

Art Integration: An Essential Design Component and Vehicle for Community Commitment in Santa Clara County

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The objectives are to relate the way in which an integrated art program can be developed successfully during the light rail transit (LRT) design process in an extremely cost-effective manner, using the Tasman Corridor light rail project in Santa Clara County, California, as a case example; to describe valuable lessons learned in Seattle during the implementation of the Downtown Seattle Transit Project; to discuss the value of an integrated art program as an integral, valuable component of LRT design; and to present the unique community relationships and support that an integrated art program can engender. The Tasman Corridor LRT project is a 20-km (12.4-mi), \$530 million light rail extension of the Guadalupe Corridor LRT system in Santa Clara County. The Tasman Corridor final design was completed in May 1995.

It has long been recognized that art is an integral component of society and its constructed environment. It is generally accepted that the sensitive use of design and art in transit systems makes public spaces vibrant and presents an image of the local culture and architectural heritage. Transit systems in Amsterdam, Paris, Seoul, and Stockholm as well as Atlanta, Boston,

Buffalo, and Pittsburgh bear out these facts. More recently, the power of artists' work as a tool in establishing relationships with a community has been recognized. Recent experience has shown that transit facilities that respond to and reflect a community's identity create places where people want to be.

With these principles in mind, the Santa Clara County Transit District (SCCTD) and the Tasman Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) project design team, led by Parsons Brinckerhoff/Morrison Knudsen (PB/MK), have developed an integrated art program. The Tasman Corridor LRT project is a 20-km (12.4-mi) \$530 million light rail extension of the Guadalupe Corridor LRT system in Santa Clara County, California, as shown in Figure 1. The integrated art program will develop a comprehensive cultural arts element, integrated with and responsible to the overall system's design process, resulting in an extremely visible and exciting cultural resource at a very small cost.

The program's mission statement reflects the project team's commitment: to establish a public art integration program for the Tasman Corridor project that involves the community in the organized review of the aesthetics of the built environment.

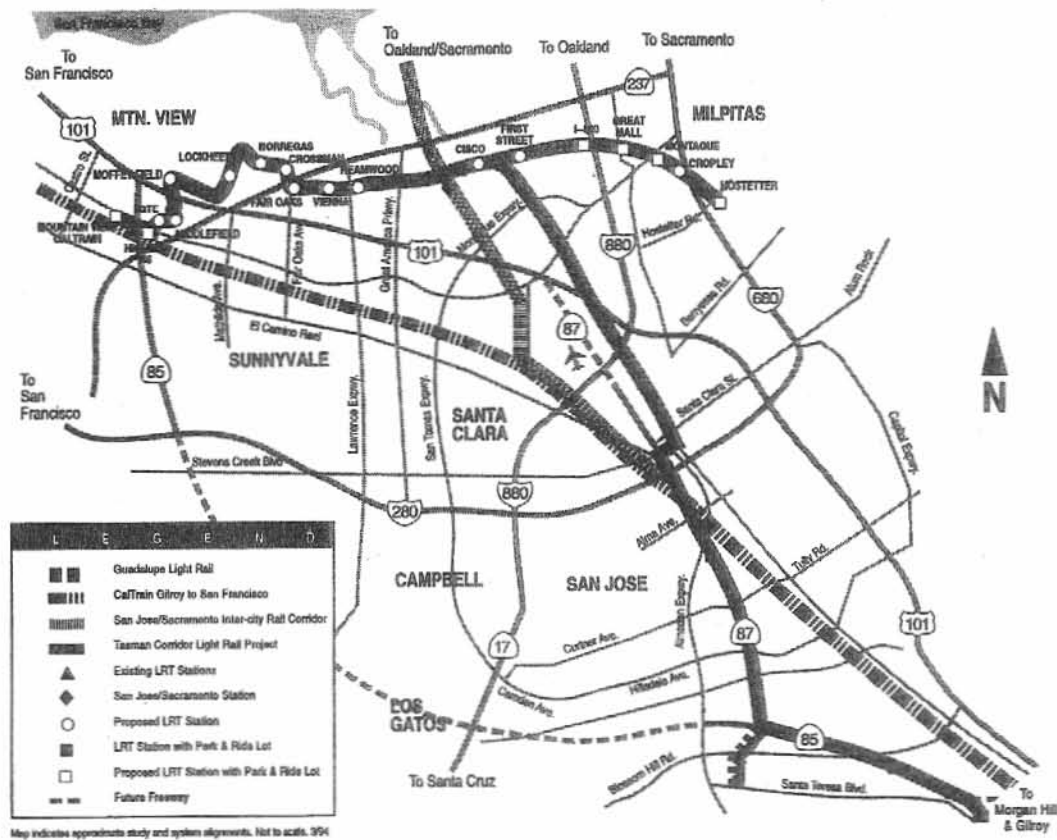


FIGURE 1 Tasman Corridor LRT project map.

The integrated art program, led by a committee of elected officials, is involving local artists, citizens, and existing arts groups. Through the public art integration process, the community is developing a heightened sense of ownership and pride that will carry over beyond the design and construction phases and will make them partners in the future operation and maintenance of the system.

BENEFITING FROM SEATTLE EXPERIENCE

The Tasman integrated art program has benefited greatly from projects such as the Downtown Seattle Transit Project (DSTP). The DSTP consists of a 2-km (1.24-mi) transit tunnel separating high-volume bus lines from surface traffic, five underground stations, and surface improvements along the tunnel route. The new dual-powered buses operate on diesel power on the surface and change to electric operation in the tunnel. In

the future, the tunnel and stations can be converted to rail transit operations.

This project, which demonstrates how art can be integrated into transit design, offered to the Tasman design team both proven procedures for integrating art and seasoned experts in the field. Project manager William Barnes and project artist Jack Mackie, a Seattle-based public artist, developed and tested these procedures together in Seattle's unique urban setting.

Integrating art into the system's design was first contemplated during the DSTP's design phase. Since Seattle has a strong public art program, a relatively generous budget (1 percent of construction budget) was allocated for art. From the beginning, it was apparent that many entities would be involved, each of which could significantly affect success of the art program. The players included

- Seattle Metro, the agency/owner;
- Other public agencies such as King County and the city of Seattle;

