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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Access Services is always looking for new ways to transport our customers safely and efficiently. For example, since its inception in 1994, Access' providers have used taxicabs to provide ADA paratransit. These taxis, which have to meet the same requirements as our dedicated Access vehicles, allow the Agency to provide trips more efficiently and are one of the reasons our Agency has one of the lower per-trip paratransit costs in the United States.

Recently, Access has been looking at the possibility of using so-called Transportation Network Companies, like Uber and Lyft, to provide trips. Staff has had conversations with some of these companies and also recently hosted a number of TNC drivers to get more insight into their jobs and whether they would be interested in, at some point, providing paratransit trips. These discussions have revealed that there are a lot of challenges to be overcome before TNCs could provide trips, particularly as it relates to the various regulations that Access has to abide by in the provision of its service. However, as we look toward the future, we have to continue to examine Access' service model to ensure we can provide quality, efficient paratransit service in the face of rising demand.

Shelly Verrinder
Executive Director

Access Winter 2016 Community Meetings



Rachele Goeman

Over ten days, January 5 - 15, Access held a total of 10 community meetings throughout L.A. County. Community meetings were held in the cities of Lancaster, Culver City, Westchester, Encino, and El Monte, with a Spanish-language meeting available in the four larger regions. About 150 people attended the meetings to hear the latest regarding Access, ask questions, provide feedback, and get to know Access staff.

During this round of meetings, staff provided an update regarding the fare system. At the 2015 community meetings, customers were informed that the fare system might be changing in 2016. Since fares did not change on January 1st of this year, many in attendance were wondering what happened. Staff explained that the F.A.S.T. Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on December 4, 2015, included language that would allow Access to keep its coordinated fare system. The customers in attendance were enthusiastic that Access could keep its simple, easy to understand, coordinated fare system, and especially grateful to Representative Grace Napolitano, who took the lead in Congress on the paratransit fare issue.

Members of Access' mobility management team, including Mayra Perez-Calderon, Zachary Strom, Steve Wrenn, and Norma De Alba, presented on transportation options other than ADA paratransit that are available to people with disabilities throughout the county. This included information on local dial-a-rides, Go511, reduced and subsidized fare programs, and non-emergency medical transportation. Besides providing ADA paratransit in the region, Access' mission is to promote all modes of transportation and assist people who need travel training or information on other services.

Customers in attendance ranged from recent customers to those who have been using the service for 20 years, and everywhere in between. However, we always aim for each customer to learn something new when they attend a community meeting. Led by the Access Operations team, the meetings also provided those in attendance with tips on how to use the service better, information on our challenges as a paratransit provider, and a question and answer section. This year's tips focused on making the trip as smooth as possible when scheduling a ride the day before and tips for the day of service. Staff also provided information on how trips are routed and the many challenges our service providers face on a daily basis.

Alfredo Torales, Special Projects Administrator
Jack Garate, Operations Administrator

Michael Conrad awarded scroll from LAFD

On Tuesday, January 19th, 2016 Access customer and CAC member Michael Conrad was awarded a scroll from the Los Angeles County Fire Department's Facilities Maintenance Division.

While many of us know Mr. Conrad through his many years of being an advocate for the disabled community, his personal accomplishments with Los Angeles County are remarkable. In 1975, Mr. Conrad began his employment under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) program for a 20-year stint in the Mechanical Department. He then moved into the Fire Department as a Helper One and later tested for the Helper Two position where he received the highest marks. During his employment with Los Angeles County, Mr. Conrad repaired small engines, chainsaws, alternators, starters and stop lights. He later began to repair transmissions, vacuums, washing machines, dryers, gas cement mixers, brake calipers and fire pump valves.



Chief Marrone, Michael Conrad, Louis Burns

Mr. Conrad received this scroll in front of numerous coworkers from the Fire Department's Maintenance Facility. The scroll was presented by Deputy Fire Chief Anthony Marrone. This ceremony will be repeated in the presence of the County Board of Supervisors at a later date and Access looks forward to attending this event as well.

Louis Burns, Customer Service Administrator



Postal Customer Council luncheon

On Wednesday, January 20, 2016, Audrey Cervantes and I attended the Postal Customer Council (PCC) luncheon in Los Angeles. We were provided an update on the changes to Priority Mail as well as the competitive pricing between carriers such as UPS and FedEx. The presentation offered an in depth discussion on the upcoming rate changes and service for 2016 and how the USPS had taken the initiative in providing quality and affordable services to businesses such as Access during this transition period.

I had the privilege of meeting Marcy Clarke, CEO of Service Mailers and Fulfillment. She took the time to explain how USPS compared to competitors in terms of pricing, reliability, and flexibility. She introduced us to Scott McGuire, Major Accounts/System Specialist from NeoPost, software that we use frequently in our day-to-day operations at Access.

Kyra Williams, Office Service Clerk

Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC) Consumer Advisory Committee

Raise your hand if you don't like seat belts? That's a trick question Project Administrator Randy Johnson and I asked at a recent meeting with the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC) Consumer Advisory Committee to make a point about customer safety. (Of course, no one raised their hand!)

Jesse Padilla, a long-time member of the Access Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and a Consumer Advocate at ELARC, invited Access to present at ELARC's Consumer Advisory Committee. The presentation focused on three items: an update on the fares; tips on how to use the system better; and information on the many transportation options available to customers beyond ADA paratransit and how Access can assist them if they need travel training or other services.

Most of the regional center members in attendance reside in cities such as Highland Park, Montebello, Alhambra, and San Gabriel, which are all in the Access Eastern Service Region. The members had great questions and discussion topics for us. We felt that the discussions were positive, and we received excellent feedback on the service from members who use Access regularly. We were honored to be invited to present and look forward to working with ELARC in the future.

ELARC's Consumer Advisory Committee exists to advocate, advise, empower, lead, plan, inform, and educate so that the consumers of Regional Centers understand their rights under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act, achieve their goals, and learn information that improves their personal freedom.

Alfredo Torales, Special Projects Administrator



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Rider Comments

Olivia Almalel (Customer
Since 2009)

"This is a big Thank you! I had not completed booking my trip the day before and was stranded out in Los Angeles for a meeting. Upon asking if my ride was on site, I was informed that I did not have a reservation. I was going home and they were able to provide me a trip to go home in less than one hour. Thank you for your help."

Fernando Roldan (Customer
Since 1996)

Customer called to file a smile for the Eastern Region. "Thanks for sending a rescue vehicle to get me to my destination due to my personal vehicle's mechanical failure. Your team is very efficient."

FTA's Triennial Review of Redondo Beach

On Tuesday, January 19th Access staff Matthew Avancena, Alvina Narayan, Alfredo Torales, Rycharde Martindale and Access' Legal Counsel James Jones participated in the ADA review for FTA's Triennial Review of Redondo Beach, which operates Beach Cities Transit.

Each year some of Access' fixed route member agencies are evaluated as part of FTA's Triennial Review process. The triennial review examines 17 areas which includes ADA Complementary Paratransit.

Since Access provides ADA paratransit on behalf of the member agencies, Access is obligated to provide supporting documents to ensure compliance with ADA paratransit provisions. This year, Long Beach Transit, Gardena Transit, and Montebello Transit are also scheduled for their reviews.

One of the areas the FTA reviewers carefully examined is how member agencies monitor (or provide oversight) for Access' compliance with required service provisions. As was shared with the FTA reviewers, Access operates a coordinated paratransit system that provides seamless paratransit services on behalf of its 44 member agencies. There exist a number of formal and informal mechanisms whereby member agencies monitor Access to ensure their constituents are receiving quality and compliant services.

These formal mechanisms take the form of standing meetings such as monthly Access Board meetings, Transportation Professional Advisory Committee (TPAC), Annual and Special Member Agency meetings, General Manager's meeting, BOS, and LTSS. Also, Board meeting agendas and monthly Board Boxes are readily available on the agency website. The Board Box contains detailed performance statistics broken down by region that any member of the public can examine to determine how the agency is performing.

Matthew Avancena, Manager of Planning and Coordination



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