessibility to the performing arts, as they would be accessible for only the price of a BART ticket. In addition, they would help introduce first time art viewers to a non-threatening foray into the arts, in the hopes that they would not be intimidated from engaging with the arts in the future.

These recommendations all have the added benefit of increasing the positive media impressions that BART receives, helping to improve its overall perception so that it will be viewed as a positive force rather than one which is regularly hit by negative media coverage.

By implementing these recommendations, BART can expect to see an increase in their ridership, increased attendance at local arts and cultural organizations, more diversity in

audiences at art institutions, as well as higher civic engagement in the communities that BART serves.