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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

The Access Services Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at the California Endowment Center, 1000 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The annual membership meeting is an opportunity for Access' 45 member agencies and other community stake holders to review Access' FY 2018 financial and operational performance.

This will be a working lunch. If you would like to rsvp or have any questions, please contact Onnika Payne at Payne@accessla.org or via phone at (213) 270-6077.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

On-going meetings with Parents with Disabilities Program customers

The Parents with Disabilities program is a pilot program operating in the San Fernando Valley with a small number of Access-eligible customers, which was designed to explore how certain modifications to the paratransit system could assist Access customers traveling with their children.

Currently, the program is operating in a one-year extension through June 2019. Customers and Access staff are working to find partners and opportunities to continue the benefits of this program beyond the current program end date.

In early August, five of the current Parents with Disabilities customers and I met at the Chatsworth Chamber of Commerce. Many of the customers in attendance - and some who could not make it - had shared written stories of how the Parents with Disabilities program had positively affected their lives. It is expected that excerpts from these personal narratives will be woven into packets, along with program data to share with agencies and organizations to determine the possibility of finding program partners.

As expressed in one parent's testimonial, "[t]he very first ride we took with the Parents with Disabilities Program made me feel so proud as a mother to be able to do something independently for my children. It may seem trivial to some, but this was a huge accomplishment for me. I am truly grateful and thankful to the program and staff for providing me with much needed help."

Additional meetings will be coming throughout the fall with customers and staff.

Eric Haack
Strategic Planner

2018 Whittier Senior Center Resource Fair

During the summer, the City of Whittier hosted their annual Senior Resource Fair at the Whittier Senior Center. Access was invited to be an exhibitor, along with several other resources such as veterans' assistance, healthcare screening, legal aid and housing to name a few. This fair had well over 100 participants from the center that participated. Access was on hand to not only provide information regarding our program but also to answer questions from current customers.



The Whittier Senior Center provides daily programmed activities for seniors 55 years of age and older such as arts & crafts, fitness, and dancing. In addition, the senior center provides supportive services such as a pet therapy group, kinship support group, free hearing aid checks and screenings as well as legal aid services. The center offers "Active Groups", which offers seniors a safe opportunity to work out and enjoy the company of friends through the "Over the Hills Extended Hike," which is a hiking group, and the "Whittier Walking Group," which allows the groups to walk locally or use public transportation to designated locations together.

Mayra Perez-Calderon
Compliance Specialist, Eligibility Department

Access to Work Program discussion with Westside Regional Center

In 2012 Access launched a special paratransit service called Access to Work for customers who use paratransit to get to and from places of employment or job skills training. Access' contractors design trips around a customer's work start time, so that they arrive at (or before) their start time, and are not late for work. With the help of a Federal Transit Administration and L.A. Metro Job Access Reverse Commute grant, much of the costs of the Access to Work trips have been paid for with grant funds.



Last month I visited with staff of the Westside Regional Center in Culver City to share information on the program. A number of clients of the Westside Regional Center are using paratransit to travel to places of employment or for job skills training and could be ideal customers to benefit from the Access to Work program.

From this initial meeting, it is hoped that Access and the Westside Regional Center will be able to work together to ensure that a number of Access-eligible customers will be able to have reliable transportation to places of employment. Future meetings between Access and the Westside Regional Center staff will be happening in the weeks ahead.

Eric Haack
Strategic Planner

Yael Hagen appointed as newest CAC member

At the August 27 Board Meeting, the Access Board of Directors took action to appoint Ms. Yael Hagen as the newest member of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). One of two advisory committees created by the Access Services Board of Directors, the CAC provides community input and advice to the Board and staff concerning operational and policy issues to impact and improve Access' transportation program.

Yael Hagen is a wife, mother, advocate and innovative problem solver. Much of her personal and professional life is dedicated to finding innovative solutions to better the lives of those with disabilities. Currently, she is working for the Personal Assistance Services Council (PASC) working with persons with disabilities and seniors.

Born in Jerusalem, Israel, Yael immigrated to the United States as a young girl when her parents sought better medical care for her. She and her family came to the United States without knowing anyone or speaking English.

In 2005, Yael gave birth to her beautiful daughter, Sara. Although she left her position to become a stay-at-home mom (she recently returned to employment with PASC in a new capacity), she continued to advocate for people with disabilities in many areas with a focus on transportation. Drawing on years of experience and training she carved a niche of expertise in this field.

When her daughter was very young she and her husband struggled with the challenges that the traditional paratransit design imposes on parents with disabilities. Knowing she would need to rely on Access Services when traveling with her daughter, she set out to find a solution for all parents facing this challenge. Seeking the advice of Access staff led to a cooperative effort that resulted in the funding of a pilot program through an FTA New Freedom Grant. This program is designed to provide parents with disabilities a safer and more usable travel option when traveling with their children.

"I am proud to have initiated and continued to participate in a program, that among its many virtues, brings parents with disabilities' needs to the forefront" - Yael Hagen.

Congratulations Yael!

Matthew Avancena
Director, Planning and Coordination

Access Services
Consolidated Transportation
Services Agency
 PO Box 5728
 El Monte, CA 91734

Tel: 213.270.6000
 Fax: 213.270.6055
 Email: info@accessla.org
accessla.org

Rider Commendations

"I would like to file a smile for my driver Michael Mills. My trip was scheduled from Los Angeles to the Olive View transfer point in Sylmar. The driver arrived on time. I was very pleased with my experience and didn't have to worry about missing my transfer trip."

Maria Garcia
Rider since May 2003

"I would like to file a smile for Driver Antonio Jordan. He arrived 5 minutes early, and he was professional, cordial, and friendly. He greeted all of us and quickly centered the wheelchair and secured my daughter Jasmine safely. I always appreciate getting a driver that is familiar with Jasmine and her wheelchair. That particular day was hot, and it only took Antonio 10 minutes to load us, which was especially helpful. I want to say thank you to Mr. Jordan, for a well-done job all around!"

Jasmine Burciaga-Terry
Rider since May 2009

New clipboards remind drivers of service fundamentals

In late August, Access' Operations Service Monitor Justin Sheldon and I collaborated with MV's Operations Manager Fany Carrasco and Smart Drive Supervisor Katie Menendez, to distribute Access' Trip Checklist Clipboards.



MV's drivers were greeted during the early morning's first pull out with snacks and clipboards, while having an opportunity to interact with Access staff. While we know that our contractors' drivers provide great service on a daily basis, the pursuit of operational excellence never ends and the clipboards were designed to help remind drivers of several fundamental tips to providing great service.

As part of the event, MV inserted a safety flyer onto the clipboard. The flyer addressed vehicle blind spots and why backing-up should be avoided; two areas of safety MV is focusing on in the month of August. The drivers appreciated the safety messages being conveyed and were extremely grateful to receive a durable new clipboard. It will certainly be useful in the performance of their duties and serve as a constant reminder of the vital aspects of delivering quality and safe paratransit service for our riders.

Faustino Salvador
Northern Region Project Administrator