



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Last week, Access underwent a Triennial Review by the Federal Transit Administration, our first since 2018. The review, conducted virtually by a consulting firm retained by the FTA, examined Access' compliance with numerous federal laws and regulations in 23 different categories, including the Agency's provision of ADA paratransit services.

I am pleased to report that the review went very well and, at this time, the reviewers have identified three technical findings related to the inclusion of certain language in Agency documents and one finding related to having a specific Title VI document on the website. Staff believes these findings can be easily addressed. Most importantly, there were no findings related to the Agency's provision of ADA paratransit services.

I would like to thank Access staff Matthew Avancena, Alvina Narayan and Onnika Payne for leading our efforts on the Review and all the other Access staff who participated. I will make the Final Report available when we receive it.

Please feel free to contact me directly about these or any other Access issues at colaiace@accessla.org.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

access

APTA Legislative Conference

Martin Gombert, Access Board Chair, and I recently traveled to Washington, DC to attend APTA's 2022 Legislative Conference. The last in-person conference was held three years ago, due to the pandemic.



The Legislative Conference plays an essential role in educating APTA members on important federal legislation and policy matters, while providing information useful in helping to shape future transportation policies and initiatives. At the same time, the Conference helps attendees develop legislative strategies and supports advocacy efforts with the U.S. Congress and Administration officials.

This year's conference focused on the future of the transit industry, following President Biden's signing of the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) last fall. The Act included \$108 billion in transit funding over the next five years. The FTA will implement the new law through Notice of Funding Opportunities, better known as NOFOs.

The IIJA will help rebuild and repair the nation's crumbling physical infrastructure. It will also serve to improve and build out local transit systems in order to serve disadvantaged, rural, and small communities. Finally, the Act should help in the transition of public transit fleets to low or zero emission vehicles.

While the conference was held in-person, the US Capitol remains closed to visitors. As a result, our local advocate and I were only able to meet virtually with a staff member from Congresswoman Karen Bass's office. Access staff looks forward to returning to DC for additional meetings when the US Capitol re-opens to visitors and members of Congress once again accept in-person meetings.

Randy Johnson
Director, Government Affairs and Outreach

The 37th Annual CSUN Assistive Technology Conference



CSUN
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
C O N F E R E N C E

California State University, Northridge Center on Disabilities (CSUN) held its 37th Annual Assistive Technology (AT) and Persons with Disabilities Conference. Returning to Anaheim, California, the conference covered every aspect of AT through educational workshops and 250 informative

sessions-- plus the conference's two Exhibit Halls. Thousands of researchers, AT practitioners, educators, government representatives, and end users met at the event. Why is this important to ADA Paratransit? AT is what end-user customers will employ to interact with mainstream technologies implemented by public transportation providers.

Several of the conference's featured presentations included: "Disability through a Whole New Lens: Reframing Disability in Media"; "Navigation for Every Ability Everywhere"; "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for PDF in Plain English"; and "JAWS Screen Reader Compatibility Testing in Real Life." The CSUN AT Conference also held numerous demonstrations of the indoor navigation system known as "GoodMaps" operating on both iOS and Android handheld devices.

The exhibit halls displayed and demonstrated products and services ranging from wearable computer-enhanced color camera lenses to a tactile braille tablet capable of showing a digital image (a map) in three-dimensional relief. However, the most interesting attraction at the conference was a unique opportunity for attendees with disabilities to participate in an accessible Escape Room experience. Promising "Puzzling Inclusive Fun," the accessible Escape Room was designed to allow small teams of people, with and without disabilities, to solve puzzles, reach objectives, and learn about accessibility.

The theme of the hotel suite hosting the Accessible Escape Room I entered was an accessible casino. Each station: Roulette Wheel, Poker Table, Slot Machine, and Drink Cart, was labeled in braille or had a typed decipher sheet indicating what each braille symbol meant. Clues were also provided in large type and the Alexa device and a screen reader tablet played a crucial role as well. It took all of us team members to figure out the puzzles, which then gave us the tokens needed to win the ultimate challenge, and the grand prize. It was indeed amazing and fun!

The conference was a much welcomed chance to learn about new and upcoming innovations in the field of AT. The knowledge acquired from AT Tech conferences are directly applied to providing solutions to Access customers. For example, using Apple's voiceover screen reading technology for the iPhone to assist customers using the "Where's My Ride" app.

For more information about the conference and to be placed on its mailing list, please go to: <https://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/sessions/2022/index.php/>. To learn more about the Accessible Escape Room, please visit: <https://accessibleescaperoom.org/>.

Rycharde Martindale-Essington
ADA Coordinator for Customer Relations

Commendations

"I am filing a smile for my driver, Aldafo Merino. I was taken aback by how compassionate he was with my family. Aldafo was kind and provided excellent service that you don't encounter every day."

Manuel Vigil

Rider since Oct 2019

"My reservationist Teri was kind, courteous, and helpful. She deserves commendation for how proficient and quick she is at her job."

Muhammed-Amid Shakih

Rider since Dec 2010