



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

I am pleased to report that with the recent enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 (H.R. 4366), Access will receive a \$3 million grant for the construction of its Antelope Valley Paratransit Operations and Maintenance Facility.

I would like to thank both Congressman Mike Garcia (R-Santa Clarita) and Senator Alex Padilla for sponsoring this request as well as Jen Covino and her team at Covino Smith & Simon for assisting us with the appropriations process. Also a big thank you to the Access team who worked on this project: F Scott Jewell, Randy Johnson and Rick Streiff.

The \$467.5 billion "minibus" package consisted of six spending bills providing funding for federal agencies and programs through the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. The Access facility funding was included in the \$103 billion Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies legislation.

I also believe this request was successful because of Access Services Board decisions to a) purchase property for the Antelope Valley facility and b) to establish the Facilities Development and Construction Fund, which allowed staff to state that this is a "shovel ready" project to Congressional offices.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

access

Transit lessons learned during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic initially left many people with disabilities and older adults without reliable transportation to access essential goods, medical care, and social engagements. Issues of social isolation for some individuals were exacerbated when transportation services were reduced, and customers often deferred taking trips to avoid riding transportation services with other people. To mitigate these challenges, transit agencies across the country developed new and innovative programs to provide essential trips, or alternatives, to persons with disabilities. A collection of these best practices was recently shared with the transit industry by the Transportation Research Board (TRB).

TRB dates back to 1920 and is a division of the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. It provides leadership in transportation improvements and innovation and advises the President of the United States, Congress, and federal agencies. One of their key programs is research, executed through the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), with the purpose of developing near-term, practical solutions to problems facing public transportation.



In 2023, I had the honor of serving as a research panel member for TCRP Research Report 243, which focused on

transportation for people with disabilities and older adults during COVID-19. I served on the panel with paratransit professionals from across the country, as well as disability advocates from agencies such as Easterseals and the U.S. Access Board. The panel provided guidance to a consultant team from Texas A&M University that oversaw the research and development of project deliverables including the report and a supplemental pocket guide. After months of work, the final documents were released to the public in February 2024.

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It was an honor to serve on the panel, and I was able to hear about innovative solutions used in public transit to respond to the pandemic across the United States. I was also able to ensure that some of the creative ideas implemented by Access were accounted for in the report. Knowing the contents of the report, and what role Access played during the pandemic, it is no surprise that we play a nation-leading role in operating great ADA paratransit service. While we all hope that another pandemic, or similar event, won't happen again in our lifetime, the deliverables from this project will serve as a collection of best practices for those that operate paratransit long into the future. You can access the TCRP report and pocket guide here: www.trb.org/publications/blurbs/183119.aspx

Mike Greenwood
Chief Operations Officer

Upcoming CTSA Training: Project AIR "An Invitation to Understanding"

Access' CTSA Extension program is hosting a groundbreaking workshop, "An Invitation to Understanding" on March 21st, 2024. Join us for a transformative experience as Kathleen Barajas, President and Founder of Project Air, conducts this enlightening session.

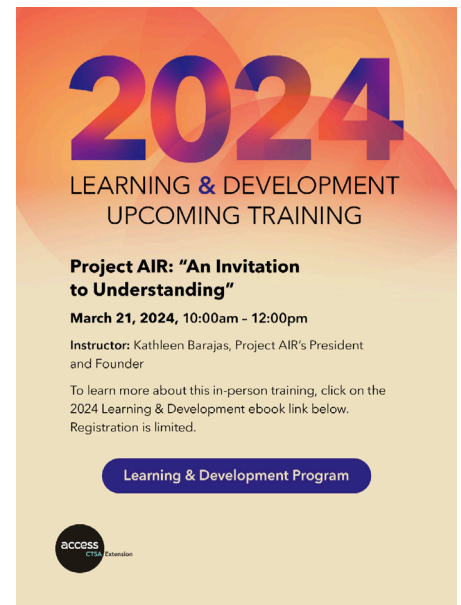
"An Invitation to Understanding" is not just a class, it's an opportunity to broaden perspectives and enhance interactions with individuals facing more severe disabilities and speech impairments. The workshop aims to equip participants with essential knowledge about various disabilities, emphasizing effective modes of communication tailored to specific needs.

Access Services creates an inclusive environment and works tirelessly to support individuals with all types of disabilities daily. This workshop is especially crucial for drivers who directly engage with riders, ensuring a seamless and respectful experience for everyone.

Secure your spot now for this incredible class!

Visit [Professional Development - Access Services: \(accessla.org\)](https://accessla.org) to register and join us on March 21st, 2024 for "An Invitation to Understanding".

Mayra Noriega
CTSA Analyst



Commendations

"The rider would like to file a commendation for Marcy for going above and beyond the role of a customer service rep. She went out of her way to assist Mr. Walker with his issue in regard to having a location evaluation done at his home residence."

Mark Walker, Rider since January 2011

"I appreciate your efforts, Mr. Johnson to accommodate me and I appreciate being able to take Access to work."

Sonara Barber, Rider since March 2015