

Behind the Scenes



Executive Director's Report

In this issue of Behind the Scenes, you can read about Access' Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the emergency, the EOC has been essential in managing the Agency's response to the pandemic.

Beginning February 22, 2021, Access riders have been able to book next-day trips to COVID-19 vaccination appointments at approved drive-thru vaccination sites. This was made possible because EOC staff worked with federal, county and state officials to provide dedicated lanes for Access vehicles to ensure our customers can get vaccinated quickly and efficiently without disrupting our service. At this time, Access is serving 8 drive through sites throughout the County.

For more information on this program, please see our website at <https://accessla.org/covid-19-updates.html>.

I would also like to thank the members of the Access EOC who have worked for the last year to keep the system running safely and effectively while implementing new programs that have helped our customers during this emergency.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

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Access Services' COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center

Almost one year into the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, the virus continues to disrupt daily life around the world. Public transit systems have also been impacted with major declines in ridership as people avoid public transportation or work from home.

On March 23, 2020, Access declared an emergency due to the pandemic, and on April 7, 2020, Access' Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated at its highest level: Level 1.

The EOC follows a federal standard called the Incident Command System used by various safety and emergency management agencies across the nation. Comprised of five (5) sections, which include Management, Operations, Planning and Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance and Administration, Access' EOC continues to increase in size as the team assists in monitoring the impacts of the pandemic.

Through the work of the EOC team, Access continues to monitor impacts on our service and share information with riders and stakeholders regarding COVID-19 testing sites, vaccination sites, stay-at-home orders, and other important news.

Access' EOC is made up of staff from departments across the agency, all contributing to help steer the agency through the challenges of this emergency and working to reduce barriers faced by our customers to connect with essential services.

Among the programs Access has introduced in this past year, Access riders can schedule same day service for non-emergency medical and dental appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies, veterinary appointments, drug stores, and the bank. To date, Access has completed over 48,000 same-day trips since the start of the pandemic.

In its effort to implement social distancing and safety guidelines, Access is presently providing No Shared-Ride Service, and enhanced vehicle cleaning. Today, Access' EOC team continues to coordinate the necessary support by working closely with county and city officials on how to assist seniors and persons with disabilities during this time.

Onnika Payne
Transportation Planner
EOC, Deputy Planning and Intelligence Section Chief

COVID-19 Vaccinations: Eligibility, Vaccination Centers, and Access

As we approach one year since COVID-19 began in early 2020, both the State of California and Los Angeles County have taken progressive measures to help reduce the threat that the virus poses to all of its residents. Within the last few months, vaccination options have been made available to residents of Los Angeles County.

Vaccination Information

There are currently two major vaccine providers allowed to distribute their versions of the COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S. The first vaccine to receive Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was produced by Pfizer-BioNTech; a two-part shot taken 21 days apart. The second vaccine to receive an FDA Emergency Use Authorization was produced by ModernaTX; also a two-part shot administered 28 days apart.

More Information on the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Pfizer-BioNTech.html>

More Information on the ModernaTX vaccine may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/Moderna.html>

A full list of commonly asked questions regarding vaccines and current efforts may be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

Vaccine Eligibility:

Current vaccine supplies are limited. For the moment, a tiered system is being used to treat those individuals who are considered at the highest risk for exposure or complications, including front-line medical personnel, along with people ages 65 and older. Individuals who want to inquire if they are eligible to receive a vaccination may visit <https://myturn.ca.gov/>

If not currently eligible, you can use myturn.ca.gov to sign up to receive a notification of when you may be eligible. The state of California intends to expand the population eligible for vaccines on March 15.

Access Services and Vaccination Centers:

In late January, as the County and City of Los Angeles established sites where eligible persons could receive vaccination shots, Access announced that Access customers could schedule next day trips for their COVID-19 vaccination appointments.

In late February, with the launch of Mega POD vaccination centers, Access developed agreements with City, County, state, and federal partners to have express lanes for Access customers. For instance, at Dodger Stadium and Cal State L.A. vaccination centers, special lanes and vaccination sites will be set aside for Access vehicles to reduce wait time for customers and drivers alike.

As southern California strives to eliminate the threat of COVID-19, Access is working closely with its customers, government partners, and its contractors to reduce barriers to life-saving vaccine doses.

Jimmy Flores

Customer Relations Associate

Title VI in Public Transit

Last month, the National Transit Institute (NTI) hosted a four-day training on Title VI in Public Transit. The course was led by instructor Aida Berry, Senior Manager in LA Metro's Civil Rights Office.

Title VI was enacted as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Understanding the historical context of Title VI equips us with the knowledge to prevent equity issues in transportation planning and operations. We engaged in exercises that demonstrated the significance of evaluating the impact of agency decisions on disadvantaged communities, as well as seniors, youth, and persons with disabilities.

As a participant in the class, I learned to appreciate the importance of transit equity considerations in planning, management, and operations. Equitable distribution of public transportation resources ultimately benefits both providers and users. The outcome is better service-delivery and planning in the communities in which we serve.

Melissa Lucero
CTSA Analyst



Commendations

"I am filing a commendation for my driver Veronica Benuelos. Veronica was respectful, patient, and never lost her smile. I appreciate her emphasis on safety and was pleased to find out that I arrived early! Overall, I want to thank Veronica for treating me like family during my ride instead of just another rider. "

David Fleming
Rider since Feb 2015

"I would like to file a smile for my driver. They were able to strap my mobility device into the vehicle safely and without a struggle. My driver even informed me that I had unintentionally given them double the fare by accident! Thank you Access for providing drivers that are patient, honest, and kind."

Alice Monday
Rider since Dec 2000