



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

The Board committees met on March 21 and addressed the following:

The Performance Monitoring committee took action and approved extensions for language interpretation services and on-board vehicle recording system contracts. The committee also approved modifications to key performance indicators and service standards.

The Planning and Development committee took action and approved renewals of the employee health and benefit contracts, self-insured retention automobile liability program and commercial business package insurance. The committee also approved a policy to establish a facilities development and construction fund.

The External/Stakeholder Relations committee approved the Title VI Plan along with the appointments of two new Community Advisory Committee members. They also received legislative updates from Access' federal, state and local lobbyists.

The next full meeting of the Board of Directors will be on April 18, 2022.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Courting success: New Antelope Valley General Manager strives for excellence

The year was 1999 and Elmer Contreras was doing what he loved best -- playing pickup basketball at the beach in the Santa Monica area. With the sun, surf and good competition, it was a quintessential Southern California day.

On that court, Elmer asked a question that would set him on a course that would define the next two decades of his life and lead him to being named the next General Manager for Access' Antelope Valley Region this year. He asked a high school friend if he knew of any job openings. The friend did – at United Independent Taxi - which at the time was an Access contractor.



Elmer finished the game and later applied for a role with the company. He started out as a reservationist, taking calls for Access riders and helping them book their trips. Sometimes Elmer would find himself working very early in the morning and took the opportunity to ask then-dispatcher Ruben Prieto (who would go on to become a key information technology staffer at Access overseeing the Agency's cybersecurity efforts) questions about dispatching. Ruben was nice enough to take the time to answer his questions and Elmer became interested in this vital task. The next stop on Elmer's journey took him to the San Fernando Valley and MV Transportation, where he continued to work in Access paratransit, serving under the leadership of then General Manager Nader Raydan.

In 2003, Elmer made a bold move. He left MV Transportation, trading the palm trees of the San Fernando Valley, for the deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq. As a

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member of the 82nd Airborne Infantry, he jumped out of airplanes while carrying out missions for the United States Army. Elmer has always believed in pushing himself, so perhaps that is how he found himself running through the desert of Afghanistan at 3:00 a.m. This was a period of tremendous personal growth and the sense of brotherhood was without equal.

Elmer served his country until 2008 when the pull of home saw him back in the San Fernando Valley. He stopped by his old workplace, Division 45 of MV Transportation and Access' Northern Region, not far from the Van Nuys Airport. On the day of his visit, he encountered then Operations Manager Walter Andrade who asked him if he was interesting in dispatching once again. It had been five years since Elmer played the real-time chess game that is dispatch and, when he agreed and sat back down at the computer, he instantly picked it right back up as if he had never left. Elmer's commitment to excellence saw him become the Operations Manager after Walter's departure. He continued to work for MV Transportation in both Van Nuys and Santa Clarita before leaving to work as the General Manager of Omnitrans' operation under First Transit, providing fixed route, paratransit and micro transit services. In 2021, he was named General Manager for the Access Antelope Valley Region, working again with First Transit as they prepare for the May 1, 2022 transition from Keolis.

Elmer is looking forward to May 1st. He is already on site at the Antelope Valley yard, getting to know his future employees and assessing the operation. He is ready to hit the ground running and says he is aiming to be the best. He has interviewed all of his managers and tells them that they need to be ready to put in some serious hours and strive for excellence.

"The customer has to come first. The drivers come right behind them," he explained, noting that without both riders and drivers, there is nothing for him to manage. He will be visible and plans to continue his tradition of going for low-key rides in revenue vehicles, so he can see first-hand how service is being executed.

Because of his military service, Elmer has a deep appreciation for life in the United States. Not everyone has the freedoms that we do, and he keeps that in mind. He believes in obtaining input from those on his team but is not afraid to make the important calls. The Antelope Valley has a long history tied to the military and the values that come with it, being home to Edwards Air Force Base and Air Force Plant 42. Elmer has enjoyed seeing the military aircraft flying around the valley and is going to live there. The community has found a true leader who will work hard to provide the quality and safe transportation that Access and its contractors are known for.

Alex Chrisman
Project Administrator

El Monte Vision Zero Technical Advisory Committee

The El Monte Vision Zero Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held its last meeting to discuss the final plan to develop a roadmap to make the city of El Monte safer for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.

The plan is the result of a decision by the city of El Monte to work with a city planning company, KTUA, to investigate traffic congestion, accidents and safety conditions throughout their city. TAC members, myself included, read the draft plan and gave our input, which has resulted in the creation of the final plan.

Based on input from the community, the goals for the project are: 1) Improve infrastructure to increase roadway safety for all users, 2) Lower vehicle speeds, 3) Prioritize road safety investments, 4) Make walking,

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bicycling and transit convenient and appealing to all, 5) Enhance safety education programs for all ages and abilities, 6) Employ quick-build bicycle and safety projects, 7) Design and promote human-centered streets and 8) Provide safe and comfortable routes to schools.

El Monte VISION ZERO Action Plan



By providing a baseline for transportation safety conditions in El Monte, it is hoped that the path forward will lead to zero traffic-related deaths and serious injuries in the city by 2027. Some of the recommendations in order to achieve this goal includes:

1) Hardened Centerlines, 2) Corner Radius Reduction, 3) Bulb Outs, 4) Raised Crosswalk/Speed Table, 5) Crossing Islands, 6) Roundabouts, 7) Pedestrian Hybrid Signal, and 8) Reflective Border on Signal Heads.

With so many groups working together, El Monte is on its way to becoming a much safer city for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

Dina Garcia
Assistant Administrative Analyst

Commendations

"I am filing a smile on behalf of my mother. Yvette from San Gabriel Transit was patient with helping resolve a scheduling conflict. I appreciate how nice and friendly she was with her."

Paul Acevedo
Rider since Oct 2018

"My driver Hrand from cab 5500 deserves commendation for his consistently pleasant demeanor. His car is always very clean and I enjoy my rides with him."

Gloria Hymes
Rider since June 2020