Behind the Scenes

Access attends COMTO’s Women Leaders of Southern CA Awards Event

On Thursday, March 30, in observance of Women’s History Month, the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) honored six women leaders in Southern California whose public service contributions have significantly impacted the surrounding communities and the transportation industry. Access Board Members Dolores Nason, Theresa DeVeria, Martin Gombert and Valerie Gibson along with staff attended the 2nd Annual Transportation Awards Event.

The morning event began with a roundtable with Guest Speaker Carolyn Flowers. Tom Kim, Senior Vice President and Southern CA Transportation Director-HDR, served as Master of Ceremonies. Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia, City of Long Beach, delivered a keynote address to attendees and Carolyn Flowers, National Transit Leader-AECOM, also made remarks.

The six awardees were: Nalini Ahuja, Access Board Chair and Metro Chief Financial Officer, Transportation Executive Leadership Award; Lucy Dunn, President & CEO-Orange County Business Council, Distinguished Society Lifetime Achievement Award; Velma Carr Marshall, Deputy Executive Officer, Real Estate-L.A. Metro, Distinguished Transportation Lifetime Achievement Award; Jeanet Owens, Senior Executive Officer-Project Management/Regional Rail-L.A. Metro, Transportation Management Leadership Award; and Sarah Swensson King, Media Relations Manager-Transportation Corridor Agencies, Transportation Emerging Leadership Award. I was honored to receive the Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award.

COMTO brings together transportation professionals, executives and decision-makers at all levels to discuss initiatives, policies, and legislation. COMTO’s goal is to become the premier organization for the training, education and professional development of minority transportation professionals. COMTO invites everyone to join and attend events hosted by the Southern California Chapter from transportation agencies throughout the region.

Faye Moseley, Deputy Executive Director, Human Resources

Executive Director’s Report

The Access Services Board of Directors met on April 17, 2017.

- The Board approved the Consent Calendar which included an item recommending changes to the Community Advisory Committee’s by-laws and also approved modifications to Access’ procurement policies.

- In addition to the above action items, the Board heard presentations on a recently-completed Free Fare survey and also an update on the performance of the Customer Service call center which is operated under contract by ALTA Resources.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be on May 22, 2017 in the Metro Board Room.

Full agendas and presentations can be found online at www.accessla.org. As always, please let me know if you have any questions about these or other Access issues.

Andre Colaiace
Interim Executive Director
Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC)

On Friday, March 24, 2017, I had the opportunity to visit Anaheim’s Regional Transportation Intermodal Center also known as ARTIC. This trip was part of an event hosted by METRANS, a transportation center, which partners with the University of Southern California and California State University Long Beach. The purpose of the event was to expose students interested in the field of transportation about how high-density development and multimodal transportation is shaping the city of Anaheim.

The ARTIC opened in 2014, and contains a station for Amtrak and Metrolink trains, a bus terminal for Orange County Transportation Authority buses and a bike path. There is also space set aside for the possibility of a train terminal expansion to serve the California High-Speed Rail when it makes its way through Orange County.

During our tour of the ARTIC, John Lower, Associate Vice President of Iteris, shared that the reason there was limited surface parking around the ARTIC is that they want to promote Anaheim as a destination. Currently around the ARTIC is Angels Stadium, the Honda Center, and the Anaheim Convention Center. Disneyland is a short distance away. There are also plans to build additional housing, commercial developments, and a business district around the ARTIC to be able to meet growing demand in the region.

The ARTIC is Orange County’s most environmentally friendly transportation center because it gathers its electricity from solar panels around the facility. The design of the building allows for more efficient air circulation, and the frame of the building was constructed out of recycled oil pipe. The inside of the facility has a restaurant for passengers who are waiting for their train or waiting for an event to start in the surrounding area and a market for any quick purchases on the go. Mr. Lower also stated that even though there are not too many business or shopping centers currently within walking distance of the ARTIC, the vision is to prepare for projected high-density usage.

Transportation facilities are often seen as an afterthought when there are new developments, and thus it becomes difficult to add additional services when there is limited land available. In the case of the ARTIC they decided to reverse this trend and build out an extensive transportation center so that when the high-density buildings are completed, there will already be an established transportation network to serve the area. Projects like the ARTIC are an essential component in shifting the way people value the importance of transportation and prioritizing the construction of these type of facilities.

Douglas Tohom, Intern, Planning and Government Affairs
Easter Seals ADA and Transportation class

On April 4th & 5th, 2017 Easter Seals Project Action Consulting (ESPAC) conducted a training class regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its impact on the transit/paratransit industry. Ms. Donna Smith, Senior Director of Training for ESPAC, shared her vast knowledge of the ADA and its history with transportation professionals from as far away as Hanford, California near Fresno.

The liveliest discussions were centered on the topics of reasonable modification, service animals, and the eligibility process. What constitutes reasonable? Is there a difference between a service animal and a comfort animal? What is the best way to determine an individual’s eligibility? All of these questions and more were covered in this very comprehensive class.

Access offers professional development courses to our partner agencies as well as public and non-profit organizations providing specialized transportation in L.A. County. Most of these courses are low or no cost. You can find a list of the current course offerings on the Access website at www.accessla.org.

*Iwalani “Evie” Palicz, Manager of Training and Development*

Commerce Eligibility Facility construction underway
Rider Comments

"I would like to file a smile for Eddy Emilien, a driver from the Northern Region. Eddy followed all procedures, was compassionate and professional."

Claudette Phillips  
(customer since February 2008)

"I would like to file a smile for Karen Daniel from ALTA. She was exceptional when filing my concern."

Brandon Williams  
(customer since June 2009)

Access hosts USC Extern

For five days in March, I had an opportunity to be an extern with Access Services. This externship provided me with a wide range of information and an extensive and detailed overview of ADA paratransit. In this very short time, I met dedicated people who are both passionate and insightful about this service that is so vital to the community.

During my orientation, Evie Palicz and Sherri Adams provided an overview of ADA transit operations in Los Angeles. Eric Haack helped me better understand the three distinct roles of planning, funding, and compliance. Mayra Perez-Calderon gave an overview of Mobility Management, which assists customers by identifying different transit options. Alfredo Torales provided an overview of current special projects that Access is pursuing. Luis Pacheco demonstrated the functions of Smart Drive, and Bill Tsuei shared the possibility of autonomous vehicles in the future.

I had some fantastic visits offsite as well. I visited both Global Paratransit and California Transit. Staff showed how contractors dispatch vehicles and I toured the Eligibility Center for a better understanding of the evaluation process. Lastly, the field trip to Foothill Transit showed the potential of electric buses. I also had the pleasure of attending the Community Advisory Committee meeting, which gave me a better understanding of the importance of public participation.

This one-week externship at Access was very valuable and provided me with plenty of information about the agency and paratransit. This experience helped to illustrate the importance of other public transportation organizations and the vast array of career opportunities within the public sector.

Yilin Zhang, USC Extern