

DRAFT

Short Range Strategic Plan

2026-2030



access



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Mission & Vision

Mission

Access Services promotes access to all modes of transportation and provides quality and safe ADA paratransit service on behalf of public transit agencies in Los Angeles County.

Vision

Access Services serves the community as the leader in promoting accessible and innovative transportation solutions.

We accomplish this vision by:

- > Providing quality, efficient, safe and dependable ADA paratransit service.
- > Leading the national dialogue as an advocate for universal access to transportation.
- > Partnering with other entities to secure alternate funding sources and legislation that expands transportation options.

Values

To Lead

Develop and implement innovative ideas as part of a nationally recognized team.

To Succeed

Demonstrate a measured and expert approach to the business at hand.

To Respond

Be sensitive to the needs of our customers and respond to their requests in a timely manner.

To Protect

Deliver results that exceed our customers' expectations.

To Respect

Treat all customers the way we, ourselves, would want to be treated.

About Access

Access Services is one of the country's largest ADA complementary paratransit providers. The agency provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services across Los Angeles County and administers the County's Coordinated Paratransit Plan on behalf of its forty-six (46) public fixed route operators.

Access provides next-day, curb-to-curb transportation services for eligible riders who, due to a disability, are unable to utilize fixed route bus and light rail services independently. Although Access' paratransit service is an alternative mode of flexible passenger transportation that does not follow fixed routes or schedules, Access is required to operate in all areas and during times when fixed route service is in operation.

The service area for Access is defined by the fixed route services that operate in Los Angeles County. Access provides service up to three quarters of a mile from fixed route services operated by Access' partner agencies.

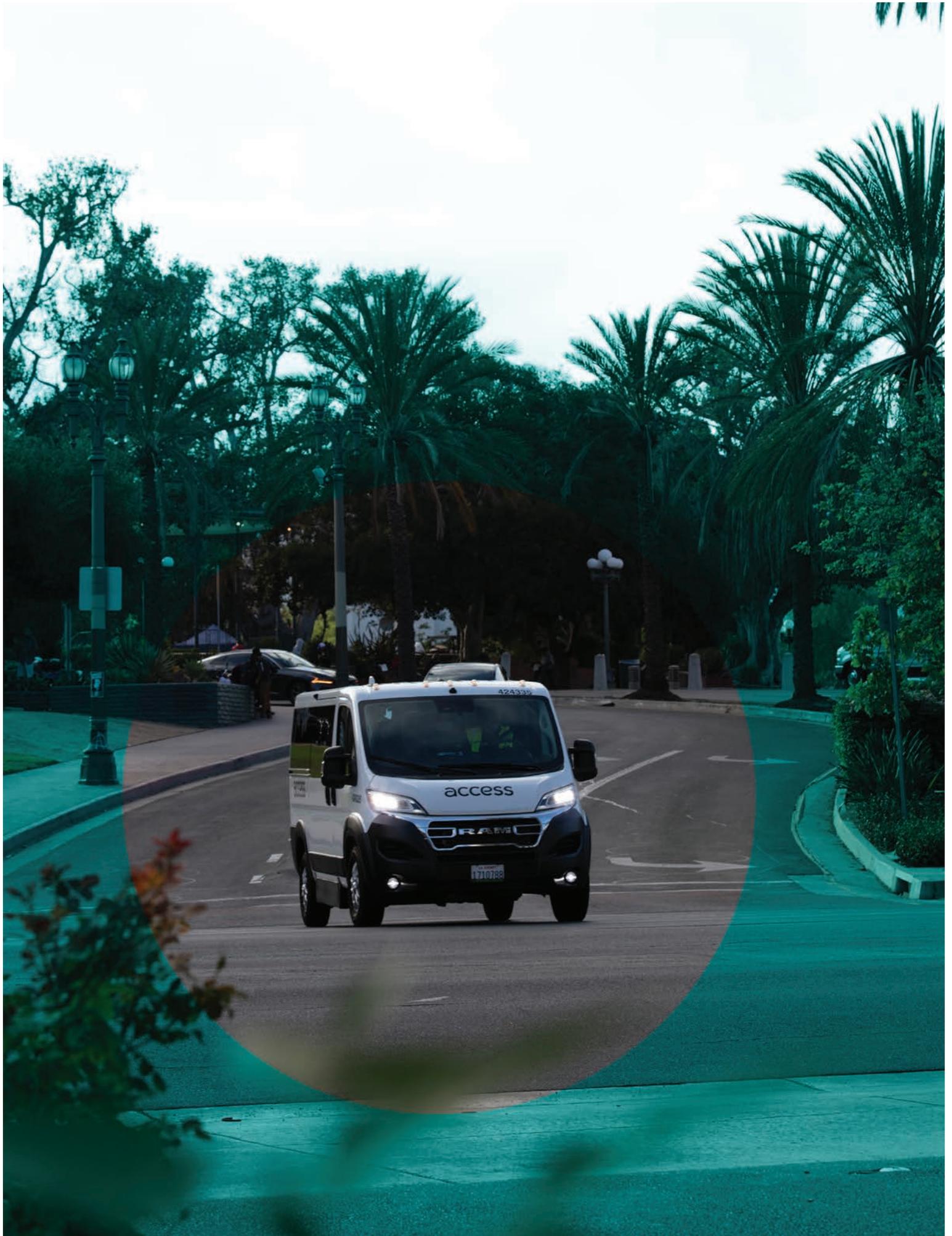
Access' service area is comprised of six regions served by separate contractors: Santa Clarita, Antelope Valley, Northern, Eastern, West-Central, and Southern regions. Across these six regions, Access provides paratransit service in almost all of the urbanized areas of the 4,751 square miles of Los Angeles County.

In FY 2025, Access performed over 4.6 million passenger trips and approximately 3.8 million vehicle trips. This was an increase from performing 4.2 million passenger trips and 3.4 million vehicle trips in Fiscal Year 2024.

Despite steady increases in demand, Access and its contractors have continued to provide safe and reliable transportation for its customers. On time performance remained steady at 92.8% for FY 2025. Access has also introduced many system-wide improvements that have positively impacted the customer experience on Access.

In addition to Access' paratransit service, Access also acts as the Los Angeles County Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA), a state mandated facilitator charged with the development and implementation of regional coordination of social service transportation for seniors, persons with disabilities, youth, and persons with socio-economic challenges.

Access Services is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors. Access also has two advisory committees: 1) the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) made up of customers and social service professionals; and 2) the Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee (TPAC) made up of public transit professionals and social service agency staff. Both committees have fifteen voting members.



Preparing for the Next Five Years

Introduction to Access' Five-Year Strategic Plan

The years ahead are filled with opportunities and challenges. New technologies have been developed to improve the customer experience and the agency has put in place practices to ensure services remain safe and reliable for its customers.

There are also a number of challenges that, if not planned for, could threaten the quality of services our customers have come to expect. It is for this reason that Access has developed this Strategic Plan (Plan).

The Plan proposes major initiatives over the next five years (FY 2026 to FY 2030). This Plan sets forth the anticipated challenges and proposes projects and programs to address these challenges. Some projects may take many years to implement, and it is for this reason they are included in this multi-year planning report.

Plan Development

In preparing the Plan, staff were consulted about the anticipated challenges as well as what strategies could be implemented to address them. From these multiple engagements across different departments, an initial list of priorities was developed. Staff also solicited the Access Board of Directors, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Transportation

Professionals Advisory Committee (TPAC) for recommendations.

The Strategic Plan is a “living document” to be revisited and updated annually.

Agency Improvements Since the Prior Five-Year Strategic Plan

Access developed its prior Strategic Plan (2022-2026) five years ago in FY 2022. That Plan provided an overview of programs for the agency to pursue from FY 2022 to FY 2026. Over the past five years, Access has made improvements that have made using Access easier for its customers while also focusing on initiatives to reduce Agency costs.

Since the adoption of the last Strategic Plan, Access was able to achieve one of its principal objectives of **securing property in its Southern and Antelope Valley regions to develop Access-owned facilities for its paratransit contractors.**¹ Having these Access-owned facilities will allow the Agency to better control operating costs by attracting additional competition during the procurement process, ensure operational continuity, and have greater flexibility to introduce alternative fueling technology at Access-owned sites.

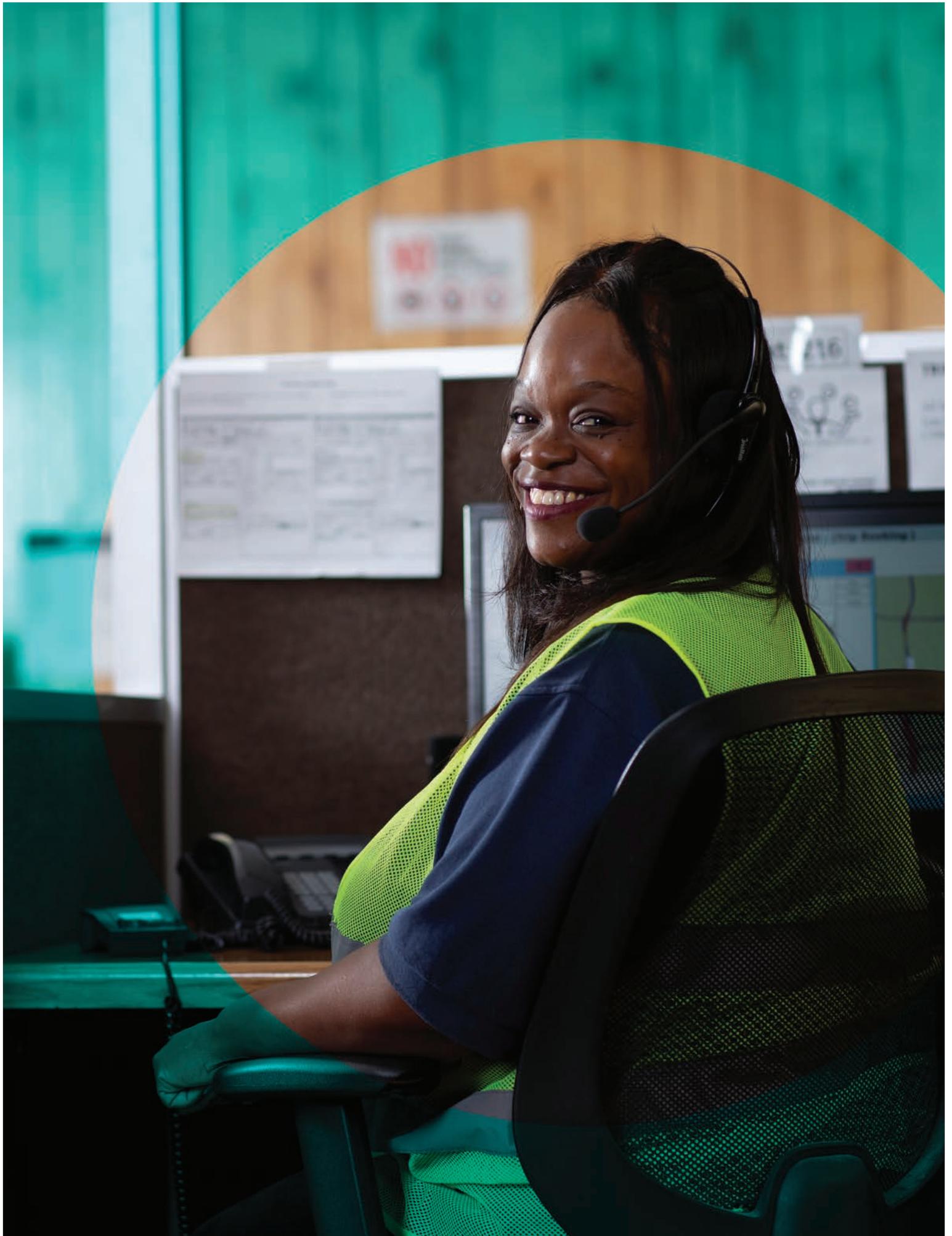
¹ “Acquiring Physical and Human Resources . . .”, - “Contractor Facilities” Proposed projects for fiscal years 2022-2026 from Access 2022-2026 Short Range Strategic Plan, pg. 29.

Access also identified and secured funding from new sources,² including reimbursement for services, such as meal and grocery deliveries, provided during the COVID-19 pandemic to Los Angeles' disability community, and Federal funding for the aforementioned real property acquisitions. The Agency also started receiving Medi-Cal reimbursements for a modest number of trips.

Lastly, Access has **continued to improve the usability of its Where's My Ride mobile application and On-Line Reservations**³ and has expanded the regions where these services are available, which has increased the technological options for our customers. These achievements were realized because of the dedicated work of Access staff, the Board of Directors, our advisory committees and partner agencies.

² "Expand Funding Opportunities" Proposed projects for fiscal years 2022-2026 from Access 2022-2026 Short Range Strategic Plan, pg. 21.

³ "Improve Access' Service through New Technology" - "Improve and Expand On-Line Apps (WMR/On-Line Reservations)" Proposed projects for fiscal years 2022-2026 from Access 2022-2026 Short Range Strategic Plan, pg. 22.



Meeting the Challenges to Come

FY 2026-FY 2030

Over the last 30 years, Access Services has prided itself on providing quality and safe paratransit services. With over 120,000 eligible customers across the county, Access has made changes to its service to improve system performance, enhance the customer experience, and reduce the barriers customers face with their transportation needs.

As Access looks ahead to the next five years, there are challenges that the agency anticipates that it must face. The primary focus of this Strategic Plan is to identify those challenges and to develop responses to ensure continued customer satisfaction.

Challenges by Category

1. Increased Paratransit Demand/ Special Events

Access Services anticipates that ridership demand will increase over the next five years, with more customers seeking to utilize transportation services.

a) Increasing demand for ridership

Population projections for Los Angeles County and trip projections that Access has developed show that in the years ahead there will be more potential customers seeking paratransit eligibility and Access' transportation services. This increase in demand will put added strain on Access' driver and fleet resources. As presented in "Access' Scheduled Trip Demand Forecasting FY 2025- FY 2034" report prepared by Hollingsworth Consulting, Access' trip

demand projections in the near term years of FY 2025 and FY 2026 predict 11-12% annual increases in trip demand growth. Subsequent to those initial years, growth is expected to not be as dramatic but still increases between 2.4 and 5.9% annually through 2030. In FY 2024, Access provided 4.2 million passenger trips. In FY 2025, Access provided nearly 4.7 million trips. By FY 2030, Access is projected to provide just over 6.4 million passenger trips.

b) Multiple major events including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Los Angeles County will host several major international events in the years ahead that will draw visitors from around the globe. The FIFA World Cup and Super Bowl in 2026 and 2027, respectively, will have impacts on both demand and traffic conditions around the event centers.

The 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games is expected to bring visitors and athletes from around the world which will impact Los Angeles' existing transportation network, existing fixed-route resources, and Access' paratransit services.

The 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games will introduce new and unique challenges for Access and the region.

2. Challenges Related to Funding

Access anticipates several challenges that will put a strain on regional funding resources as it continues to provide safe and reliable paratransit services across Los Angeles County.

a) Increased demand for paratransit

Over 95% of the Access budget is dedicated to providing federally-mandated paratransit and eligibility services, as presented in Access' Annual Report (FY 2025). Projected increases in ridership demand will increase the Access budget in future years.

Further, in addition to the increase in paratransit demand, the cost per trip is likely to increase due to the following factors:

Legislated changes to the minimum wage have increased local wage rates, which has significantly increased the salaries that our contractors have to pay to attract qualified employees.

In the past, Access' contractors were able to work with existing taxi service providers across Los Angeles County to carry nearly half of Access' trips. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there are fewer taxi operators who can partner with Access' contractors, requiring more of Access' services to be operated with Access vehicles and contracted drivers.

As fewer taxi and other transportation partners exist, Access' contractors must rely more on their own fleet of vehicles to cover paratransit transportation.

This ridership growth increases the need for additional vehicles which then require more real estate to store, operate, and maintain.

b) Fleet needs

With the discontinuation of the Dodge Caravan accessible minivan, Access staff have had to work with the automotive industry to develop new accessible vehicles for the Access fleet. In addition, these vehicles, specifically the Ram Promaster, are significantly more expensive than the Dodge Caravan. Staff has been working with customers to get their feedback on improvements to these vehicles.

c) Transition to Zero-Emission Vehicles in California

The state of California is requiring that Access and other public transportation agencies transition to Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) fleets by 2035. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has provided guidelines for all transit agencies, including Access Services. For vehicles that exceed 14,000 lbs. in gross weight, (Access' larger cutaway vehicles), CARB is requiring that a percentage of new vehicles purchased starting in calendar year 2026 be zero emission vehicles. Starting in calendar year 2026 through calendar year 2028, 25% of new cutaway vehicle purchases – **for vehicles that exceed 14,000 lbs. – must** be zero emission vehicles. Starting in calendar year 2029, all (or 100%) of **cutaway vehicles exceeding 14,000 lbs.** purchased are to be zero emission vehicles

d) Increased competition for transit funds

Access is part of a growing regional transit network that is funded by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). At the local level, there is greater demand for transit funds as Metro expands its rail network and prepares to host the major events outlined above. At the federal level, there is increasing competition for bus and bus facility funds that Access could use to fund its various initiatives. In addition, for certain types of federal funds, Access cannot apply directly and must find a fixed-route agency to partner with.

e) Need to attract new personnel due to projected Agency growth

As the Agency expands the number of trips it provides, acquires real estate assets, and continues to encounter a more complex information technology environment, the Agency may need to hire additional personnel to effectively manage these tasks. Additionally, Access must ensure that it is developing its own employees as future leaders of the Agency.

f) Access Headquarters in El Monte

Access' current administrative headquarters has reached capacity with its current staffing of 81 FTEs. With service levels continuing to grow year over year, Access will need to expand contractual and administrative staffing to maintain sufficient oversight of the service, especially in light of upcoming mega events like the

World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The current lease of its administrative headquarters expires in December 2026 and, while there is an additional five-year option to extend, Access should immediately explore options to add additional space or identify a new location.

3. Challenges Related to Effectively Communicating the Services that Access Provides

Access provides paratransit services that are distinct from other transportation services operated by other systems in Los Angeles County. It is important to effectively communicate what the services are, or there can be misunderstandings and confusion about what services Access offers and/or how to use those services.



Proposed Projects of the **2026-2030 Strategic Plan**

The projects provided in this Strategic Plan are designed to respond to the challenges outlined above. Input was gathered from Access' Board of Directors, the Community Advisory Committee and Transportation Professionals Advisory Committees and Access staff.

Improving Agency Effectiveness to respond to Increased Paratransit Demand/Special Events

Access continues to partner with various entities, such as Metro and LA28, as the region prepares to host major Los Angeles-based events, such as the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It is Access' intention to provide safe and reliable paratransit service for its own customers and visitors who need the service for travel to and from these events as well as travel across Los Angeles County.

Access has already made a number of changes to its international visitors' policy and will continue to look at its policies and procedures to ensure these events are accessible to all.

a. Acquisition of facilities

Access intends to continue its efforts to purchase properties that may be used for vehicle storage and paratransit operations by its contractors. As described above, Access may also need to relocate its current headquarters from El Monte.

b. Improve existing vehicle design

Access will continue to work with vehicle manufacturers to find opportunities for improvement in paratransit vehicle designs. Seeking feedback from Access' customers and disability community advocates, Access will ideally seek a mix of vehicles that work for its many customers and the needs of the service.

c. Transition to Zero-Emission Vehicles - Hydrogen or Electric vehicles (Fleet)

The State of California is mandating that all transit agencies transition to Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEV) in the coming years. While Access only operates a small number of vehicles that are covered under this mandate, we are committed to working with state agencies and vehicle manufacturers to assist with this goal.

d. Continue exploring accessible autonomous vehicles

Access has done extensive work in building partnerships and working to develop an accessible autonomous vehicle design. Access will continue its efforts with the AV industry to develop a vehicle design that is capable of providing safe and reliable service to Access customers.

e. Facilitate contractor partnerships with Transportation Network Companies

Access believes that contractor partnerships with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Lyft and Uber could provide additional

operational capacity as demand grows. Access has been working with a national consortium to amend various federal laws and regulations to make it easier for transit systems to use TNCs in their paratransit services.

f. New Instacart services

Access intends to pilot a program unique to Southern California in a partnership with Instacart. Access will procure Instacart memberships for Access customers interested in participating in the program. The expectation for this program will be improved quality of life for customers who may request Instacart deliveries of groceries and other necessities instead of scheduling separate paratransit trips for these errands.

g. Information Technology Improvements

1. Develop mobile routers to enable enhanced real-time vehicle location services

Access is seeking to introduce embedded mobile routers on all Access vehicles. This will improve customer-facing services such as Where's My Ride by providing more accurate data about a vehicle's location. It will also increase redundancy in the event of technology failures.

2. Create automated AI services that can answer general questions

Currently, many calls to ALTA ask similar questions. Access is looking to implement an AI service that can answer general questions about Access and provide information about a customer's ride, like an estimated time of arrival (ETA).

3. Introducing technology for customers with visual impairments to make it easier for customers to locate their Access vehicles

There are a variety of methods that can be employed so that customers with visual impairments may be able to utilize Bluetooth technology through their phones so they can follow a beacon to find their Access vehicles.

4. Development of an E-Wallet payment method

Access is exploring the development of a system allowing customers to pay for Access trips using digital payments or through an e-wallet. This process can add convenience and ease for customers seeking to ride Access.

5. Develop A.I. policies and continue cybersecurity improvements

Cybersecurity and safeguarding customer information are critical goals of Access Services. As the business landscape changes and security threats change and Access and other industries use Artificial

Intelligence (AI) technology to support its services, it will be incumbent upon Access to continue to update and adapt its own security and policies. This will be done throughout the Strategic Plan period.

h. Expand Access staff size and increase position responsibilities to correspond to expanding needs

Access anticipates that as demand increases for its paratransit services and its oversight duties change over time, that its staffing will need to expand and change from its current levels. Examples of changes in responsibilities will include personnel to perform property management and maintenance oversight as Access becomes responsible for contractor properties. Access' I.T. and procurement departments may need to expand to include subject matter experts on new I.T. platforms and ability to draft contracts that capture required language properly. Additional complexity in new vehicles, including, but not limited to transitioning to Zero Emission Vehicles, will require additional subject matter experts for oversight in the Fleet department as well. Finally, the Operations Department may need to expand to monitor and oversee the increased number of trips.

Meeting Challenges Related to Funding

a. Increase Medi-Cal reimbursement
Access already receives some reimbursement from the Medi-Cal program for some trips it performs.

Staff will continue to work with its partners at the state and federal levels to ensure that Access can be reimbursed for eligible trips.

b. Change federal law to allow Access to apply for funds directly

At present, there are certain federal grant programs, specifically the Bus and Bus Facilities program, which are only open to fixed-route agencies. Access can only apply for these programs with a fixed-route partner which makes it more difficult to receive funding. Access has been working with its federal partners to change federal law to allow Access to apply directly for these programs.

c. Seek out new and additional funding resources

Access will continue to apply for relevant grants (e.g. vehicles, facilities and other projects) and seek out new funding opportunities for its paratransit services.

d. Provide customers with information on alternative services

Los Angeles County offers several transportation options that can enhance customer choice while requiring fewer public subsidies than a typical paratransit trip. Access will continue to inform customers about these alternative services and look at ways of enhancing its communication on this topic.

e. Need to foster partnerships with other agencies, social services, businesses

In Los Angeles County, there are different agencies and service providers available

that can provide transportation services. Access intends to work with its existing partners and seek out new partners to determine where these outside agencies may be able to support Access' efforts of improving transportation options for persons with disabilities.

Improving the Access Customer Experience

a. Improve public-facing information about Access

Providing information about what Access is and how it differs from other forms of transportation will always be important. A goal for Access Services will be to improve our existing public-facing information to help reduce confusion people may have about Access to help manage rider expectations about the service.

b. Develop more tools for riders on how to use Access

An effective way to communicate important information to Access customers is to use means other than standard written communications. Access has been successful in conveying information about its system, its on-line and app-based services with recorded videos. Expanding this communication method, and looking at other methods, could help to get valuable information to customers.

c. PCA Campaign

Paratransit services like Access allow customers to travel with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) at no additional

cost. As this is something relatively unique to paratransit, Access may seek to develop a campaign to ensure that Access customers who may benefit from traveling with a PCA are aware of this feature.

d. Continue collaborative work between staff and riders

Access always strives to provide the best service that it can for its customers and the region. Access' ability to improve relies on feedback from its customers and those who represent the disability community. Access will continue to work with its advisory committees such as the CAC and TPAC as well as seeking input from its customers.

The CAC has forwarded the following ideas for inclusion in the Strategic Plan:

1. Research Same-Day trip service programs for customers

Access' current paratransit model is a next-day service where customers must reserve their trips the day before. The CAC has asked Access staff to research the possibility of a same-day service program.

2. Pursue funding for challenging / medical trips

Paratransit is supposed to treat all trips as equal, so that there are no priorities given to one trip over another. That said, there are instances where some trips are either especially challenging for Access' contractors to provide or Access customers have difficulty taking, or both.

An example of this may be an Access customer taking an Access trip following dialysis treatment in which they may be very fatigued during transport.

Access can explore if there are funding opportunities to improve these trip experiences for customers.



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