

## Gold Line bridge designer hopes to link San Gabriel Valley traditions with modern design

By Nathan McIntire, Staff Writer

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ARCADIA - A selection committee has chosen an artist to design a bridge along the Foothill Gold Line extension billed as an iconic gateway to the San Gabriel Valley.

Andrew Leicester, 61, emerged from a field of 17 entrants bidding to become the designer of a 739-foot bridge that will stretch diagonally across the freeway from Santa Anita Avenue in Arcadia.

The Metro Gold Line Foothill Construction Authority chose Leicester in July to design the artistic elements of the bridge, which will cost an estimated \$20 to \$25 million to build. The bridge would be part of an extension from Pasadena to Azusa.

But it wasn't his initial idea that got him the job. In fact, the initial design has since been scrapped.



Minnesota artist/designer Andrew Leicester stands where the new Metro Gold Line tracks will be installed leading to the bridge that will cross the 210 Freeway in Monrovia on Tuesday August 25, 2009. Leicester has been chosen as the artist who will design a bridge over the 210 Freeway billed as a "Gateway" to the San Gabriel Valley. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Walt Mancini/SXCity)

Leicester provided rough sketches of his concept in his application to design the bridge and was chosen despite the selection committee's displeasure with the actual idea.

"The initial concept that he came in with they actually did not like," said Lesley Elwood, a public art consultant hired by Metro Gold Line for the project.

But when Leicester explained how he arrived at the concept and detailed his artistic process and experience, the committee knew they had the right person.

"I think it was the overall visual quality of his work that he had done previously," Elwood said

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of the committee's decision. "I think they felt that after he presented his previous projects that he was obviously capable of doing this."

Leicester acknowledged his original concept, which featured references to the peacocks associated with the Arboretum and the seal of the city of Arcadia, was not focused enough.

"That's the No.1 challenge," Leicester said. "To find something that resonates geographically and culturally with the entire area."

Now Leicester, who is based in Minneapolis, plans to incorporate the artistic traditions from Native American tribes from the San Gabriel Valley, including the Chumash and Gabrielenos, and references to the region's native animal and plant life into a contemporary structure. Gabrielenos are also called Tongva.

His goal is to "try to pay homage to the early cultures and at the same time address recent history," he said.

Leicester also wants to use energy-saving technology to partially power the bridge's lighting.

"I'm very interested in manipulating solar and wind technology... so that they can be visually exciting as well," he said.

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