



# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

Paratransit demand in Los Angeles County is cyclical during the year with two peak periods in the late summer/fall and late winter/spring. As Access enters the fall peak, staff has been working with our contractors to ensure they have the necessary personnel to handle projected increases in demand.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to some challenges in the transportation market. Qualified vehicle operators and other personnel are in short supply and the taxi industry, which provided 50 percent of Access' trips pre-pandemic, has been slow to recover. Despite these headwinds, our contractors have been trying their best to recruit and retain qualified employees.

Service quality in FY 22 (91.5% on-time performance YTD) has been helped by the fact that paratransit demand remains at about 61 percent of normal. We expect demand to increase, however, and will be working collaboratively with our contractors to try and maintain the quality paratransit service our customers have come to expect.

**Andre Colaiace**  
*Executive Director*

## CTSA Extension collaborates with TSA for Cybersecurity Workshop

Access Services' CTSA Extension Program recently hosted a cybersecurity virtual workshop led by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The class was attended by Access Information Technology staff and several local transit agencies, such as Foothill Transit and LADOT. Others in attendance were the FBI and the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).



The FBI kicked off the workshop by providing threat briefings on recent breaches that have caused significant disruption, such as the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack in May 2021. TSA kept things moving by going over their outreach objectives and the "5N5 principles", which are: 1) Provide no-cost cybersecurity resources and programs 2) Discuss lessons learned and best practices associated with implementing cybersecurity measures 3) Provide five non-technical actions to implement in five days that will enhance transportation organizations' cybersecurity posture. The CISA agents provided presentations on free resources to help combat cyber-attacks. They also introduced a new website, [StopRansomware.gov](https://www.stopransomware.gov), launched in July 2021, which is a one-stop hub intended to help the private and public sector mitigate the threat of ransomware.

Cybersecurity awareness is more critical than ever, as reports indicate that cybercriminal activity is one of the biggest challenges people will face in the next two decades. These workshops are essential to preparing tomorrow's cybersecurity workforce and keeping current workers up-to-date on skills and evolving threats.

**Ruben Prieto**  
*Systems Administrator*

## Access staff completes the Naval Postgraduate School's Emergence Program



Between December 2020 and July 2021, I had the opportunity to participate in the Emergence Program at the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security. The six-month program provides an educational forum and innovation lab for early-career public safety professionals to develop the skills needed to lead change and implement new ideas in the field.

The program included a diverse cohort of participants representing the emergency management, law enforcement, fire service, and homeland security professions – all of whom brought unique perspectives and experience to the course. During the virtual components of the program, I participated in lectures, readings, and assignments on various emerging natural hazards, security threats, and other public safety leadership topics. During two week-long in-residence intensives, I participated in discussions and exercises with national emergency management and homeland security leaders that broadened my understanding of those disciplines and the ways they must evolve to meet future challenges.

A major component of the program was the research and development of a public safety change initiative. Given Access' role in providing evacuation assistance, I chose to focus my research on accessibility issues during emergency evacuations culminating in the development of a new Paratransit Emergency Strike Team concept. Modeled after strike teams commonly used in other public safety disciplines, this concept would help organize large amounts of paratransit resources during an emergency. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend this program and look forward to implementing the many lessons learned from my research to continue improving accessibility across all facets of emergency management. Attending training opportunities like the Emergence Program is an important way I stay current on the latest best practices in emergency management to ensure Access' emergency plans are continuously improved in an ever-changing environment.

**Matthew Topoozian**  
**Emergency Management Coordinator**

## Access expands Parents with Disabilities Program Countywide

With a new school year starting and a return to in-person learning, parents and students are making new routines to ensure they are getting to school on time.

Coinciding with the school year's start, Access has launched the new Parents with Disabilities Program countywide. The program is specifically designed to help Access customers who are parents or guardians get their children to school on time in the mornings and pick their children up from school in the afternoon.

Among the benefits of the program are the following:

- (1) A reduced \$2.00 one-way fare;
- (2) Trips are designed to arrive at or before the start of school in the morning and at or before the end of school in the afternoon; and

*continued*

(3) If a parent chooses to use a Standing Order for their trips, they do not need to call the day before to schedule their trips.

Access has received many applications from customers across Los Angeles County. As schools in different districts have returned to in-person learning, Access has been providing trips for these parents and their children.

Esther Nodal is one such rider. She and her daughter have been using Access to get to school in the Northern region for years now (as part of an initial pilot program) and the new Parents with Disabilities program is welcomed. The service "allows kids to get to school. [It's] very important for our family," she shared.

At this time, Access is still accepting applications from Access customers. For more information on the Parents with Disabilities program, please contact me at [Haack@accessla.org](mailto:Haack@accessla.org) or (213) 270-6000.

***Eric J. Haack***  
***Strategic Planner***



***Esther Nodal***

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## **Commendations**

"I would like to file a commendation for my reservationist from MV. He was very nice and professional. He did a great job helping me with my questions."

***Jessica Diaz***  
***Rider since April 2015***

"I would like to file a commendation for my driver from CTI who was very friendly and drove safely."

***Jennifer Carrillo***  
***Rider since December 2012***