

Behind the Scenes



Executive Director's Report

As you will read in this issue of Behind the Scenes, Access staff continues to conduct outreach to various organizations representing people with disabilities.

This last month, in addition to the presentation to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Access staff met with representatives from five of the six LA County Independent Living Centers (ILCs), as well as a representative from the California Foundation of ILCs. The discussion focused on how the ILCs and Access can collaborate and break down barriers to transportation. Topics of discussion included participating in Access' customer satisfaction survey and how to better communicate about various Access programs.

I also recently had the pleasure of meeting in-person with members of the Foothill Service Club for the Blind in Glendale. I updated the group about recent initiatives at Access and also answered their questions about the service and received valuable feedback about how Access can better serve people with visual disabilities.

As always, please let us know if you would like Access staff to talk to any group in your community about the services we provide.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

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Accessible Autonomous Vehicle (AAV) Pilot Update

Access Services was named an FTA Transit Bus Automation Strategic Partnership partner by the FTA on August 2, 2019 and given a grant of \$125,000 to assist in developing an Accessible Autonomous Vehicle. The AAV pilot project consists of:

1. SAE Level 4 Autonomy Enabled Accessible Self-driving Shuttle
2. Route Planning & Testing
3. Revenue & Non-Revenue Operations



Access formed a project alliance with Lilee Systems and Sunset Vans to build the accessible self-driving shuttle. Lilee Systems, based in San Jose, California,

is the vehicle self-driving technology solution provider. They have built and operated SAE Level 4 enabled 40-foot buses on public roads with mixed traffic in Taiwan since 2018. Sunset Vans, based in Corona, California, is the purpose built low-floor ADA accessible shuttle provider. We chose the RAM ProMaster 3500 as the vehicle chassis and installed it with self-driving technology with the goal to build an accessible vehicle that can operate on public roads.

Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project did not kick-off until July 2021. After four months of extensive work by Access partners, the autonomous vehicle was finally finished in October 2021.

The AAV was showcased at the October 2021 CalACT Autumn Conference in Monterey, California; the American Public Transportation Association EXPO in Orlando, Florida

continued

(November 2021); and the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada (January 2022). The vehicle has garnered praise from transit peers and industry firms. Transit agencies such as RTC in Las Vegas, Nevada; VTA in Santa Clara, California; Contra Costa Transportation Authority in Walnut Creek, California and Western Reserve Transit Authority in Youngstown, Ohio, have expressed interest in adapting our AAV technology for their autonomous vehicle pilot projects.

The AAV is presently undergoing testing and tuning in San Jose. We are planning to bring the AAV to Los Angeles in the spring for a demonstration to our Board members, advisory committees and other regional transit peers. Access continues to pursue other funding sources to continue the AAV pilot project and collect important data to share with the US DOT, FTA and the industry.

The link below is a time-lapse video that shows the build of the AAV from start to finish.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/h61ztjvdw1kztx9/FMT%20Autonomous%20ProMaster%20Time%20Lapse%20Final.mp4?dl=0>

I would like to thank Access staff members Rick Streiff, Senior Manager, Fleet, Maintenance and Safety; William Kim, Fleet Specialist; Josh Southwick, Chief Marketing Officer; and Thomas Lee, IT Project Manager, for their assistance with this project.

Bill Tsuei

Director of Information Technology

Travel Training Program Presentation to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Self Advocacy Board of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities recently held a virtual meeting with its members along with representatives from L.A. Metro and Access Services.

The Board members had requested presentations on transportation resources across Los Angeles County and any services that could help persons with disabilities to safely and effectively utilize these services.

Representatives from L.A. Metro provided thorough presentations on utilizing Metro's TAP fare card on Metro and other fixed route systems, along with an overview of Metro's reduced fare program for low-income persons (LIFE).

Additional presentations by Metro representatives were given on Metro's mobility device securement technology on-board buses and Lily Ortiz, from Metro's On the Move Rider's Program, provided a presentation on Metro's travel-buddy program designed to introduce seniors to using fixed route transit.

For Access, I provided an overview of the Travel Training programs that Access offers for persons with disabilities, from one-on-one travel training to group workshops designed to educate individuals on how to safely use fixed route bus or rail services for some or all of their travel needs.

The presentations were well received with assurance that the information provided would be shared with groups the advocates represented.

Eric J. Haack

Strategic Planner



Commendations

"Jose Figueroa deserves praise, a shout-out, and a high five! He has been the best driver I have ever encountered since being with Access. Jose was respectful and made the safety of his riders a priority. Access should hire 100 more drivers like him."

Ouida Brown

Rider since October 2018

"I am filing a commendation for Manuel Urbina. While making my reservation Manuel was very pleasant and helpful. His smile came through even over the phone."

Rocio Robledo

Rider since July 2014