Metro Awards Access $1.13 Million for CNG-Fueled Vans in Eastern & Southern Regions

On Thursday, August 25th, the Metro Board of Directors voted to award funding for agencies that had submitted applications for the Metro Express-Lanes Round 2 Toll Revenue Reinvestment Grant Program. The funding for this grant program came from fees collected from the Carpool/Express-Lanes that operate along the I-10 freeway between Downtown Los Angeles and the Harbor Gateway Transit Center.

Access received the third highest overall score of all awardees behind Foothill Transit’s request for two Electric Double-decker buses and LADOT’s request for 2 CNG-fueled 35-foot buses.

Access’ request was for $1.13 million to purchase 20 CNG-fueled minivans to expand its fleet in the Eastern and Southern regions; the two regions bisected by either the I-10 or I-110 corridors. Access will contribute an additional $300,626 as a local match to ensure sufficient funds are available to purchase all 20 vehicles.

With this grant, Access continues its commitment to transitioning from traditional gasoline-fueled vehicles to cleaner-burning CNG-fueled paratransit vehicles which emit fewer greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, with this funding award, Access will be better equipped to meet growing demand in the Southern and Eastern regions (Access’ two largest regions) with new vehicles to help our customers with their paratransit needs.

Metro previously awarded Access funding through Metro’s Express-Lanes Grant in 2014 when Access received funding to purchase 15 CNG-fueled MV-1 minivans for the Eastern and Southern regions.

Eric J. Haack, Strategic Planner
Where’s My Ride Pilot Phase Training

In mid-August, I conducted multiple training sessions for the Where’s My Ride project pilot phase at Global Paratransit. Access operations staff and riders participating in the Southern Region pilot phase were in attendance.

“Where’s My Ride” is an exciting new system that allows a rider to check the location of a vehicle after it has been dispatched; the system can be used in different modes, such as a Smartphone App, computer, and even SMS text messaging. Also, the system provides the ability for a rider to rate the service at the end of the trip, similar to Lyft and Uber, which will help Access continue to make service improvements. The pilot training was well received.

The beta users were thrilled to be the first ones to use the system which allowed them to check on the status of their vehicle and leave instant feedback at the end of the trip without the need for a phone call. Regarding next steps for the project, Access will be obtaining continuous feedback from the pilot participants to make further system improvements and enhance the overall user experience. If everything goes as planned, we expect to have the system available to all riders by the end of the year.

Ruben Prieto, Systems Analyst
Access Board Members Theresa de Vera and John B. Troost, along with Interim Executive Director Andre Colaiace, were recognized by self-advocates and staff of the United Cerebral Palsy Los Angeles (UCPLA), for their efforts to increase accessibility, provide quality service, and keep the Access fare structure simple and easy for customers to use. The event, hosted at the UCPLA Washington Place Day Program in Culver City, recognized these individuals while celebrating the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mr. Colaiace acknowledged that all of the self-advocates in attendance were instrumental in Access’ recent achievements. Mr. Colaiace explained that it was their advocacy in the form of attending community meetings, submitting comments, and writing letters that allowed Access to maintain its coordinated fare system in 2015. UCPLA self-advocates, led by Terri Lantz, UCP Client Rights Advocate, and Access Community Advisory Committee member, have been valuable partners in helping Access make progress over the years. During the second half of the event, UCP self-advocates were provided time to ask the panel questions and make suggestions about Access’ future. The event was a great opportunity to celebrate recent achievements and continue dialogue with UCPLA, whose members are some of the most enthusiastic and diligent advocates in the region.

Alfredo Torales, Special Projects Administrator
Rider Comments

"Whenever I call Customer Service the representatives are friendly, knowledgeable and do a great job helping me with any problems I might have."

Larry Gaiber (customer since January 2014)

Ms. Nurrahman wants to file a smile for Eastern driver Mike. "Mike was kind enough to wait for me, and helped me with my things while I entered the vehicle. He was incredibly polite and deserves a raise for his professionalism."

Pamela Nurrahman (customer since June 2011)

Best Practices Event Held at Access

On Thursday, August 25th a best practices meeting was held here at Access with members and supporters of the disability community and staff from Access’ Operations, Safety and Provider staff. The purpose of the meeting was to allow advocates and members of the disability community to share concerns they have experienced and heard from the community and to make Access aware of these issues.

Invited to provide feedback were: Los Angeles County Commission on Disability President Carlos Benavides, County Commissioner Ray Pizzaro and Los Angeles City Commission on Disability member Betty Wilson. Michael Conrad, CAC vice-chair and Access customer, was also in attendance. The visiting panel spoke to issues they experienced personally and also issues brought to their attention at their respective commission meetings. Many of the issues raised by the panel were: driver assistance, curbside pickups and how being late can affect one’s health, late pickups and routing issues. Some on the panel have heard customers refer to this as being insensitive, though when explained by Alex Chrisman, Access Road Safety Inspector, the majority of late pickups and routing issues are beyond the driver’s control and therefore not the fault of the driver.

Commissioner Betty Wilson suggested that we provide comment cards so customers may send in their concerns and suggestions regarding sensitivity and other issues. Jack Garate, Project Administrator, informed the panel that we currently have a procedure in place that allows for such comments.

I’d like to thank everyone from Operations who not only participated but assisted in facilitating the meeting.

Louis Burns, Customer Service Administrator