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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

Currently, our customers who want to book a trip have to call our providers. In order to provide customers with a choice, we have been working with our providers to implement an online reservations platform.

Similar to the implementation of the Where's My Ride application, the online platform was first tested internally by Access staff who provided feedback. Subsequently, we recruited customers in our West Central and Eastern Regions to beta test the platform. This test group, which is actually booking its trips online, has provided valuable input. A presentation was also made to our Advisory Committees and, in November, to our Board of Directors.

This platform is expected to go live in March 2019 in the West Central and Eastern regions with expansion to the other regions in the Los Angeles basin scheduled for the summer of 2019. Please let me know if you would like additional information about this or any other Access initiative.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director

Smart Cities Collaborative session in Atlanta

Transportation for America is an organization based in Washington, D.C. dedicated to the premise that smart and innovative transportation design and policy can lead to strong local, state, and national economies.



Over the course of 2018, Transportation for America hosted a series of four quarterly meetings with representatives from across the country - the Smart Cities Collaborative. The Collaborative is designed to bring together representatives who work in different aspects of transportation to work together to find solutions to common problems facing communities.

There were representatives from city and county governments, fixed route systems, and start-up technology, among others. I attended on behalf of Access Services to discuss aspects of paratransit and how new transportation modes are improving options or negatively impacting mobility for members of the disability community.

On December 3rd and 4th at the Peachtree Center in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, the approximately 50 Collaborative attendees discussed and had presentations on multiple topics. Mobility as a Service (MaaS) was a principal focus. MaaS is a process where a government agency or a smart phone application can connect persons wishing to travel with all available mobility options for these trips. The attendees also had lengthy discussions on how to develop transportation pilot programs to study specific areas and gather useful information from such studies.

Atlanta's December Collaborative meeting marked the fourth and final quarterly meeting of the 2018 Smart Cities attendees. In 2019, Transportation for America will launch a new series of the Smart Cities Collaborative, with many new attendees, but continuing a strong focus on new and developing transportation trends.

Eric J. Haack
Strategic Planner

Woolsey Fire

During November 8-17, Access Services and regional contractor staff were involved in response efforts due to the fast moving and destructive Woolsey wildfire that burned 96,949 acres in both Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The Access service area was impacted due to numerous road and freeway closures and evacuation orders being issued for residents of Malibu, Calabasas, Westlake Village, Agoura Hills, and Hidden Hills.

Access' EOC was activated to a major emergency Level 2 for 25 hours, where staff monitored the fire in the EOC and near the fire evacuation zones. Access made the decision to notify riders of the expanding Woolsey Fire via a website alert and an Everbridge message sent to 892 riders in the affected region. All trips into the declared evacuation zones were canceled and not rebooked until the areas were declared safe. Overall, Access' regional operations remained unaffected throughout the weekend due to the blanket cancellation of all trips to and from the fire area.

During this period, Access' Emergency Operations Center (EOC) team was contacted by Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District for assistance evacuating 103 adults and children from a Malibu youth camp. The EOC team coordinated the evacuation using two Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and one Santa Monica Big Blue Bus (BBB) on behalf of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Transit Authority. Access did not provide any Access vehicles to assist in the actual evacuation.

Access' EOC eventually downsized to a rotating Duty Officer who monitored trips and was ready to offer support to the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles, if needed. The Access Duty Officer received a request from LADOT and immediately requested a MV Transportation driver and vehicle to stage at the Pierce College Red Cross Shelter with a Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) patrol unit in preparation for potential immediate evacuations. In addition, Access received a request from the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for transportation assistance. An MV Transportation driver and cutaway were requested to transport nine people to and from the Pierce College Red Cross Shelter to a Red Cross Disaster Assistance Center (DAC).

The Woolsey Fire highlighted the importance of Access' engagement with member agencies and its contractors in coordinating evacuation and transportation assistance efforts.

Beth Ross
Emergency Management Coordinator

CAC and TPAC Officer Elections

The Access Services Board of Directors has created two advisory committees - the Community Advisory Community (CAC) and the Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee (TPAC).

The CAC, primarily comprised of disability rights advocates and Access customers, provides community input and advice to Access Services Board of Directors and staff concerning operational and policy issues to impact and improve Access' transportation program.

TPAC was created in September 2001 by the Access Board to provide input regarding operational and policy issues. TPAC is primarily comprised of staff from transportation representatives from social service, community transportation and fixed-route transportation providers.



Maria Aroch
CAC Chair



Giovanna Gogreve
TPAC Chair

The CAC and TPAC is comprised of two sets of members, Group A and Group B, which serve two-year terms. Pursuant to its bylaws, both committees recently held officer elections to elect their chairperson and vice-chairperson for fiscal year 2019.

The CAC elected Maria Aroch as chair and Michael Arrigo as vice-chair. Maria Aroch is an advocate for the disability community for the Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living (SCRS-IL) since 2007. Her primary responsibilities at SCRS-IL is leading the vocational program, peer to peer counseling and all related administrative and billing functions.

Maria is also an Access customer, and has been an active member on the CAC since 2012. She is an advocate for the disabled community and dedicates her spare time helping others to maximize their quality of life to become independent. Ms. Aroch is a certified yoga instructor, and volunteers at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey and the senior center in the City of Norwalk.

TPAC elected Giovanna Gogreve as chair and Gracie Davis as vice-chair. Giovanna is the Senior Manager of Transportation Planning which oversees ADA paratransit services within LA Metro. She has more than 20 years of experience in fixed route transit and paratransit. Before joining Metro in 2011, Giovanna worked at Access Services, where she and her colleagues created a program aimed at providing safe and efficient transportation for people with disabilities. Giovanna provides program oversight to Access and works on establishing and strengthening relationships with disability advocacy groups. She is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration degree at Cal State University LA.

Matthew Avancena
Director, Planning and Coordination

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Rider Commendations

"I want to file a commendation for my driver Randy. My scheduled pickup time was for 12:30 and Randy was on time. After I was dropped off Randy realized that I left an item in the vehicle. Randy was still in the area and went out of his way to find me and return the item left behind. I want Access and the driver to know how appreciative I am for the incredible customer service."

Shannon Reel
Rider since June 1999

"I want to file a commendation for Jorge Orozco from CTI for providing me with a pleasant trip last night. He was on time and very courteous on the ride from Santa Monica to my home in Mt. Washington. He said that he loves driving for Access because he gets to meet new people every day and continues to strive to be the best driver for the rider's sake."

Theresa De Vera
Rider since September 2002

SCRS-IL Pasadena Open House

On November 30, Access' Deputy Executive Director Hector Rodriguez and I attended the grand opening of Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living's (SCRS-IL) newest office on 2023 Lincoln Avenue in Pasadena, CA.

At the event, we met with SCRS-IL Executive Director Rudy Contreras and other key staff who were responsible for the agency's services. One of the services that the agency provides is employment support services. Staff from the employment support department assist customers by starting with an initial job assessment to gauge their interest and skill sets. After that, staff help participants create a resume or improve upon their existing resume. By learning how to format the document, list experience and showcase skills, participants can then use the output to apply for jobs.



SCRS-IL is one of the most successful independent living centers for placement of individuals into competitive, integrated employment in the State. Their experienced staff have built a strong network of reputable employers seeking to build upon their diverse workforce.

SCRS-IL is a cross-disability, non-residential, disability rights organization empowering people with any disability to live full and independent lives by committing to building an inclusive community that recognizes the dignity, humanity, and worth of all people.

The philosophy of independent living is the belief that each person with a disability is unique and has the same civil rights as people who do not have a disability. Centers for Independent Living were created to be run by and for people with disabilities, and offer support, advocacy, and information on empowerment in the attainment of independence from a peer viewpoint, a perspective that was hitherto excluded from participation in the discussion and execution of "services for the disabled."

Matthew Avancena
Director, Planning and Coordination