



# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

The Board of Directors met on October 28, 2024.

The Board approved scope changes and additional funding for the Antelope Valley paratransit facility architecture and engineering design services contract. The Board approved the reappointment of five TPAC members for a two-year term along with approving the renewals of various agency insurance policies. The Board also received an update on the Free Fare and Travel Training programs.

The Access Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at 11:00am at the California Endowment.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for December 9, 2024.

**Andre Colaiace**  
**Executive Director**

## The long way down: Panel aims to address pressing problem in Long Beach

People sometimes forget how important the power is until it is gone. One moment the lights are on, the TV is tuned to The Simpsons and the next second, with a blink, the complex dance of electrons ends and the electricity stops. Senior high-rise buildings in Long Beach are particularly vulnerable to power loss, which can shut down air conditioning, leading to dangerously hot temperatures. It can also render elevators useless, making exiting the building quite the challenge for a person with a disability. In some cases, it may be nearly impossible.



The City of Long Beach held its Emergency Evacuation Action Day event at the beautiful Billie Jean King Main Library not far from the sea in the city's downtown government district. A panel

discussion was hosted by Deaka McClain. I was honored to serve as a panelist along with Karen Reside of the Long Beach Grey Panthers, Anne Streit of the United Spinal Association and Michael Martinez of Disability Disaster Access and Resources. Solutions to the power outage situation were discussed, including the use of an evacuation chair that can traverse stairs, similar to the devices we have at Access headquarters. These chairs have special treads on the bottom so that people can be lowered down stairs with minimal effort. This helps avoid a situation that was shared with the group where six firefighters had to carry a person down multiple flights of stairs.

During my time on the panel, I shared the role that Access plays in an emergency response along with critical information – if you need emergency evacuation, don't call Access, call 911. Access does not self-deploy. We may help if we are asked, and we are able.

*continued*

Steve Wrenn from Access was also present and hosted an information table. 40 members of the public were in the room along with approximately 100 viewers via Zoom. Numerous political officials were in attendance such as Long Beach Councilwomen Mary Zendejas, Kristina Duggan and Joni Ricks-Oddie, as well as Carlos Benavides, President of the Los Angeles County Commission on Disabilities.

It was made clear during the meeting that the current fire code does not account for the senior high rise power outage situation adequately. Hopefully, legislation can address this important issue.

**Alex Chrisman**  
*Emergency Management Coordinator*

## Be the spark: Neogov Ignite Conference

I recently attended the 2024 Neogov Ignite conference. Neogov is a human resources management system used by the public sector to recruit, hire, and retain employees. This year's theme – Be the Spark – was a call to action, inviting attendees to ignite innovation, inspire change, and fuel growth within their community and beyond. Each interaction, presentation, and workshop were an opportunity to inspire a new idea, a new partnership, or a new way of thinking.

The keynote speaker, Aaron Ralston, delivered a powerful talk about resilience and overcoming obstacles. He shared his extraordinary story of survival after an 800-pound boulder trapped him in a remote Utah canyon. His story is a testament of the human spirit's ability to thrive in the face of adversity. Ralston encouraged his audience to embrace challenges as opportunities to transform our environment and perspective.

In addition to the keynote, I attended sessions on employee engagement and leadership. These workshops highlighted the importance of keeping employees connected and motivated in the workplace. A key takeaway was to foster an environment where employees feel valued and supported. I am looking forward to using the strategies shared in these sessions to engage and retain our workforce.

**Melissa Lucero**  
*HR Specialist*




---

## Commendations

"My driver Adolfo Marin went above and beyond for me. When I first got in the vehicle, Adolfo said "...let's get you home safe", which I really appreciated."

**James Craig**  
*Rider since November 2016*

"I want to file a compliment for reservationist Brigette from the Eastern Region. Brigette was very helpful, and kind and it means a lot for people with disabilities."

**Maria Cobo**  
*Rider since May 2013*