Public art connects communities and the transit system

The visual quality of the nation’s mass transit systems has a profound impact on transit patrons and the community at large. Good design and art can improve the appearance and safety of a facility, give vibrancy to its public spaces, and make patrons feel welcome.

– Federal Transit Administration

Public art invigorates communities, helps create a sense of place and adds to the quality of life for our citizens. To this end, TriMet has made public art an essential component of our regional transit system and created an award-winning public art program.

TriMet is continuing its commitment to public art on the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail (PMLR) Transit Project, working in collaboration with project partners, the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC), the Clackamas County Arts Alliance and the communities along the alignment. Goals for the artwork are to express the uniqueness of the individual station areas, inspire stewardship and foster sustainability.

System-wide project — Buster Simpson
Poetic insights or phrases solicited from the general public were printed on orange silt fencing and placed temporarily by construction crews where needed during light rail construction. A selection of these phrases is stamped into new concrete sidewalks at 122 locations along the alignment.

Lincoln St/SW 3rd Ave Station —
Elizabeth Conner
Three abstract steel sculptures were inspired by the work of choreographer Anna Halprin and Lawrence Halprin, the architect of the adjacent Halprin District. A large, illustrated panel on the platform designed by Mayer/Reed provides an introduction to this historically significant district.
South Waterfront/SW Moody Ave and OMSI/SE Water Ave Stations — Jim Blashfield
Video screens inside four narrow steel enclosures display slow moving images that allude to local history, the river, and nearby culture.

Tilikum Crossing — Anna Valentina Murch and Doug Hollis
Programmable lighting on the cable stays and piers changes color and motion depending on the natural conditions of the Willamette River. The same lighting plays off the curved and tiled abutment walls where a central “sonic” dish amplifies sound.

Clinton St/SE 12th Ave Station — Matthew Passmore
A sculpture constructed of repurposed freight rail acknowledges the significance of transportation infrastructure to the area. The rail is bent into seemingly impossible curves that resemble transit maps and railroad trackways.

Powell Light Rail Overpass — Horatio Law
Recycled bicycle and skateboard parts are arranged to look like the skeletal remains of imaginary dinosaurs in a series of eight concrete bas-relief panels embedded into the retaining walls below the overpass.

SE 17th Ave Corridor: Rhine St and Holgate Blvd Stations — Bill Will
Thirty-eight, weathered steel boat sculptures appear to float in the landscape strips along 17th Avenue, emphasizing the natural history of the “brook land” neighborhood and the green street improvements along this corridor.
Rhine/Lafayette Pedestrian Overcrossing — Anne Storrs
The branching pattern of train tracks is suggested in a sculpture and pavement medallion at the overcrossing landings. Poetry is inscribed in stainless steel rings that encircle both pieces.

SE Bybee Blvd Station — Dana Lynn Louis
A cupola with an illuminated glass painting of Crystal Springs serves as a beacon for the station. Drawings abstracted from nature are etched into the elevator and windscreen glass and appear in two light projections on the station platform. At night, the elevator towers will be bathed in colored light.

SE Tacoma St/Johnson Creek Station — Thomas Sayre
Two sculptures “earth-cast” on site act as landmarks for the station. The sculptures represent the influence of wheels upon the area, from a 19th-century sawmill on Johnson Creek to the wheels of the future light rail.

Milwaukie/Main St Station — Brian Goldbloom
A pair of carved granite millstones at the north station entrance pays homage to an historic flour mill. At the south entrance, a realistically carved granite streambed routes stormwater into the landscaped area on Lake Road. The station platform shelter columns are clad with vine maple tree trunks also carved of granite.

Kellogg Bridge — Andre Caradec and Thom Faulders
Multiple chartreuse-colored aluminum forms are arranged to create a dynamic pattern that appears to flow along the underside of the new light rail structure where it crosses over the Trolley Trail.
Trolley Trail — Six sculptures made out of wood from trees removed from the Trolley Trail area range in style from traditional to abstract. The sculptures will be sited along the new portion of the trail built by TriMet between SE River Rd and Park Ave. Hilary Pfeifer will create an additional sculpture for the landscape around the SE Park Ave parking garage inspired by her work with students from New Urban High School.

SE Park Ave Station — Susan Zoccola
A gazebo-like steel sculpture featuring a canopy of over-sized laser-cut oak leaves serves as an icon for the Oak Grove Community. Thirty-feet tall and illuminated at night, it is a focal point for the plaza adjacent to the station.

Station Shelter Columns and Windscreens — Lynn Basa
Abstract imagery relating to each location appears in beautiful, hand-crafted glass mosaic on all of the station shelter columns except for Milwaukie/Main St. The shelter windscreen pattern is derived from natural forms seen in the flow of water and in wood grain.

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For more information regarding the Portland-Milwaukie public art program, visit: trimet.org/pm/library/publicart.