

Behind the Scenes



Executive Director's Report

The Access Services Board of Directors met on April 18, 2022.

The Board approved the Consent Calendar, which included items on the contract extensions of language interpretation services and on-board vehicle recording system contracts. This action also included the approval of the employee health and benefit contracts, self-insured retention automobile liability program, commercial business package insurance and appointments of two new Community Advisory Committee members.

The Board also approved modifications to key performance indicators and service standards, the establishment of a facilities development and construction fund, and the adoption of the Title VI plan for FY2022-2025.

Upcoming Board committee meetings are scheduled for May 16, 2022 and the next full meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for June 20, 2022.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Access Contractor Hiring Assistance Program kicks into high gear

"You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful place in the world...but it requires people to make the dream a reality," Walt Disney once said, when considering what it takes to build a world-class company.

Access aims to be among the best paratransit agencies in the United States. That cannot happen without the success of our contractors, who provide the service on a daily basis. Drivers, customer service representatives and the utility workers who fuel and wash vehicles are all needed to provide the excellent service our riders and the community has come to expect. Between the pandemic and the economic environment, hiring has been a challenge across the transit industry.



"We are competing with all the other companies out there that are trying to hire, such as Amazon and FedEx," said Mike Fricke, General Manager of California Transit (CTI). CTI works constantly to hire drivers, but it definitely takes a proactive and assertive effort. "[Our best drivers] like the job, and enjoy helping people," he further explained. It takes constant effort to find these caring drivers.

Access recently implemented its Contractor Hiring Assistance Program to help our contractors find qualified personnel.

- > When riders call the reservation line, the first thing they hear is a recorded message providing contractor employment information, "Do you know someone who would make a great Access driver or call taker? Access contractors are hiring and offer competitive pay, benefits and paid training," the recording states. Callers can press option 7 to hear more and be connected to the appropriate contractor.

- > The Agency has also added information to its webpage, providing the phone numbers of hiring contractors as well as a video that provides some insight into the life of an Access contractor employee.
- > Employment opportunities were also promoted at the recent Virtual Community Meeting and as an email blast to subscribers to Access' email alerts.
- > Finally, Access recently implemented a social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram.

Access is pleased to be able to assist its Contractors in the important work of finding the right talent for the unique business of paratransit. For more information, go to <https://accessla.org/contractor-employment.html>.

Alex Chrisman
Project Administrator

Accessible Autonomous Vehicle (AAV) Drive-by-Wire Training

On August 2, 2019, the Federal Transit Administration awarded Access a \$125,000 grant and named the agency as a partner in its FTA Transit Bus Automation Strategic Partnership. Access used the funds to develop the industry's first Accessible Autonomous Vehicle and committed to collect and share useful data with US DOT, FTA and transit peers. As previously reported, the AAV was built in October 2021 and was showcased at several conferences such as CalAct, the APTA EXPO and the 2022 Consumer Electronics Show (CES).

Lilee Systems, the technology partner of the self-driving vehicle program, recently invited Access staff -- William Kim, Fleet Specialist, and I -- to attend the drive-by-wire training in Augusta, Maine. The training consisted of hardware maintenance, software design and configuration.

In Access' AAV, Lilee Systems installed the AEVIT drive-by-wire solution based on the RAM ProMaster 3500 van. The hardware components consist of a Display Screen Interface, Electronic Control Unit (ECU) (pictured), Electronic Power Steering (EPS) unit and Mechanical-based Braking Unit (MBU). The ECU converts digital signals to analog format, which triggers the Transmission Control Unit (TCU) for shifting, EPS for steering, MBU for braking and CAN bus for throttling. These components form the basic functions that enable the self-driving systems to simulate human driver behavior while navigating the vehicle. The software interface allows the self-driving software to issue commands based on the data collected via sensors and cameras on board the AAV.

At the end of the two-day training, William and I saw first-hand how an automotive engineer in LiLee Systems headquarters in San Jose, California could remotely operate an AAV vehicle in Augusta, Maine. This eye opening experience further reinforced our confidence to operate our AAV on public roads with the knowledge that in case of an emergency, the vehicle can be operated safely.

Bill Tsuei
Director of Information Technology



Commendations

"Teri was kind, courteous, and helpful. She deserves commendation for being proficient and quick as a reservationist. Thank you, Teri."

Muhammad-Azim Shaikh

Rider since Dec 2010

"I would like to file a smile for my driver. Usually, my daughter assists me on trips. With her absence, my driver stepped in and assisted me to the front door. This type of service is what makes Access so special."

Dolores Jimenez

Rider since Oct 2008