



Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Access will be hosting a virtual Community Meeting on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The meeting will take place using Zoom and can be viewed in English or Spanish. Closed captioning will also be available.

During the meeting, Access staff will make presentations on several topics important to riders. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions. When using Zoom, click on the raise hand feature to be called upon. If calling in, Dial *9 to raise your hand.

There will also be a more open-ended question and answer session where riders can ask questions about the service in general and also get one-on-one assistance from Access staff about their service needs.

The Zoom link will be available before the meeting on our website at www.accessla.org.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

NDASA Conference 2026

The 2026 National Drug and Alcohol Screening Association (NDASA) Annual Conference brought together leaders from across the testing, transportation, healthcare, and compliance sectors to examine the evolving landscape of drug and alcohol screening in a rapidly changing regulatory and technological environment. The event served as a central forum for professionals committed to promoting workplace safety, ensuring regulatory compliance, and advancing best practices across industries.



This year's conference emphasized the growing complexity of substance use trends, including the continued expansion of legalized cannabis, the emergence of synthetic drugs, and the implications of these developments for employers subject to federal and state regulations. Attendees engaged in in-depth sessions exploring how organizations can navigate conflicting legal frameworks while maintaining workplace safety standards, particularly in safety-sensitive industries such as transportation.

A key theme throughout the conference was the integration of technology into testing and compliance programs. Presenters highlighted innovations in oral fluid testing, data management systems, and mobile collection solutions, all designed to increase accuracy, efficiency, and accessibility. As federal agencies continue to modernize testing guidelines, including the adoption of alternative specimen types, organizations are adapting their programs to align with new regulatory expectations.

Beyond technical advancements, the conference placed strong emphasis on workforce development and training. Sessions addressed the need for ongoing education among Medical Review Officers (MROs), Designated Employer Representatives (DERs), and collection professionals to ensure consistency, reliability, and compliance. The importance of standardization and quality assurance was underscored as essential to maintaining the integrity of testing programs nationwide.

Another critical focus area was the role of drug and alcohol testing within broader workplace culture and employee wellness strategies. Speakers encouraged organizations to move beyond a purely enforcement-based approach and adopt more comprehensive

models that incorporate prevention, education, and support for employees struggling with substance use. This shift reflects a broader understanding of substance use as both a safety issue and a public health concern.

The conference also provided a platform for collaboration between public agencies, private employers, and service providers. Discussions highlighted the importance of partnerships in addressing emerging challenges, including workforce shortages, evolving legal requirements, and the need for equitable and consistent enforcement of testing policies.

Overall, the NDASA Conference 2026 reinforced the critical role of drug and alcohol screening programs in protecting public safety while adapting to a dynamic regulatory and social environment. As the industry continues to evolve, the conference underscored the importance of innovation, education, and collaboration in shaping the future of workplace testing and compliance.

Alvina Prasad
Senior Manager, Training & Compliance

Access staff presented "Access' AI Journey" at the 2026 CTAA EXPO



CTAA's EXPO is the premier annual training and networking event for community and public transportation professionals. It offers valuable learning opportunities, networking events, and sessions focused on emerging technology, workforce development, communications, funding, and regulatory updates.

This year's workshops covered data literacy, technology and systems evolution, artificial intelligence, microtransit and paratransit trends, and federal legislative and policy updates. The EXPO also featured a trade show highlighting the latest products and services in community transportation. The 2026 CTAA EXPO was held in Omaha, Nebraska.

I was invited to present on Access' AI journey during an artificial intelligence-focused session. I outlined Access' phased approach, which included establishing AI governance, building foundational skills through Microsoft Copilot training, developing advanced technical capabilities and a custom prompt library, and introducing a customer service AI agent. Attendees asked thoughtful questions about AI policy development, staff adoption, workforce readiness, organizational impacts, and lessons learned. More than 60 people attended the session.

Bill Tsuei
Director of IT

Commendations

Eligibility Contractor

"I called to reschedule an evaluation, and Rosie assisted me. She is the best because she is kind and patient. I would like to compliment her."

Albert G.
Rider since June 2021

Northern Region

"The driver was very accommodating, assisting me with boarding the vehicle, getting off the vehicle, and handling my folding cart. He is very nice and drives very safely. 5 stars for Mario!"

Amor M.
Rider since July 2014