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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Last week I had the opportunity to travel to Haiti with my daughter and a group from the school she attends. The main purpose of our visit was to reinforce the educational partnership between my daughter's school and their Haitian counterparts. However, I couldn't help but notice how different "public" transportation is there.

Haiti does not have a functioning government so there is no public transportation. The populace relies on "tap taps" for their transportation needs and there was a robust system of tap taps in each city we visited. Tap taps are brightly painted buses or pick-up trucks that serve as shared ride taxis. I use the term buses and trucks lightly since the vehicles are significantly modified and have long bench seats. The vehicles are privately owned and are not regulated. Even without any signs, each tap tap follows a fixed route, does not leave until filled with passengers (including passengers on the roof and hanging off the sides), and riders can disembark at any point in the journey. In some cases the driver has an assistant who collects the fares.

For pictures of these colorful vehicles, please see the last page of this edition of Behind the Scenes!

Shelly Verrinder,
Executive Director

Access Services attends Metro's T3 Industry Forum



Phil Washington, Faye Moseley

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) recently hosted a half-day invitation-only event to bring together the best and the brightest to partner with them to deliver capital projects, improve operations, implement mobile solutions and enhance the customer experience in new and unconventional ways. Access staff joined nearly 400 business and industry leaders from around the world for the Transformation Through Transportation (T3) Industry Forum.

T3 Industry Forum speakers included Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman, Metro Board of Directors, Los Angeles County Supervisor, 2nd District; Honorable Jim Frazier, Chairman, California Assembly Transportation Committee; Honorable Eric Garcetti, 2nd Vice Chair, Metro Board of Directors, Mayor of Los Angeles and Phillip A. Washington, Metro Chief Executive Officer. Metro staff presenters included Nalini Ahuja, Metro Chief Financial Officer/Access Board Member; Stephanie Wiggins, Metro Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and Joshua Schank, Ph.D., Metro Chief of Innovation.

The various speakers outlined thoughtful solutions for our region's mobility challenges:

- Of significance was the introduction of an Unsolicited Proposal Policy (UPP) that allows for greater innovation, creativity, and speed for project delivery.
- In addition, Metro is looking to enter into public-private partnerships (known as PPPs). PPPs are a way for private money to be used to finance, build or operate public infrastructure.
- Metro CEO Phil Washington said that he views the Measure R sales tax increase as the first part of the infrastructure program that L.A. County needs. He said the potential ballot measure would extend Measure R for 22 years (past its expiration date in 2039) and add a new half-cent sales tax increase for at least 30 years. The draft spending plan for the potential ballot measure is due to be released in March with a public and stakeholder comment period to follow. The Board is scheduled to decide in June whether to put the ballot measure before voters.

It will take new, innovative and outside-the-box thinking to keep up with future growth and rapidly changing mobility needs - whether it's implementing emerging technologies such as driverless cars and trucks, safe and walkable transit-oriented communities, or local projects that enhance quality of life.

Faye Moseley, Vice President, Human Resources

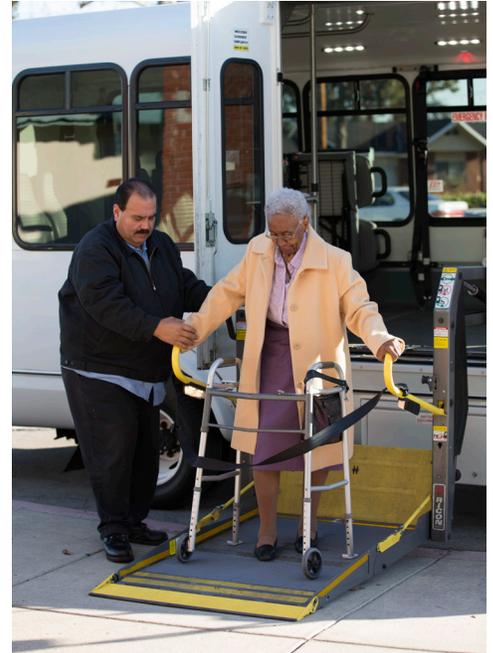
Access hosts TPAC Meeting

On Thursday, February 11th, Access held its Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee Meeting (TPAC). TPAC is held bimonthly and is comprised of transportation professionals from Access member agencies and outside advisors from L.A. County Regional Centers and the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA). At these meetings, various presentations are made about Access and its ongoing initiatives.

Among the topics discussed were updates from the Free Fare Working Group, Access' outsourcing of its customer service function, potential amendments to Access contractor agreements and possible findings from FTAs recent Member Agency triennial reviews.

Meetings are open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend. TPAC meetings are held bi-monthly at Access' administrative offices on the second Thursday of every other month, 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 14, 2016.

Matthew Avancena, Manager, Planning and Coordination



Access Intern visits the Abilities Expo

As an Access Services intern, I recently had the opportunity to attend the Abilities Expo on February 5, 2016, at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Throughout the event, I observed the importance of this transportation service to Access customers.

Participating in this experience allowed me to interact with Access employees, provider staff, and, most importantly, our customers. During the event, I was able to observe why the service is successful, as Access and the provider staff worked together to ensure effective pick-ups and drop-offs for the event. It was there at the pick-up location that I truly learned and experienced the riders' deep appreciation for Access and how critical a role this service plays in their everyday lives.

Overall the Abilities Expo provides a much-needed service to the disability community. As an Access Services intern, I learned many lessons that day that cannot always be taught in a classroom. I now have a deep appreciation for Access Services and provider staff who work hard to ensure Access customers can lead independent lives.

Gloria Martinez, Human Resources Intern

Free Fare Working Group Meeting #2

On Monday February 22nd, Access convened the second meeting of the Regional Paratransit Free Fare Working Group. Access staff established the working group to discuss the increased 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, Pasadena, Gardena, AVTA, Norwalk and LA County Public Works were in attendance.

As follow-up tasks from the first meeting, Access staff distributed handouts that detailed which agencies allow PCAs to board their systems for free and annual reimbursements paid to each free fare partner.

Access staff shared reimbursement totals from FY 2015 and the first six months of FY 2016 (July through December).

Discussion centered around ways to address the increasing costs of reimbursements, Access' eligibility policies, and potential Title VI impacts on fixed route operators should they decide to start charging fares to Access customers.

It was a productive meeting with the following proposals introduced by Metro:

- Free Fare partners may submit reimbursement invoices to Access for the remainder of FY 2016.
- Beginning FY 2017 (July 1, 2016), free fare reimbursements to partner agencies will be capped at FY 2015 funding amounts.
- Use the coming months to review and evaluate fixed route policies with regards to PCA fares and the possibility of a standard regional fixed route rate for free fare boardings.
- Evaluate impacts on Formula Allocation Procedure (FAP)

The proposals will be brought back to BOS and LTSS for further discussion. If the proposals are ratified, Access staff will seek Access Board of Directors approval to implement these changes moving forward. If you have any questions, please contact me at Avancena@accessla.org.

Matthew Avancena, Manager, Planning and Coordination



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Rider Comments

Agustin Ramos (Customer Since 1998)

"Mr. Ramos' PCA stated she had an excellent driver who went above and beyond to assist her and Mr. Ramos."

Carole R. Baker (Customer Since 2005)

Carole stated she had one of the best drivers she has ever had while riding with Access. She stated, "Driver was polite, helpful and funny."

Presentation to Los Angeles County Commission on Disability

On Wednesday, February 17th Access made another presentation to the Los Angeles County Commission on Disability on the topic of how the Agency is preparing for potential severe weather during this El Nino year. Mike Greenwood, Vice President of Operations, spoke in front of the Commission and outlined how Access prepares for emergencies.

The Commission was told about Access' Emergency Preparedness program and Mike also addressed specific questions and scenarios that were brought up by the Commission. For example, the Commission asked what Access would do if it was informed that someone's power chair shorted out in the rain or what would happen if a driver accidentally drove into high waters and the vehicle became inoperable. Mike and I also addressed concerns about our No Show policy as it relates to inclement weather and told the Commission that, in general, if a customer calls about their No Show it will generally be removed. Overall, the Commission found Access' plans for El Nino to be acceptable.

Louis Burns, Customer Service Administrator

Tap Taps In Haiti

