



# City of Austin

## Recommendation for Action

**File #:** 25-1086, **Agenda Item #:** 6.

6/5/2025

### **Posting Language**

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Gil Rocha Public Art Projects LLC for artwork for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Departures Ticketing Art in Public Places Project for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$1,000,000. Funding: \$150,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining years of the agreement is contingent upon available funding in future budgets.

### **Lead Department**

Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment.

### **Fiscal Note**

Funding in the amount of \$150,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining \$850,000 of this contract will be added as the construction phases begin.

### **For More Information:**

Angela Means, Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment, 512-974-1624; Morgan Messick, Assistant Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment, 512-974-7873.

### **Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:**

April 21, 2025 - the Austin Arts Commission approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Departures Ticketing AIPP Project, naming Gil Rocha Public Art Projects LLC as the selected artist and Jose Rafael Vargas-Suarez (Vargas-Suarez Universal) as the alternate for the \$1,000,000 commission. (Motion by Vice Chair Schmalbach, second by Commissioner Houston; approved 6-0-1, with Commissioners Kracheni, Hussain, Gray, and Maldonado absent).

April 7, 2025 - the AIPP Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Departures Ticketing AIPP Project, naming Gil Rocha Public Art Projects LLC as the selected artist and Jose Rafael Vargas-Suarez (Vargas-Suarez Universal) as the alternate for the \$1,000,000 commission. (Motion by Chair Lemmo, second by Panel Member Davis; approved 5-0-0, with one vacancy and Arts Commission Liaison Maldonado absent).

August 2024, the Art in Public Places (AIPP) Panel and Arts Commission approved the "Art in Public Places Sites and Opportunities Plan for Austin-Bergstrom International Airport," which identified and scoped three phases of AIPP opportunities within the current Airport Expansion & Development Program (AEDP).

### **Additional Backup Information:**

This commission is part of Phase II of the City's AIPP initiative, developed as a component of the AEDP at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS). The multi-phase plan was created through a collaboration between the Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment (ACME) and the Department of Aviation and was approved by the Arts Commission in August 2024.

Phase II prioritizes the selection of Texas-based artists, ensuring diverse and meaningful cultural representation across the airport. Among the seven commissions awarded during this phase, four were given to artists based in Austin, underscoring a strong commitment to regional talent.

#### Artist Selection Process: Departures Ticketing AIPP Project

This project was part of a broader Phase II effort to engage artists from across Texas via a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process:

#### Application & Outreach:

- RFQ released: January 3, 2025
- Submission Deadline: February 2, 2025
- Public call distributed through PublicArtist.org, City newsletters, and social media channels
- Artist info and pre-submittal meetings held on January 22 and 23, 2025
- 195 applications were received; 112 met the minimum qualifications

#### Panel Review & Interviews:

- A selection panel of arts professionals and community representatives reviewed submissions on March 4, 2025
- Finalist interviews occurred March 21, March 25, and April 1, 2025
- Final Recommendation:
- Recommended Artist: Gil Rocha - Laredo, TX

The recommendation was approved by the AIPP Panel on April 7 and affirmed by the Austin Arts Commission on April 21, 2025.

#### About the Artist

Gilberto Rocha is an artist, curator, and educator based in Laredo, Texas. His artistic practice is grounded in site-responsiveness, blending materials, history, and cultural movement to generate work that captures both memory and transformation. Rocha's ability to translate place into layered visual storytelling makes him well-suited to interpret the high-traffic, transitional experience of the airport's Departures Ticketing area.

#### Project Context Within the AUS AIPP Plan

This project is one of seven Phase II commissions tied to AUS's AIPP strategy. While Phase I prioritized nationally known artists, Phase II is focused on Texas-based creatives. Phase III will be fully dedicated to artists based in Austin.

#### This phased approach:

- Promotes excellence at every level of engagement,
- Elevates regional and local artistic voices, and
- Aligns with the larger capital development timeline at the airport.

All commissions are scheduled to be completed by 2030, in time for the full opening of the expanded Arrivals and Departures Hall.