



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

The Board committees met on March 27 and addressed the following:

- > The Performance Monitoring committee took action and approved contract extensions for fleet inspection services and insurance third party administrator services.
- > The Planning and Development committee took action and approved renewals of commercial business package insurance policies, the self-insured liability program and employee health and benefit contracts. The committee also heard a presentation on the upcoming RFP for eligibility services.
- > The External/Stakeholder Relations committee heard an update on existing and proposed grants and received legislative updates from Access' federal, state, and local lobbyists.

The next full meeting of the Board of Directors will be on April 17, 2023.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Access staff reflect as pandemic winds down and changes take hold



Friday, March 13, 2020 started with an air of uncertainty for the staff at Access Headquarters in El Monte. The novel coronavirus that had started off in the distant land of China was now too close for comfort. The NBA had just canceled its season two days prior when

Rudy Gobert of the Jazz tested positive and now Disneyland was closed. Like Disneyland, which expected to be closed for a month, staff members at Access didn't expect the pandemic to last long term.

Access Senior Road Safety Inspector Colin Obeso thought the pandemic would last "a few months" before returning to normal. Randy Johnson, Director of Government Affairs and Outreach, expected things would return to normal in "six to nine months." Nobody predicted it would last more than three years.

The pandemic brought many changes. For the majority of staff, that Friday was the last day in the office for all but a handful of staff for years. Most staff pivoted to working remotely, which continues to this day under a hybrid schedule, with some days in the office and some at home. Access would get into the meal delivery business, keeping drivers employed and feeding many as the Agency delivered over 438,000 meals. Access also provided drive-thru and drop-off vaccination service and switched to a no-share ride model. Masks became required on-board Access vehicles and enhanced cleaning, which continues to this day, worked to keep drivers and riders safe.

Speaking of Access' many efforts to help the community during those trying months, Johnson shared, "Everything that Access did and contributed to was equally important, because it was what we could do, instead of nothing. We are in the service and advocacy business, so we did what we should've done."

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Staffers put in extra effort during the pandemic as the commitment to emergency preparedness paid off. The remote Emergency Operations Center activated at a level one status (fully staffed) for over a year, remaining active until May of 2021, when monitoring and management of Covid-19 reverted to staff under “normal” operations. While the EOC was activated, many employees put in long hours managing the Agency’s response.

Faustino Salvador, Project Administrator and Meal Delivery Branch Director, described the time, recalling “working long hours, 8am to 11pm [while working to ensure] the meal delivery list was ready for the following day, ensuring EOC documents were turned in, and [conducting quality assurance of] meal delivery data for accurate reporting. Most challenging project ever! This does not include your normal job duties.”

As the emergency formally ended on March 31st in Los Angeles County, Access has returned to as normal as things will likely be for the foreseeable future. Masks are no longer required onboard Access vehicles and share rides have long since returned due to an increase in ridership from pandemic lows.

Chief Operations Officer Mike Greenwood, who served as EOC Director for much of the activation, reflected on the team’s accomplishments:

“The emergency brought together staff from across the agency to work collectively with our contractors in new and different ways. Innovative modifications were made to enhance service and safety measures protected both riders and drivers. The bravery of our frontline workers cannot be underestimated as, under extreme circumstances, they continued to highlight why Access is the best paratransit operation in the country.”

Project Administrator Jessica Volanos, who was also involved in the meal delivery efforts, summed up the feelings of many at Access:

“I’m proud to work for an agency that truly cares about our riders and our community. I am proud of my colleagues and how they rallied to support each other even when it was the most difficult.”

Alex Chrisman

Emergency Management Coordinator

Tabletop Exercise for Information Technology Disaster Recovery

Tabletop testing is the industry standard for assessing business continuity (BC) and disaster recovery (DR) following a catastrophic incident, such as a significant system failure or a natural disaster. Access Services recently participated in a virtual IT disaster recovery tabletop exercise led by ConvergeOne and attended by the Access leadership team and its IT members.

The simulation started with a massive earthquake that damaged many county roads, freeways, and communication infrastructure. Because Access and its contractors rely heavily on telecom carriers like AT&T as their primary mode of communication, any major system failure with the common carriers is disastrous to business operations. Access team members followed agency restoration procedures, such as the Information System Contingency and Continuity of Operations Plans, to respond to mitigation and recovery efforts. Furthermore, while the pandemic has been devastating for everyone, it has allowed organizations such as Access to telecommute and continue operations during emergencies.



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The ability to recover quickly from an unexpected disruption is directly related to the quality of pre-event preparations. As a result, the Access DR team will review the tabletop after-action reports to assess effectiveness, identify gaps, and recommend improvements.

Ruben Prieto
Cybersecurity Specialist

Access staff attends the WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner



Each year the Los Angeles chapter of the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS-LA) awards academic scholarships to a select group of high school, community college, undergraduate, and graduate students enrolled in transportation-related programs. This year, Access Services was one of the sponsors of a community college scholarship.

As a sponsor, Access was invited to participate in the WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner. Alvina Narayan, Manager of Training and Development, presented a college scholarship to Jennifer Nunes, a Citrus Community College student, in recognition of her hard work. In Jennifer's

acceptance speech, she expressed her thanks to Access Services and WTS-LA for the opportunity. She also talked about her future plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Access congratulates Jennifer on receiving the WTS-LA Community College Scholarship.

Yilin Zhang
GIS Developer

Commendations

"I am filing a Smile for my driver. Anna helped me get on and off the vehicle safely and even helped carry my belongings to the gate. She's great."

Rosa Burgee
Rider since August 2016

"Chanel in MTM is sweet and professional. I would like to file a Smile for all her help."

Jesus McClane
Rider since Jan 2021