

**Los Angeles County
Veterans Advisory Commission
Recommendation #2**

WHEREAS, on January 3, 2023, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission conducted a Special Meeting to discuss concerns raised by a veteran constituent of Supervisorial District 3 regarding Metro’s artist selection for the “Westwood / VA Hospital” Station as part of the Purple Line Extension Project;¹

WHEREAS, on January 18, 2023, the Los Angeles Times published “Veterans claim anti-vet bias in Metro’s choice of muralist for a new VA station” outlining Metro’s controversial selection of artist Sandow Birk;²

WHEREAS, on the same day, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission conducted a Regular Meeting and received a briefing by Metro officials regarding artist selection and station naming for the “Westwood / VA Hospital” Station;³

WHEREAS, during the briefing, Metro shared that it had contacted Metro’s Veterans Program, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Los Angeles County Department of Military Affairs about the [Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool Request for Qualifications \(RFQ\)](#);⁴

WHEREAS, Metro did not quantify the number of engagements with veterans community stakeholders regarding the Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool RFQ;

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission that sharing information internally or with other government agencies tasked with serving veterans does not constitute meaningful outreach to the Los Angeles veterans community;

WHEREAS, Metro claimed it “sent emails to the Purple/D Line project stakeholder e-blast list of nearly 8,000 people” regarding the artist solicitation;⁵

WHEREAS, after reviewing past emails of the Purple/D Line project stakeholder list⁶, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission found no notices regarding the Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool RFQ.⁷

WHEREAS, of the over 1,500 respondents, Metro could not quantify the number of veteran applicants to the Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool RFQ;⁸

¹ [LACVAC Special Meeting on January 3, 2023](#)

² [LA Times. “Veterans claim anti-vet bias in Metro’s choice of muralist for a new VA station.” January 18, 2023.](#)

³ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023](#)

⁴ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 49m 34s](#)

⁵ Id

⁶ Note: Purple Line stakeholder list defined as emails originating from purplelineext@metro.net

⁷ Note: Metro shared it had attended the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Creative Arts Festival on [3/4/20](#). Metro also shared notices regarding the Veterans Legacy Art Project solicitation, independent of the Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool RFQ, on [6/4/21](#), [8/20/21](#) and [8/23/21](#).

⁸ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 1hr 4m 33s](#)

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WHEREAS, on May 3, 2022, Metro published a press release announcing results of the Sections 2 & 3 artist selection process;⁹

WHEREAS, none of the artists selected for the “Westwood / VA Hospital” Station are veterans;¹⁰

WHEREAS, of the 10-person community-based peer review panel for Sections 2 & 3, only one member was identified as a veteran and another as a veteran family member;¹¹

WHEREAS, after reviewing weekly updates of the Purple/D Line project stakeholder list since the May 3, 2022 artist selection announcement, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission found no notices provided to the public regarding opportunities to participate in Metro commissioned art projects related to the “Westwood / VA Hospital” Station;¹²

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2022 at 6:35pm, Metro Art sent an email announcement for an artist engagement event less than 24 hours prior to start time (and the event was limited to 50 attendees);¹³

WHEREAS, as of January 27, 2023, Metro Art’s calendar of events tagged as relevant to the Purple (D Line) Extension Transit Project included community engagement events for artist Sandow Birk but no other events for artists associated with the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station or other stations along the Purple D Line;¹⁴

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission that public art commissioned by Metro must be conducted in a way that is fully transparent and accessible to the communities of Los Angeles;

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission submits that veterans are the primary stakeholder audience concerning the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station;

WHEREAS, Metro has inappropriately identified the station location as “Westwood,” a name that does not conform to the public’s perception of Westwood’s boundaries or The City of Los Angeles Westwood Neighborhood Council Map;¹⁵

WHEREAS, Metro is currently constructing the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station on land donated to the federal government in 1888 “to locate, establish, construct, and permanently

⁹ [Metro. “L.A. Metro announces artists commissioned to create site-specific artwork for the Purple \(D Line\) Extension Transit Project.” May 3, 2022.](#)

¹⁰ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 1hr 4m 10s](#)

¹¹ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 1hr 3m 57s](#)

¹² [Exhibit A: Weekly updates of the Purple/D Line project stakeholder list from May 3, 2022 – January 23, 2023](#)

¹³ [Metro Art email newsletter from December 7, 2022](#)

¹⁴ [Exhibit B: Metro Art Calendar of Events from May 3, 2022 – January 31, 2023](#)

¹⁵ [Exhibit C: City of Los Angeles Westwood Neighborhood Council Map](#)

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maintain a branch” of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers west of the Rocky Mountains;¹⁶

WHEREAS, the 50th Congress first bestowed the name “Pacific Branch” in reference to the property while appropriating \$90,000 to maintain and enlarge the facility in 1888;¹⁷

WHEREAS, on November 19, 2014, the “Pacific Branch” was listed on the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places (NRIS Reference Number: 14000926);^{18 19}

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2022, the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board (VCOEB) voted to adopt a recommendation to the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs requesting that Metro “refer to the planned Metro Station on campus as the ‘Pacific Branch / VA Hospital’ station.”²⁰

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission joins the VCOEB in requesting that Metro rename the station “Pacific Branch / VA Hospital” in an attempt to raise awareness of the VA campus’ unique history as the Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ON FEBRUARY 15, 2023:

Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission recommends that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, acting in their official capacity as permanent members of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board of Directors, take a leadership role in advocating for the following reform efforts:

1. Metro will hire or contract a third party with cultural competency in both the military veteran community and arts development to assist with public outreach for the duration of the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station construction.
2. Metro Art will adopt a new policy that incorporates public scoping meetings prior to engaging in artist selection by community-based peer review panels. The scoping meetings should be conducted on a station-by-station basis giving various communities an opportunity to provide ideas that best represent their unique cultural identity. Public comments can be incorporated into existing artist selection procedures²¹ with the goal of producing conceptual art submissions that resonate with communities served by Metro.

¹⁶ [Transcription of recorded deed between John P. Jones and Arcadia B. Baker and NHDVS. March 3, 1888.](#)

¹⁷ [Statutes at Large of the United States of America from December 1887 to March 1889, etc.](#)

¹⁸ [NPS National Register of Historic Places Listing Record: West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Historic District](#)

¹⁹ [NPS website. “Pacific Branch: Los Angeles, California.”](#)

²⁰ [Reading and discussion of Recommendation 17-03 at the 17th VCOEB meeting](#)

²¹ [Note: Call to Artists – 2020 Artist Pool – Review Process guidelines state: “When short-listed, artists will be provided relevant project information and a stipend to present proposals for evaluation by a community-based peer review panel](#)


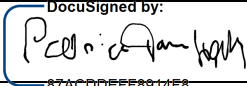
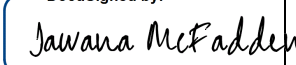

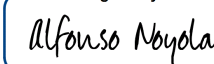
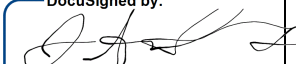
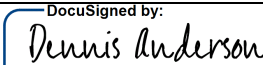
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3. Metro Art will adopt a new policy that all opportunities to participate in Metro commissioned art projects, including artist-directed community engagement events, will be distributed to the public stakeholder list for each line at least 14 days in advance.
4. Any Metro Art projects that have been completed, or in the process of being installed, should be subject to a review based on proposed Recommendations 2 & 3 above.
5. Metro will work with veterans community stakeholders to identify and schedule opportunities for additional artist engagement events.²²
6. Metro will donate any completed art projects for the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station to the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, VA West Los Angeles Medical Center, any of the Permanent Supportive Housing programs on campus or any other veteran serving organizations.²³
7. Metro will brief all final conceptual renderings prior to production of art for the “Westwood / VA Hospital” Station to the following veteran groups (at a minimum): VCOEB, Los Angeles Regional Community Veteran Engagement Board, The California Veterans Board, Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission and the City of Los Angeles Mayor’s Military Veteran Advisory Council.
8. Metro Art will create a paid artist-in-residence program exclusively for veterans that aims to enable veteran artists to become qualified for inclusion in Metro, and other public agency, artist pools. Veteran artists will have an opportunity to showcase their art, or artworks, in an annual rotating exhibit at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall where it will be moved to the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station once it becomes operational.
9. Metro will rename the “Westwood / VA Hospital” station “Pacific Branch / VA Hospital” or begin the public engagement process to announce a new station name by November 11, 2023.
10. Metro will initiate a new selection process to identify an artist with cultural sensitivity to the often traumatized and vulnerable veteran population that will receive care at VA West Los Angeles. Sandow Birk's prior exhibit "Depravities of War" demonstrates this artist is, in fact, culturally biased against U.S. troops and veterans. Metro’s current selection runs the risk of exposing veterans to re-traumatization, and it is the Commission's urgent recommendation a new artist is selected to replace Sandow Birk.

²² [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 1 hr 8m](#)

²³ [LACVAC Regular Meeting on January 18, 2023 at 58m](#)

Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission Recommendation Signature Page

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SD 1 Commissioner - VACANT		
Affirmative	Opposed	Abstained
SD 2 Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley		
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SD 3 Commissioner Anthony Allman		
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