



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Access held its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, November 6, 2024 at the California Endowment in downtown Los Angeles. Over 100 participants, including 21 member agencies and Access' Board of Directors, came together to review the previous year's operational and financial performance.

The membership also approved the nominating committees that will develop a list of candidates for the Municipal and Local Fixed Route Transit Operators' Board Member elections. The Spotlight and Spirit of Accessibility award winners were also honored.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on Monday, December 9, 2024.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Spotlight Award Winner - Maria Avila

California Transit's (CTI) General Manager Mike Fricke nominated Maria for the Spotlight Award due to her dedication, commitment to safety, and positive attitude in all aspects of her job, including her interactions with coworkers, dispatch, Access staff, and especially her riders.

Maria came to Access Services almost by accident. After the 2008 financial crisis, the company Maria worked for went out of business, leaving her unemployed and nearly causing her to lose her home. One day, while at a gas station, she spotted an Access driver and inquired about the job. The driver provided her with California Transit's contact information, and a few weeks later, Maria began training. Of the ten people in her original class, she is the only one still with the agency. Despite her initial doubts due to her background in office work, CTI management encouraged her to continue because her positive attitude was the key quality needed for the job. Over time, as she grew to understand the job and get to know the riders, she came to love it, and the rest is history.



Highlights of Maria's Service:

- > Joined CTI in 2010 and has been with the company for fourteen years.
- > Completed over 24,600 trips with an impressive on-time performance (OTP) of 96.7%.
- > Actively participated in events like the Abilities Expo, LA Marathon, and community meetings every year.

Examples of Commendations Received:

- > "Rider stated that driver Maria Avila was welcoming, intelligent, and an excellent driver."

- > "Rider was greeted warmly. The driver is happy in her job. Rider has been using Access for 20 years, and this driver was the best she's ever had."
- > "Driver Maria is very nice and kind. You can feel her good vibes, always willing to help."

Remaining with Access for this long requires dedication and a deep care for passengers, traits Maria exemplifies every day. Her willingness to go above and beyond for her riders is clear evidence of her commitment to her job and the community.

You can view Maria's video by clicking on this link.

Spotlight - <https://youtu.be/YNkJBbqBuFA>

Matt Avancena

Director, Planning and Coordination

Spirit of Accessibility Award Winner - Sydney Magtoto



Sydney was deeply moved by the challenges her grandmother had to overcome while using public transportation. This motivated her to contact The Campbell Center (TCC) and dedicate her Girl Scout Gold Award project to helping those who faced the most significant obstacles with public transportation.

Through several weeks of dedication, she completed a seven-part curriculum that teaches adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities a clear definition of different transportation modes, travel information, service hours, ticket prices, and travel tips. The project aimed to create a toolkit that breaks down transportation barriers. This includes providing hands-on experience through an interactive transportation field trip that helps foster engagement and real-life problem-solving skills.

Sydney worked closely with Adela Garcia, TCC's Program Director and Sydney's mentor. Adela stated that she was "...truly impressed by her drive to develop a travel training curriculum for the center. Serving as a co-facilitator for some of our program designs, I deeply recognize the value of creating curriculums and materials that utilize plain language. Using plain language was a skillset that Sydney practiced throughout the entirety of the seven-part curriculum." Sydney was able to take the standard definition of public transportation and apply it to everyday scenarios that riders may encounter.

Adela truly admired Sydney's willingness to receive feedback. She consistently arrived prepared and demonstrated openness to any suggestions for improvement, a quality that is so important for the success of any project. Additionally, during the field trip portion of the curriculum, she empowered TCC clients John Paul, Eddie, and Dominique to practice paying their fare, hailing the bus, and learning important safety skills.

You can view Sydney's video by clicking on this link.

Spirit of Accessibility - <https://youtu.be/ZcHjzbz57GU>

Matt Avancena

Director, Planning and Coordination

Commendations

"James was a great driver. I have known him for a while, and I think James is one of the best drivers."

Douglas Doggett
Rider since February 2015

"Tooradj from region four did a great job. I had to call back to adjust my return trip for tomorrow. Tooradj has a nice personality, is polite, enthusiastic, and he repeated information back slowly to make sure trip details were correct."

Jessica Diaz
Rider since April 2015