



**In this issue:**

Louis Garcia steers Global Paratransit .....2  
"GoMonrovia" program .....3  
Building Diversity Skills.....4  
Rider Commendations.....4

# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

For the last several years, Access has been committed to "technology equity," delivering the same technology to our customers that has been widely adopted throughout society.

To that end, Access, led by Director of Information Technology Bill Tsuei, has been working on ensuring that emerging autonomous vehicle technology, particularly as it relates to transit applications, is also accessible. While wide-scale deployment may be years away, Access believes that it is essential to consider accessibility issues now rather than wait until the technology matures.

To further this goal, Access is in the process of submitting an application to the Federal Transit Administration to become a Strategic Partner of the FTA's autonomous vehicle efforts. Access will request \$150,000, which will help fund our proposed pilot program focusing on developing an accessible autonomous vehicle.

**Andre Colaiace**  
*Executive Director*

## Crisis Communication for Transit Employees

Last month, Access' CTSA Learning and Development Program hosted the Crisis Communication for Transit Employees course. Rich Foerch from the National Transit Institute (NTI) was the class facilitator. The main objective of the class is to communicate effectively with passengers and members of organizations during a crisis regardless of the size, cause, or complexity.

For front line transit employees, the importance of relaying information to the command center is to initiate an appropriate response. The goal when communicating within your agency, with other employees, supervisors, and interacting with passengers, is to pass along the most important information. This information can consist of receiving help to warn others or maintain control of the situation.

Towards the end of the class, Mr. Foerch separated the class into groups. The activity consisted of the groups selecting an image from the training workbook, and using their gut instinct to select the photo they considered the most tragic. The class participants understood how an individual's life experiences could have a strong influence on how to respond to a crisis.

The participants also had the opportunity to network and engage in other activities where they learned how to manage non-compliant passengers, when to use active listening techniques, and how to disengage with an angry customer to help protect the individual and other passenger's safety.

**Onnika Payne**  
*CTSA Analyst*

## Driving forward in the Southern Region: Luis “Louie” Garcia steers Global Paratransit from experience

Louie Garcia got his transportation industry start by driving for the City of Lakewood Dial-A-Ride as a summer job, he likely never imagined that he would one day lead a team of over 320 paratransit drivers (in addition to 480 taxi subcontractors that Global Paratransit works with) and associated administrative staff.

As the General Manager of Global Paratransit Incorporated (GPI), Louie is responsible for delivering quality and safe paratransit service on a daily basis, an undertaking that frequently includes over 4,000 trips a day. After some challenges last year, GPI has started the New Year off with a strong 92% on time performance, low reservation telephone hold times of 84 seconds and a reduction in complaints to less than 3 per 1,000 trips in addition to meeting all other key performance indicators as of January 2019. A commitment towards continuous improvement and a recent change of reservation, scheduling and dispatch software has helped.

“We want to provide the best service possible. We work long hours and are intertwined with the community. The customer has to come first; that’s the reason that we are all here,” he explained. He shared how he interacts with riders during time off, meeting them by happenstance in Long Beach on a recent occasion and getting on-the-spot feedback about the service. He feels that Access is a vital service without which some riders would be “prisoners in their own homes.” Louie shared how his time as a driver back in the late 90s guides his interactions with the team. He knows what they go through, but he does expect them to realize that they are the face of both Access and Global Paratransit. “This is not a job for everyone,” he explained and mentioned that a good number of drivers are clearly not motivated by money alone; the job is a sort of calling for some.



The Southern Service Region is a sprawling piece of territory, extending from just south of Downtown Los Angeles, eastward deep into Central Orange County passing Knott’s Berry Farm in Buena Park and ending at Disneyland in Anaheim (service follows inter-county Metro Line 460), west to the Pacific Ocean and south to the tip of the affluent Palos Verdes Peninsula. It’s bigger than many agencies’ entire service area, despite being only one of six Access service regions.

Asked which locations in the Southern Region he recommends people visit, he mentioned the scenic beauty of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, once home of Marineland (served by the old Southern California Rapid Transit District/Metro Line 225 many years ago) and the sun and fun of the beach cities, such as Redondo and Manhattan Beach. He enjoys working on classic cars during his rare down time.

Louie has spent decades now in the paratransit business, leaving Lakewood Dial-A-Ride in 1999 to join Access where he spent 15 years before heading to Global. He has seen an ever-increasing focus on customer service on the part of Access as time goes on and thinks that trend will continue into the future.

He did have some parting advice for riders: Attend community meetings, which he says are very informative and provide context to the Rider’s Guide, which is a vital tool for getting familiar with the service.

Louie and the team at Global will continue striving to provide the best paratransit service possible for our riders. The next challenge: maintaining the strong performance that the New Year has started with.

**Alex Chrisman**  
Project Administrator

## The City of Monrovia: Introducing Lyft and Transforming Dial-a-Ride



The city of Monrovia in the San Gabriel Valley recently changed how it operates its city's Dial-A-Ride service. The City entered into a partnership with the transportation network company Lyft to provide reduced fare trips to all city residents. The program is widely advertised around the city as "GoMonrovia."

On Wednesday, February 6th Matthew Avancena, Director of Planning and Coordination, and I met with Alex Tachiki, Senior Management Analyst, in Monrovia's Public Services Department. We discussed the paratransit services that Access provides for Access-eligible persons with disabilities in Monrovia and Mr. Tachiki described changes

associated with Monrovia's partnership with Lyft. Prior to the introduction of Monrovia's Lyft partnership, the city's Dial-a-Ride service was providing approximately 38,000 trips annually. After the launch of the GoMonrovia program, Lyft is now providing in excess of 30,000 trips every month for residents, or about 360,000 trips annually!

The program has been a success in providing an inexpensive and convenient transportation option for residents across the program's service area, which largely mirrors Monrovia city limits. Because of the growth of Lyft trips, however, the City has had to increase fares paid by users of the program in order to control growth.

Monrovia's efforts to work with non-traditional transportation models to provide improved services for its residents are commendable. Matthew and I were very happy to discuss the successes and potential challenges associated with the partnership that Monrovia has pursued. Monrovia's GoMonrovia partnership with Lyft will serve as a model for other agencies hoping to work with companies like Lyft for transportation service.

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## Rider Commendations

"I would like to file a commendation for my driver Veronica. She was friendly, professional, and went above and beyond to help me. She was even able to drop me off right in front of my home and waited until my wife was able to come out and assist me inside. I'm very happy with Veronica's outstanding service."

***Castrejon Saul***  
***Rider Since January 2012***

"I would like to file a commendation for my driver. The driver was very patient with me. I have never travelled to this address, but my driver took the time to assist me in making sure that I made it to the correct location. This driver went above and beyond the call of duty to make sure that I was safe. Thanks Access!"

***Constance Walker***  
***Rider Since February 2015***

## Building Diversity Skills in the Transit Workplace

Access recently hosted a training class called Building Diversity Skills in the Transit Workplace, which was taught by Russ Parish from the National Transit Institute (NTI). The class was designed to help transit employees maintain effective working relationships by recognizing and responding to the diverse needs of individuals and groups within the transit workplace.



Public transportation is a diverse industry and respecting differences improves the quality of our transit workplace and helps agencies serve their customers better. Mr. Parrish discussed diversity issues and barriers to valuing diversity. During one of the learning activities, the class separated into two groups, where each group played the role of a medical team with nine different patients who were all in need of a heart transplant. The outcome of the activity provided the groups with an awareness of how stereotyping can influence our responses to specific situations.

After attending the class, I gained new insights to understanding diversity and respecting differences in the workplace. Communicating effectively can eliminate and reduce workplace conflict. In addition, improving customer and employee relationships can improve the quality of our transit workplace.

***Onnika Payne***  
***CTSA Analyst***