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# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

### Happy New Year!

Access is in the process of conducting a series of community meetings in all of our service regions. We generally have two sets of community meetings each year. At each meeting, we are providing an update on the fare system. Needless to say, our customers are telling us how happy they are that we get to start 2016 with our simple, easy to understand coordinated fare system, thanks to the Congressional action that took place late last year.

In addition, our mobility management staff has put together a presentation about all of the different transit options available to people with disabilities. It's amazing how many customers are not aware of the many options available to them beyond ADA paratransit and how Access can assist them if they need travel training or other services.

Finally, like we do at all of our community meetings, we work with individual customers on any issues they may have with Access and give them tips on how to use the system better.

Keep an eye out for the next community meetings sometime this summer!

Shelly Verrinder  
Executive Director

## Q & A With Sarah Boden Chief Operating Officer



### What led you to Access Services?

I've spent the last 15 years leading a variety of technology companies. During that time, I had the privilege of working with the Access team as a vendor. I was so impressed with the desire at Access to innovate and constantly improve in order to better serve their customers. When Shelly presented the opportunity for me to join the team there was no way I could refuse.

### What do you hope to accomplish at Access?

Access is already considered a leader and innovator in paratransit. I hope to help take us to the next level, driving operational excellence and further leveraging of technology.

### How can technology improve the Agency and the Rider experience?

We all see how technology has transformed our lives, and over the past few years, how the ride sharing apps have transformed the transit industry. We need to ensure that our riders have the same tools available with Access as they do for any other transit experience. Can I register and book online? Can I see my trip history? What about the status of my vehicle and, at the end of the trip, can I rate my ride? These technologies will not only improve the rider experience, but they will make Access more efficient and give us real time information about the quality of service for our riders.



**Intern Giovanni Sera shares his story**

## Leadership Development Institute

On December 5, 2015, Access staff, in partnership with the Millennium Momentum Foundation (MMF), hosted a workshop on the campus of Biola University in La Mirada. The MMF Leadership Development Institute (LDI) provides over 40 hours of practical leadership, employment, and business skills that aren't taught in a standard classroom setting.

Evie Palicz, Manager of Access' Training and Development programs, facilitated a workshop on How to Turn Internships into Jobs. Ricky Bout, Alfredo Torales and I shared our own story about being an intern. The fact that each testimony was very different made the workshop interesting and relevant for the students. Current intern Giovanni Sera shared his story as well.

MMF was formed in 2002 with the mission to increase the number of students and young adults in public policy and other public service fields through higher education, mentoring, and leadership development training.

**By Sherri Adams, Training and Development Coordinator**



**Sherri Adams test's the Bus Simulator**

## Transit Instructors Network

On December 16, 2015, Sherri Adams, Access' Training and Development Coordinator, and I attended the Transit Instructors Network meeting hosted by Long Beach Transit. Approximately 30 representatives from 11 transit agencies attended.

The meeting was an open forum for all transit agencies to collaborate on various plans and ideas. Some of the topics discussed were reasonable modification and future transit trends. The meeting also focused on issues involving safety-sensitive employees (operators/drivers) including the effects of illegal drugs, operator assaults and sleep apnea. Other topics, ranging from ongoing driver training to emergency preparedness, were covered.

The highlight of the meeting was a demonstration of the bus operator training simulator. This device can simulate difficult driving conditions including rain, snow, and even a Sig Alert on the freeway. Five strategically placed big screen monitors show the trainee a simulated scene that safely teaches the user proper maneuvers. This type of training is an excellent way for drivers to learn how to react to various scenarios in order to make our transit systems safer.

**By Evie Palicz, Manager of Training and Development**



**Access Customers are all smiles despite the weather**

## **LA City Emergency Preparedness**

On Wednesday, January 6th Access staff member Cynthia Perkins-Stevenson made a presentation to the Los Angeles City Commission on Disability about Emergency Preparedness and the steps we are taking to keep people safe in the event of a natural disaster. Access volunteered to make this presentation so the City Commission knows Access is not only able to address fires and other emergency conditions, but is also prepared for heavy rains like the ones we faced the day of the meeting.

We told the Commission that, while Access needs to do its part to make sure it is prepared for a variety of events, customers need to do their part too. I shared the following scenario with the Commission: the local news forecasts torrential rain for the next 3 to 4 days. The question a customer needs to ask themselves is, "Do I need to take this trip today?" In this case, we hope the customer will make the decision to take the trip another time given the impact of severe weather on Los Angeles traffic conditions. However, if the trip is essential, Access will continue to provide the best possible service under such conditions. The Commission was pleased to know that we are prepared to handle all types of emergencies, and said the presentation showed Access' commitment to the safety and welfare of the community.

**By Louis Burns, Customer Service Administrator**

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## Rider Comments

**Julia Orozco** (Customer Since 2009)

"I would like to thank you for all you do for me and others. Without your hard work we would not be able to travel and get around town, or to and from work. Thank You Again."

**Bernice D. Harris** (Customer Since 2008)

Customer called to file a smile for all of Access. "They have are very well trained and are very nice."

## Regional Paratransit Free Fare Working Group Meeting

On Monday, January 11th Access convened the first meeting of the Regional Paratransit Free Fare Working Group. Access staff established the working group to discuss the increasing costs of reimbursements to Free Fare partners and other issues related to the program. Representatives from Metro, Long Beach Transit, Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Palos Verdes Peninsula Transit Authority, LADOT, Torrance, Beach Cities, Culver City, Glendale and LA County Public Works were in attendance.

The Free Fare program was established in 2002 to encourage Access customers to use fixed-route, if they are able, as an alternative mobility option. The Free Fare program allows Access customers with a valid ID card to board 23 fixed route systems, including Metrolink, at no-charge. In return, Access reimburses Free Fare partners for each Access boarding at the elderly/disabled fare rate. During FY 2015, Access and Metro spent approximately \$5.5 million in Free Fare reimbursements and recorded over 31 million trips.

Access Strategic Planner Eric Haack opened the meeting by presenting an overview of the program, including customer trip patterns and different methodologies for estimating whether the program is successful in saving the Los Angeles region money through the diversion of paratransit trips. The working group members agreed that the program has its benefits but also understood the cost implications if changes are not implemented. A follow-up meeting has been scheduled for early February to continue this discussion.



**Metrolink train**

**By Matthew Avancena Manager, Planning and Coordination**