



# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

During the recent Los Angeles County wildfires, Access activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to monitor the wildfires' impact on its service area, communicate with riders, and handle any requests for assistance from member/partner agencies.

Overall, there was limited impact on paratransit services and Access provided shuttle service to Red Cross shelters to assist evacuees.

Throughout the emergency, Access EOC staff were in contact with partners including the LA City Emergency Management Department, LA County Office of Emergency Management, Metro, Foothill Transit, Pasadena Transit, and Ventura County Transportation Commission.

I want to thank the Access employees who staffed the EOC, specifically Mike Greenwood and Alex Chrisman, for all of their efforts to keep our riders safe and informed about this emergency.

Also, our thoughts are with the members of the Access family and the larger Los Angeles County community who had to evacuate and, tragically, lost their homes. Access stands ready to assist in any rebuilding efforts.

**Andre Colaiace**  
Executive Director

**access**

## Wildfire smoke and air quality: Options to protect your health

While the recent tragic wildfires in Los Angeles County affected specific areas, it's important to realize that there is a threat that impacts everyone: smoke.

Wildfire smoke contains a witch's brew of contaminants, including particulate matter (soot, chemicals and metals such as lead among other nasty materials), which can enter the body and lodge deeply into the lungs, causing respiratory and heart problems. Children, elderly people, those with certain disabilities and chronic health conditions, such as COPD, are most at risk. Needless to say, it is best to minimize exposure to wildfire smoke.

So, what can be done about this health threat?

Check the air quality index by searching "Los Angeles Air Quality" on Google or other sources. The index is also sometimes referenced on local television news during the weather report. The index ranges from Zero (Good) to 301 and above (Hazardous). Any reading above 151 is unhealthy and people should limit outdoor activity, especially if they have preexisting health conditions. There are high quality indoor air filters for air conditioning systems (if you have one) that can filter out some of the smoke. Look for HEPA filters or those with a high MERV rating. A MERV rating of 13 to 16 is good for filtering smoke. It is also possible to obtain a portable filter for those who do not have air conditioning.

If driving, set your vehicle air conditioning to recirculate and keep the windows up.

Finally, you may consider a face covering. N95 masks are the best at this. Keep in mind however, that unless the mask fits properly, it may not be as effective. For job-related use, fit testing is often required – however, for personal use, it is not required. Follow the instructions that come with the mask.

**Alex Chrisman**  
Emergency Management Coordinator



## Access staff meets with Waymo

Access staff and I recently took a tour of the Waymo operations and maintenance facility in west Los Angeles. It was really fascinating to see their yard and talk to them about the technology and topics like maintenance and the various challenges they have operating in Los Angeles.

We then took a Waymo over to Google's west side offices: a beautiful 450,000+ SF, four-level "building-within-a-building" inside a seven-story, 750-foot-long historic wooden structure which was built by Howard Hughes in 1943 for the construction of the Hercules IV airplane (aka the "Spruce Goose").

We had a meeting with a Waymo executive to discuss their future plans, accessibility strategies and possible partnerships. We will continue to monitor this evolving technology and its potential for providing accessible services in the future.



**Andre Colaiace**  
*Executive Director*

---

## Commendations

"I am writing you for a second time, to let you know what an essential part of my life Access Transportation has become. I have dialysis 3 times weekly, and I depend on your services for my transportation to and from my treatments. The reason I am writing to you again, is to express my sincerest gratitude for your consistency, kindness, and assistance with my rides. You are always there for me, and I am most grateful that I can depend on you. If you would like for me to do a testimonial about your services, it would be my pleasure, so do not hesitate to reach out."

**Robert Blisten**  
*Rider since October 2021*

"If I had any complaint about 2 of my rides on Monday it would be they were too short. My first was a driver I hadn't met before. He was such a joy. I was enjoying our conversation, and it ended too soon. Very kind man. He and his passenger had to wait a few minutes for me, but he still greeted me with a smile. My second was with my Eric. Always glad to see him. He is such a lovely person. In addition to his kind demeanor, he is always so patient and helpful. Love visiting with him. These trips are always too short. Thank You Gentlemen.

**Elizabeth Whisnant**  
*Rider since February 2012*