



# Cleveland RTA Launches Innovative Artwork Initiative

## Agency Partners with City, MPO To Celebrate Diversity

Because of the unique collaborative efforts and the creative vision of incoming APTA Chair Valarie J. McCall, the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) is moving forward with an innovative public artwork plan.



Valarie J. McCall

McCall was instrumental in brokering the cooperation of the GCRTA, along with the city of Cleveland, private donors and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA)—the area’s metropolitan planning organization—to bring the vision into reality.

Her efforts call for installing a number of large art pieces along RTA’s rail lines over the next several years. The initial focus will be along the Red Line that connects Cleveland Hopkins International Airport to downtown in time for the Republican National Convention in July 2016.

A grant from the city’s Department of Economic Development kick-started the program, which leveraged a \$357,000 commitment from NOACA, followed by a \$150,000 grant from the Cleveland Foundation.

“There is no question the art program will help create a positive first impression for visitors coming to Cleveland. It also creates a better experience for our daily customers,” said GCRTA

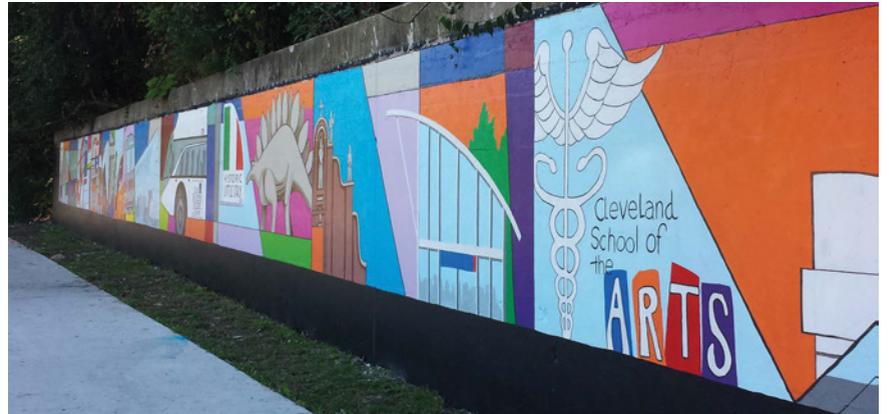
CEO and General Manager Joe Calabrese. “This is yet another region-wide, collaborative effort and a testament to how important projects get done.”

That feeling was echoed by McCall, who also serves as a GCRTA board member and the city of Cleveland’s chief of government and international affairs. (In addition to

her position as incoming APTA chair, McCall also served the association as chair, Transit Board Members Committee, and member, Authorization Task Force and APTF board.)

“The Cleveland Foundation is one of the world’s largest community foundations, and we are proud to be among the many beneficiaries of their generosity,” she said. “This is a good example of what public-private partnerships can accomplish in our city. It is unique that the city, along with RTA, our MPO and now a community foundation are working together for the success of such a worthy effort.”

The public artworks will be inspired by the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, the annual literary prize presented by the Cleveland Foundation. Celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> year, the awards are the only juried prize in the nation for books that confront racism and celebrate diversity. The art installations will honor past winners, which have included literary giants Toni



Painted in September near the new Cedar-University Red Line Station, this mural is an example of the type of artwork that will be installed along GCRTA’s rail lines, funded through a collaborative effort of private-public partners.

Morrison and Langston Hughes and national leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

NOACA Executive Director Grace Gallucci said, “We are pleased to be able to support the improvement to the communities adjacent to RTA’s rail lines. Beyond its obvious cultural and aesthetics benefits, we feel this project will provide a safer and more appealing transportation experience that leads to increased transit ridership, and furthers NOACA’s goals of providing a sustainable multimodal system for those who live, work and play in the region,” she added.

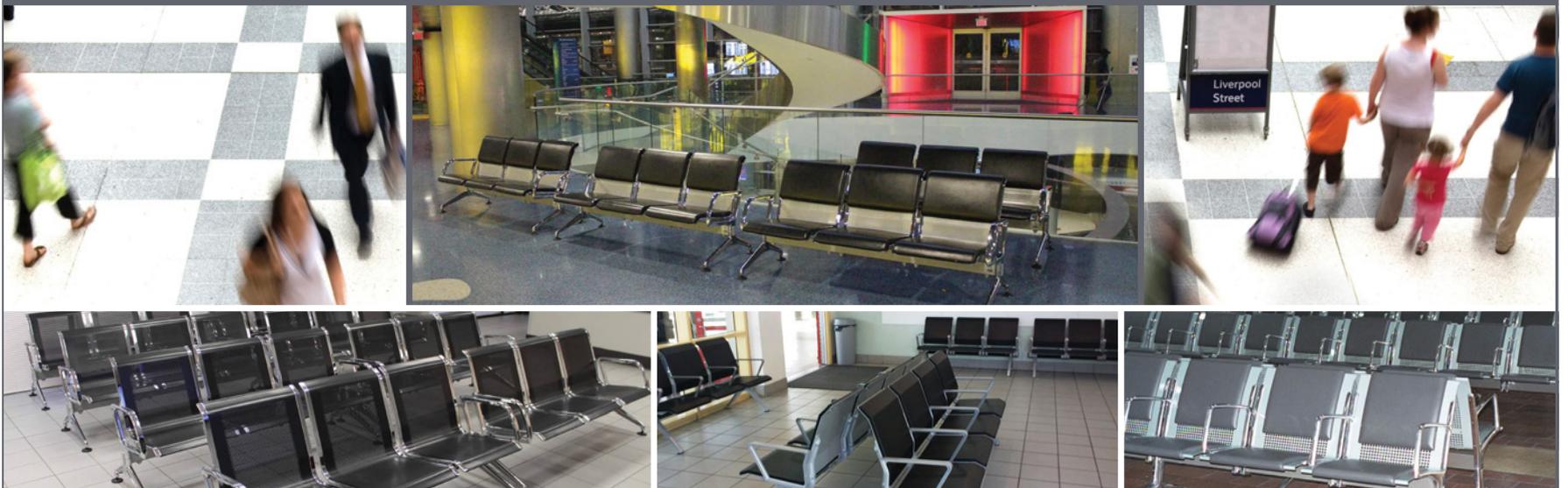
“This project showcases the power of the arts to transform community spaces,” says Lillian Kuri, Cleveland Foundation program director for architecture, urban design and sustainable development. “We believe it has the potential to turn the various rail lines into cultural attractions, especially by

connecting the art to the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, an internationally-respected program born right here in Cleveland.”

Cleveland planners from Land Studio will lead the curatorial team, which will invite select local, national and international artists to participate in the project and the authors whose work will be represented through the installations.

“This is a good example of what public-private partnerships can accomplish in our city,” said Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson. “This project began as a city-led initiative, in partnership with RTA and Land Studio, and has attracted support from the Cleveland Foundation, following initial investments from the city’s Department of Economic Development and a great investment by NOACA. The development of public art along the RTA Red, Blue and Green lines will improve the transit experience for all.”

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