Executive Director's Report

I was in Washington, DC this week to attend a conference sponsored by the Eno Center for Transportation called Convergence: The Intersection of Technology and Transportation. The goal of the conference was to “assist in developing public policy responses to technological innovation that encourage mobility while simultaneously ensuring public safety and public benefit.”

The conference started with a great panel on “Transit’s Technological Revolution” featuring representatives from ride share companies like Uber and Lyft and Tim Papandreou, who leads the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency’s Office of Innovation. There was a great discussion about how these companies have changed mobility and how these and other private sector companies can partner with public agencies to potentially provide transit services.

This led to a number of different panels throughout the day with the most fascinating being a panel on the Pragmatic Policy Role in Autonomous Vehicles. Representatives from Toyota, General Motors, Intel and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration talked about the future of autonomous vehicles and what role government should play in regulating them as society transitions to a time when the car drives us (instead of the other way around).

Overall, it was a great conference that provided quite a bit of food for thought. Please contact me if you would like additional information.

Shelly Verrinder, Executive Director

Behind the Scenes

Access staff presents at the Villas at Gower

On March 10, the residents and staff of the Villas at Gower, a housing complex located in Hollywood, were visited by mobility management staff from Access Services. Staff from our operations department were also in attendance to address any operational concerns.

We explained how our service operates as well as Access’ eligibility requirements. Access customers in attendance had questions related to the actual pick-up and drop-off locations for the Villas. There were also questions concerning what transportation options are available for those who are found ineligible. Staff and residents appreciated receiving information that allows them to make more appropriate choices for their transportation needs.

This event was coordinated by Aver Wishum, who is the case manager for the housing complex. The Villas at Gower is a 70 unit community complex that provides, through the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, subsidized one and two bedroom units. All units are set aside for individuals and families who have experienced homelessness and have qualifying disabilities.

Steve Wrenn, Senior Mobility Management Counselor

2016 Social Work Month Resource Fair

On March 9th, Access mobility and operations staff had the pleasure of attending the annual Olive View Resource Fair in Sylmar. The event was coordinated by Alejandra Marasco, a clinical social worker with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS). DHS is the second largest municipal health system in the nation, caring for 670,000 patients and employing 19,000 people.

Access staff was happy to share information with over 150 attendees regarding eligibility and how the service operates. At each outreach event we have the pleasure of attending it is our goal to help educate those we come into contact with about Access and the services we provide.

Steve Wrenn, Senior Mobility Management Counselor
Sighted guide technique training at Braille

On February 4, Access staff Zachary Strom, Faustino Salvador, Anthony Santiago, Randy Johnson, Mike Greenwood and I attended the “Sighted Guide Techniques” training at the Braille Institute of Los Angeles. The training was attended by nine representatives from five contractors. Master Orientation and Mobility Specialist Tamar Tashjian and Director of Digital Programs Ben Pomeroy with the Braille Institute facilitated the two-hour training session.

The classroom and hands-on training consisted of some basic techniques that a sighted person can use to help assist people with low or no vision. Two of the tips that stood out to me are, when guiding individuals with low or no vision, you must work together as a team and, secondly, constantly communicate as you go. Other topics discussed during classroom instruction included customer contact, different grip techniques that a person with little or no vision may use, and the proper stance that a sighted person should take. The hands-on portion of the training consisted of guiding a fellow classmate to an open seat, through a door, up and down a flight of stairs, and entering and exiting a vehicle. Overall, both Access and contractor staff found the training to be very helpful.

The Braille Institute of Los Angeles offers a full range of free services to the visually impaired including library services, low vision consultations, and career counseling to name a few. The Institute is the highest daily trip generator for Access with an average of 112 trips each day.

Jack Garate, Operations Administrator

APTA 2016 Legislative Conference

Andre Colaiace, Deputy Executive Director of Planning & Gov. Affairs, and I travelled to Washington DC to attend APTA’s 2016 Legislative Conference. The Legislative Conference educates APTA members on important federal legislation and policy initiatives; provides members with the opportunity to shape future industry positions and federal transportation policy; provides direction on the industry’s legislative strategy and advocacy efforts with the U.S. Congress and Administration executives; and offers sessions with key members of Congress, Hill staff, Administration officials, and Washington opinion makers.

The focus of this year’s conference was learning how the FAST Act would affect transit over the next five years. Andre and I sat in on sessions where members of Congress, as well as senior staff from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), offered their perspectives on the FAST Act and spoke about priorities for the years to come. Of particular interest was the introduction of a new Pilot Program for Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility which will assist in financing innovative projects for the transportation disadvantaged that improve the coordination of transportation services. While only $15 million is authorized over the life of the FAST Act for this pilot program, it is a positive development that Congress is starting to focus on transportation coordination issues.

In addition, Andre and I participated in APTA’s Legislative Committee and Access Committee Meetings, which discussed the latest regarding legislative and regulatory issues related to the ADA. In addition, we heard from two experts on their analysis of the Presidential and Congressional races this year, and how they may affect the legislative agenda. Overall, we found the conference very valuable because of the timely information and the opportunities to talk face-to-face with many of the key players in the transit industry.

Alfredo Torales, Special Projects Administrator
Pacific Palisades Senior Transportation Event at Palisades Charter High School

The Gilbert Hall auditorium at Palisades Charter High School was the site of the first-ever Pacific Palisades Senior Transportation Event. The resident-organized meeting, held in the late afternoon on Tuesday, March 1st, was to be the first of a series of meetings discussing a trio of topics:

(a) Listing transportation services currently available to seniors in the Pacific Palisades community;
(b) Identifying areas where gaps in transportation exist in the community; and
(c) Coordinating ideas on how to expand transportation services in the Pacific Palisades community.

At this meeting, a panel of representatives from public and private transportation agencies spoke about the services that are currently available in Pacific Palisades. Officials from Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Santa Monica-based WISE & Healthy Aging, LUXE Home Health Care Services, Metro's Seniors' Riders Clubs and Access Services each gave a brief presentation on their programs and the services they offered in Pacific Palisades and responded to questions from an audience of approximately 40 residents.

About half of the attendees knew of Access Services, and many were eligible for the service. Currently, Access Services provides service over the southern half of Pacific Palisades near Pacific Coast Highway and Sunset Boulevard. Part of the Pacific Palisades community is located outside of Access' service area. I explained that Access' service follows existing fixed route service and operates within a ¾ mile boundary of that service.

It is expected that with the growing senior population in Pacific Palisades, there will be an increase in demand for additional public and private transportation services. Future meetings of this community-based group will explore if there are opportunities to expand either fixed route service or Lyft and Uber-like service to areas not currently served.

Eric J. Haack, Strategic Planner
Rider Comments

Armenuhi Nalbandian
(Customer Since 2010)

Customer called to report she is visually impaired and, as she boarded the vehicle, she handed the driver $300 dollars by mistake and the driver was very honest and informed her of her mistake and returned the money to her. Mrs Nalbandian would like to thank the driver for his honesty.

William Craig
(Customer Since 2002)

Customer called to file a smile for CSR Christina. "She's a great representative. She is always so pleasant and willing to help. I can tell she loves her job."

What’s happening in our service regions

Antelope Valley Region
On February 11, 2016, the Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) announced their commitment to become the first 100 percent electric public transit fleet in the country. The AVTA board of directors voted to award a contract to manufacture up to 85 electric buses over a five-year period. The build will include a variety of all-electric bus models including a 40-foot low floor transit bus, a 60-foot low floor articulated bus, and a 45-foot commuter coach. All 85 buses will have a range of more than 160 miles on a single battery charge.

AVTA is also in the process of installing a wireless charging system to extend the fleet’s range to ensure the electric buses will be able to serve the agency’s longest rural routes.

Santa Clarita Region
Santa Clarita Transit’s contractor (MV Transportation) was recently awarded the 2015 Best of the Best Award by MV Corporate for their success in lowering their workers compensation and accident rates.

Eastern Region
Foothill Transit held its 21st Annual Foothill Transit Bus Roadeo on Saturday, March 12, 2016, at their Arcadia/Irwindale Operations & Maintenance facility. Five Access staff members and one contractor employee from Global Paratransit volunteered as judges for the event.

The 5th Annual Five Star Bus Roadeo was held in the City of Gardena’s GTrans bus yard. The Roadeo included the City of Gardena’s GTrans, Culver CityBus, Montebello Municipal Bus Lines, Norwalk Transit, and Torrance Transit System. Three Access staff members volunteered as judges for the event.

West Central and Northern Region
Safety staff began work with LADOT to enhance disabled rider access points on Reseda Boulevard, Broadway and Van Nuys Boulevard related to bike lane/street patio access concerns. This collaboration is intended to rectify streetscape impediments that prevent Access vehicles from adequately serving our riders on those corridors.