

- 950.01 General
- 950.02 References
- 950.03 Definitions
- 950.04 Standard Architectural Design
- 950.05 Criteria for Public Art
- 950.06 Process and Project Delivery Timing
- 950.07 Approvals
- 950.08 Documentation

950.01 General

There has been a growing interest on the part of communities to use art within the transportation facilities of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). It can be used to provide visual interest along roadsides, make unique statements about community character, and create positive public response that will last over time.

Proponents for public art might be local agencies or engaged citizens' groups with interest in the outcome of a WSDOT project. The environmental and public involvement processes offer opportunities for community partnership on the visual and aesthetic qualities of a corridor.

The public art policy in this chapter is intended to provide guidance for managing public art on WSDOT projects; reinforce the existing policy in the *Roadside Classification Plan*; designate appropriate locations for the incorporation of public art features; and provide for the consistent use of statewide development, review, and approval processes on new and existing features. (Note that nothing in this chapter is to be construed to *require* public art on WSDOT projects.)

The appropriateness of public art is frequently dependent upon its location and composition. An art piece or feature chosen for the back side of a noise wall, at a safety rest area, or along a bike path may not be suitable at the end of a freeway ramp or along the main line of a highway. In addition to appropriate placement, WSDOT must balance the requests for proposed public art projects with the need to provide corridor continuity, improve the unity of highway elements, and provide roadsides that do not divert motorists' attention from driving.

While some local jurisdictions dedicate a percentage of their project budgets for art, WSDOT has no such dedicated funding. Section 40 of the State Constitution specifies that gas tax money must be used for a "highway purpose." Therefore, public art beyond WSDOT standard design is typically funded by other sources. The *Roadside Funding Matrix for WSDOT Capital Projects* was developed to provide guidance for funding various elements found within public works projects on which WSDOT is the lead agency.

When city or community entrance markers are proposed, this policy should be used in conjunction with the guidance contained in the *Traffic Manual*.

950.02 References

(1) Federal/State Laws and Codes

[Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 47.42](#), Highway advertising control act – Scenic vistas act

Washington State Constitution, Section 40

www.leg.wa.gov/LawsAndAgencyRules/constitution.htm

(2) Design Guidance

[Bridge Design Manual](#), M 23-50, WSDOT

[Roadside Classification Plan](#), M 25-31, WSDOT

(3) Supporting Information

[A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design](#), AASHTO, 2004

[Flexibility in Highway Design](#), FHWA, 1997

[Roadside Funding Matrix for WSDOT Capital Projects](#), located in Appendix B of [Understanding Flexibility in Transportation Design – Washington](#), WSDOT

www.wsdot.wa.gov/Research/Reports/600/638.1.htm

[Roadside Manual](#), M 25-30, WSDOT

[Traffic Manual](#), M 51-02, WSDOT

[Understanding Flexibility in Transportation Design – Washington](#), WSDOT, 2005

www.wsdot.wa.gov/Research/Reports/600/638.1.htm

950.03 Definitions

context sensitive solutions (CSS) A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves the community in the development of a project. (See [Chapter 210](#) for further information.)

public art An enhancement to a functional element, feature, or place within a transportation facility to provide visual interest. The enhancement could be an addition to a functional element, integrated into a design, or for purely aesthetic purposes. An element is considered “public art” if it is beyond WSDOT standard practice for architectural treatment.

950.04 Standard Architectural Design

WSDOT’s public art policy does not apply to the standard design of transportation architectural elements such as simple geometric patterns or standard concrete finishes like fractured fin, paving patterns, or colors.

To discuss the details of proposed public art projects, contact the State Bridge and Structures Architect and the region or Headquarters (HQ) Landscape Architect. They are key members of the Public Art Specialty Services Team (described in [950.06](#)) and can answer questions and assist in determining an appropriate course of action.

950.05 Criteria for Public Art

Placement and composition of public art is unique and is to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Prior to approval of public art, a public art plan is to be developed in coordination with the Public Art Specialty Services Team. The team will review the concept, guide the local agency or design team through the process, and approve the plan in accordance with 950.07. The following criteria are to be addressed and documented in the public art plan:

- The public art proponent, the funding source, and those responsible for the installation and maintenance of the proposed art. Provide for safe maintenance access, and establish agreements with local agencies for maintenance where appropriate. If there is a potential for vandalism, address this issue in the associated maintenance agreement.
- Whether public art resulted from the specific recommendation(s) of a planning-level study.
- Subject of the recommended art.
- Visibility: Art visible from the main line must contribute to corridor continuity and the view from the road. Art visible to the community or adjacent to the neighborhood side of a structure may have more flexibility in design than that visible from the main line.
- Safety and security: Public art must not negatively impact safety nor create an attractive nuisance.
- Potential for traffic distraction: Proposed art must not distract motorists. It must be appropriate for the speed and angle at which it will be viewed.
- Scale and context compatible with the surrounding landscape and land use.
- Contribution of the art to community character.
- Impact of the proposed art on social, cultural, and environmental features. In general, WSDOT would not approve the addition of art on a historic structure or within an ecologically sensitive area.
- Compliance with applicable laws, such as the Scenic Vistas Act and 23 CFR 752, Landscape and Roadside Development.
- Demonstrated responsible use of tax dollars and enhanced public trust in WSDOT judgment.

For further information on these criteria, see the [Roadside Manual](#).

(1) Acceptable Public Art Features

Public art must be in compliance with WSDOT corridor guidelines and existing policies such as the [Roadside Classification Plan](#) and the [Bridge Design Manual](#). The following are examples of types and locations of acceptable public art features:

- Concrete surface treatments (beyond WSDOT standard).
- Colored paving/colored pavers/scoring patterns (beyond WSDOT standard).
- Specially designed benches, trash cans, planters, or other street furnishings.
- Soft lighting and lighting fixtures.
- Small-scale sculptures or art pieces (when not viewed from the main line).
- Attachments to decorative railings, light poles, or fences.
- Decorative bus shelters.

(2) Unacceptable Public Art Features

The following are examples of unacceptable public art features:

- Kinetic sculptures.
- Brightly lit or flashing art.
- Art that poses a safety risk or liability.
- Large sculptures (the size of a sculpture is relative to its context and location in the landscape).
- Art with highly reflective qualities or adverse colors.
- Art that is a distraction to drivers or out of context with the surroundings.
- Art with a topic/theme that could cause negative public reaction.
- Art that resembles a traffic control device.

950.06 Process and Project Delivery Timing

Begin the development and review of public art early in the WSDOT design process and conduct subsequent reviews during the course of its development. Do not include public art as a change order or addendum to a project without first having gone through the process described in this policy.

A public art plan is developed to incorporate public art into WSDOT projects. Include the review of the public art plan by the Specialty Services Team in project reviews.

(1) Public Art Plan

The public art plan is developed by the WSDOT Project Engineer's Office. The plan provides enough detail and description to convey the intent of the proposed art project. The plan documents how the proposed art meets the criteria listed in [950.05](#) and includes the following elements:

- Cover sheet with appropriate approval signatures (see [950.07](#)).
- Project overview.
- Location of the proposed art.
- Scale drawings of the proposed art, including proposed materials and finishes.
- All criteria from [950.05](#), Criteria for Public Art, addressed and documented.
- Justification and recommendations for public art.

Include the public art plan in the Design Documentation Package (DDP) and consider including it in the Design Approval and Project Development Approval packages.

(2) Public Art Specialty Services Team

Include the Public Art Specialty Services Team in the development of public art and the public art plan.

The Public Art Specialty Teams include the following:

- WSDOT Project Engineer or designee(s)
- State Bridge and Structures Architect
- Region or HQ Landscape Architect
- Region Traffic representative

Consider team membership from the following functional areas when their expertise is applicable:

- Maintenance
- Planning
- Environmental
- Real Estate Services
- Highways and Local Programs

For projects requiring full FHWA oversight (New/Reconstruction projects on the Interstate), the following team members are also required:

- HQ Design (ASDE)
- Federal Highway Administration (Area Engineer)

950.07 Approvals

Involve the Public Art Specialty Services Team in the development of art during the earliest possible phase of project development, ensuring that approvals happen smoothly and that WSDOT and FHWA are aware of the public art as soon as possible. Phases include the following:

- Initial Art Concept review: input and approval.
- Selected Art Concept review: input and approval.
- Final Proposed Art review: input and approval.

(1) Approval Signatures

The public art plan cover letter includes the following appropriate approval signatures.

(a) Approval of public art for New/Reconstruction projects on the Interstate includes:

- Region/HQ Landscape Architect
- HQ Bridge and Structures Architect
- HQ Design (ASDE)
- FHWA Area Engineer

(b) Approval of public art for all other projects includes:

- Region/HQ Landscape Architect
- HQ Bridge and Structures Architect

950.08 Documentation

The public art plan, complete with approval signatures, is retained in the Design Documentation Package (DDP).

For the list of documents required to be preserved in the DDP and the Project File, see the Design Documentation Checklist:

 www.wsdot.wa.gov/design/projectdev/

