

Behind the Scenes



Executive Director's Report

COVID-19 has changed nearly everything and the regional budget process is no exception. Generally, our budget would be approved in June before the start of the new fiscal year on July 1.

This year, Access has been operating under a continuing resolution for the first quarter of FY 21 and will be taking its budget for approval this month for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Access will be asking for a \$163.9 million operating and capital budget, which is a 15 percent decline from FY 20. We are projecting significantly lower ridership but higher per trip costs due to the budgeting of enhanced services, such as no shared rides, for the remainder of the fiscal year. We are also asking for a \$15 million reserve in the event the pandemic subsidies and ridership demand increases beyond projections.

The budget will be reviewed by the Metro Finance, Budget and Audit Committee on September 16 and the Access Board of Directors on September 21.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Access invites you to our Virtual Community Meetings



The meetings will take place online using Zoom. The meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, September 12, 2020**. There will be two meetings. The first meeting will be in Spanish, and will begin at 11:00am; the second meeting will be in English and will begin at 1:00pm.

Please visit Access' website at accessla.org and scroll down to the News and Access Events section. You can then click on the Community Meeting event for further information. If you prefer calling in, please dial the toll free number at **877.853.5247** and enter **Webinar ID: 966 6400 3425**. You can **Dial *9** to raise your hand to ask questions during the meeting.

Commendations

"I am filing a smile for Joanna from Eastern Region Reservations. Joana was patient and open to assisting me in making three separate reservations. I appreciate how helpful and polite she was during my call. Joana deserves a smile and two thumbs up for her care and exceeding expectations."

Gloria Soto
Rider since November 2013

"I would like to file a smile for my driver, Keith Collins. Mr. Collins is one of the kindest, most courteous drivers I have ever encountered. His patient and attentive driving brought back memories of my old school bus driver! There should be 100 more drivers like Mr. Collins."

Laura Musgrove
Rider since July 2013

Access staff participates in Transit Talks webinar

I recently had the opportunity to share Access' response to the pandemic with transit agencies across the state of California as part of the Transit Talks webinar series sponsored by the California Transit Association. The panel, which included Dawn Sweet and Bonnie Graves of the Federal Transit Administration, and Moses Stites, of the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency, provided best practices for accessible transportation while responding to the pandemic.



After presentations from each participant, panelists were able to respond to questions submitted by participants via webinar host Jacklyn Montgomery, the Executive Director of CalACT. The webinar had more than 170 participants in the audience and had some good questions for the panelists. There was definitely interest in Access' pandemic response including meal deliveries, vehicle cleaning, and the implementation of mask requirements for riders. It provided another opportunity to show how Access' staff and contractors -- and especially our front line workers -- are doing a great job of providing service during these challenging times.

Mike Greenwood
Chief Operations Officer

Access CSRs provide a friendly voice during difficult times



It would be an understatement to say that these are challenging times. Since early March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, life as we know it has changed. Stores closed, offices shut down and society has had to adapt.

One thing that has not changed is that our riders still need the vital transportation services provided by Access. The first step for most riders is reaching out to our contractor Customer Service Representatives (CSR) to make ride reservations. In the face of the current situation, these CSRs continue to show up to work, day in and day out, to answer the call of our riders and

ensure they are able to book a trip. Access has always been a lifeline; but now more than ever, Access is able to make a difference in the lives of our community by allowing people to access non-emergency healthcare, groceries (including same day curbside pickup) and so many other vital services.

Access has high standards. We expect CSRs to provide accurate information in accordance with established procedures. Those procedures have only gotten more complex during this time, with required scripts sharing important COVID-19 information and new services such as same day service and curbside pickup. The CSRs have risen to the challenge. Over the last fiscal year, as part of Access' CSR Incentive Program, over 150 incentives have been provided to the CSRs from Access to reward excellent service. These include gift cards and theme park and movie tickets. In addition, while ridership and reservation calls have declined significantly since COVID-19, more than 10 gift cards were distributed to CSRs for great performance during the final quarter of Fiscal Year 20.

Access contractor CSRs will continue to provide excellent service for our riders. We look forward to continue recognizing this vital group of caring people who provide a warm voice on the other end of the phone line.

Alex Chrisman
Project Administrator