



# Behind the Scenes

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## Executive Report

During this time of state funded programs cutting transportation for the disabled and local transit agencies cutting back on Dial-A-Ride programs to meet dwindling budgets, then add high gasoline prices to the mix and it equaled beyond expectation ridership gains at Access.

Due to the inability to cut back ADA required paratransit service we have to look elsewhere to cut corners to meet the funding required for service demand, unfortunately with little options vehicle replacement has taken the brunt of the funding short fall. Our vehicle replacement schedule is to replace vehicles at the end of their useful life which is 200,000 miles and four years of service and as you can imagine for a minivan, maintenance needs to be spot on to get these vehicles to last to 200,000 miles. The budget short falls have Access behind in replacement; currently our fleet has 212 vehicles over 200,000 miles. The road back to a healthy fleet will take time; Access has requested \$2.8 million in funding for the next fiscal year to fund the deferred FY13 vehicles. The FY14 budget request also includes \$7.5 million for replacements, if all goes well the fleet could be in significantly better shape by the beginning of 2015. The next two years will be a tough road in our maintenance program to keep this aging fleet in tip top shape to meet our service demands.

*Shelly Verrinder*  
Executive Director

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## Access' 18th Annual Meeting



Over 100 people attended the 18th Annual Access Services Annual Meeting which was held on March 27th at the California Endowment Center in Downtown Los Angeles. After the membership approved the minutes from last year's member meetings and approved the formation of nominating committees, Access staff made two presentations:

- **Technology at Every Turn:** F Scott Jewell, Deputy Executive Director of Administration, discussed Access' use of technology in its operations, specifically the recent implementation of the Stratagen ADEPT reservation, scheduling and dispatching platform, the Transit Access Pass (TAP) Rider ID and the 511 Travelers Information Service. F Scott also discussed future plans for Stratagen that will include phone reservations and a "Manage My Trips" web-based application designed to let riders schedule, view and cancel their own trips online. These enhancements will be implemented within the next year.

- **Demand/Budget Forecasting:** Matthew Avancena, Manager of Planning and Coordination, and I made a presentation on how Access forecasts ridership demand and then translates it into an annual budget. Matthew discussed how we work with economics firm, HDR Decision Economics, every year to try and project our ridership. HDR uses a complex model with a number of variables that has been quite accurate. After Matthew's presentation, I spoke about how we take this ridership number and develop an internal budget which includes both projected operating and capital expenses. We then work with Metro to determine the amount and type of funding the agency will receive. Once this is complete, we create a detailed line-item budget that is ultimately presented to our Board for approval.

After these presentations, we moved on to the Spirit of Accessibility and Jerry Walker awards. Details on the awards and their deserving recipients are detailed elsewhere in this issue.

Overall, it was a great event. If you weren't able to be there and would like copies of the presentations, please e-mail me at [colaiace@accessla.org](mailto:colaiace@accessla.org).

*Andre Colaiace*  
Deputy Executive Director, Planning & Governmental Affairs

## Community Connections - Spirit of Accessibility Award Winner



Each year during the Annual Membership Meeting, Access honors an agency or individual for their significant contributions that resulted in the improved mobility for L.A. County residents. Established in 2000, past recipients of the award have been social service agencies, transit providers, and advocates for the disability community.

This year's winner for the **Spirit of Accessibility Award** is a Volunteer Driver Program called **Community Connections**, a program of Community Senior Services in Claremont. Community Connections empowers older adults and persons with disabilities to remain independent by providing a mileage reimbursement for their friends, neighbors and other community members who provide them with rides.

Prior to presenting the agency with the Spirit of Accessibility Award trophy, staff honored Community Connections by showing a video presentation which featured agency staff, volunteer drivers and customers whose mobility

have been positively impacted since the program started in 2010. Funded with an FTA New Freedom Grant through a joint partnership program with Pomona Valley Transportation Authority, Omnitrans and VTrans (the CTSA for San Bernardino County), Community Connections was instrumental in providing over 270 riders with some form of mileage reimbursement assistance.

Accepting the award on behalf of the program was Ms. Floy A. Biggs, Chief Executive Officer of Community Senior Services.

*Matthew Avancena  
Manager, Planning & Coordination*

## San Gabriel Valley Transit Providers Meeting

On March 28th, representatives from Metro, Foothill Transit, Metrolink, Pasadena ARTS and the El Sol County of Los Angeles Shuttle attended the quarterly meeting of the San Gabriel Valley Transit Providers, this time hosted in El Monte at the offices of Access. The San Gabriel Valley Transit Providers meeting is held quarterly and provides an opportunity for different transit operators to discuss challenges, upcoming service changes and encourage coordination amongst the different providers.

The meeting started with a presentation on the transportation

service that Access provides to its customers. This aided many of the attendees in understanding how Access provides ADA/ Paratransit required service, so that they may concentrate on their fixed route operations.

Representatives from Metro provided additional presentations on Metro's successful efforts to meet Civil Rights obligations with the Federal Transit Administration and also a presentation on the construction and current operations of the recently opened El Monte Station. A separate discussion was had on the new "Silver 2 Silver" program in which

Metro or Foothill TAP card users, can now choose to take either the Silver Line or Foothill Transit's Silver Streak between El Monte and Downtown - depending upon whichever bus comes first.

The Gold Line Foothill Extension construction company provided the final presentation on the current construction underway to extend the existing Metro Gold Line from Pasadena to the city of Azusa with station stops in Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte and Irwindale. The extension is planned to open in 2017 with the intention of taking a lot of traffic pressure off of the I-210 freeway.

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## Jerry Walker Award Winner



The purpose of the **Jerry Walker Commitment to Quality Service Award** is to honor Jerry's contributions to Access by recognizing an exceptional employee who displays the same commitment to providing high quality service. Access is pleased to honor **Mr. Ali Ahmednor**, the 2012 Jerry Walker Commitment to Quality Service Award recipient.

Born in Somalia, Africa, Ali began working for San Gabriel Transit

in 1994. Ali was drawn to the field of paratransit because he wanted to make a difference and help members of the disabled community. He believes that excellent customer service includes escorting customers safely during all parts of their trip. That commitment to safety has led to him being presented with every driver incentive prize and being the first Access driver to reach 100,000 safe driving miles.

Mr. Ahmednor was surprised on March 7, 2013 when he was presented with the award, a monetary prize of \$1,000, a balloon bouquet, a Clippers jersey and tickets to a Clippers game. He was honored again at the Access Annual Membership Meeting on March 27, 2013. San Gabriel Transit

will hold the traveling award at their facility for the remainder of the year.

The Jerry Walker Commitment to Quality Service Award is intended to honor outstanding individuals armed with an intense sense of duty and responsibility to Access customers, dedicated to improving service by consistently placing their needs above all other considerations. Ali Ahmednor exemplifies quality service and his tireless dedication and solid commitment to the safety of Access Services is a testament to the legacy of Jerry Walker.

Congratulations Ali!

*Charace Thompson*  
CTSA Analyst

## Retiring the Keys



The Veterans Memorial Complex is a Community and Recreation Center in Culver City also known as 'The Heart of Screenland' thanks to the thriving Hamlet of film studios. The Center prides itself in government and community awareness not only for their senior citizens but for the community as a whole. When should I stop driving? When should mom or dad stop driving? This difficult and sensitive decision is one most of us will face at some point in our life. It is a delicate conversation with an aging parent(s); loved one and when the time comes, yourself. To make the Culver City senior population aware of the mounting problem, a 'Community Conversations' was held. Invited to participate in this important discussion were Access

Services, California Highway Patrol, Metro, Culver City Bus, Dial-A-Ride and Age Well services.

For Access' Mobility Management staff along with Travel Trainer Monica Marroquin of Mobility Management Partners the morning conversations presented another opportunity to introduce our services to the community and make a connection. For the older California adult, Access Services can and does play a vital role for many seniors who are retiring their car keys. It is a continuation of their independence including saving money and helping to ensure their safety on our streets.

*Erik Washington*  
Mobility Management Counselor

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## Rider Comments

"I am thankful for Access daily. Knowing Access is there for me is comforting. Because of Access, I have a greater quality of life.

I always thank the reservationists & drivers who transport me to and from my appointment. Telling them that I don't know what I would do without their service.

I thank all of the staff within Access who put their time and effort into providing this needed transportation service. It takes a lot of people to work together to get me where I need to go. Thank God for them. There are a lot of elderly who have no one but your service.

I have noticed your service has improved in a number of ways. Access provides me great service most of the time. Like life, sometimes there are mistakes made."

*Patricia, Long Beach  
 Rider since 2004*

## Helping Hand February Winner



Our Helping Hand Program February 2013 award goes to Patricia Mitsuuchi of Rosemead. Ms. Mitsuuchi has been using our services since 1995 and has expressed her appreciation and gratitude for the professional services and support she receives from Access and our Service Provider teams.

In the past months, Ms. Mitsuuchi has:

- Traveled 50 times with no late cancellations or no-shows
- She goes out of her way to recognize staff

A recent commendation at the Abilities Expo from Ms. Mitsuuchi states:

- I am pleased by the service and what Access does for all the customers. I enjoy everybody and do not know how I would get around if Access weren't around. I just want to say thank you.

Overall, Ms. Mitsuuchi is very appreciative of everyone's support and services. For her kindness and appreciation, we had the honor of presenting this wonderful customer, Ms. Mitsuuchi with our Helping Hand pin and balloons on April 10th.

*Hamilton Franco &  
 the Operations Supervisor Team*

## SGVT Meeting (cont.)

The next meeting of the San Gabriel Valley Transit providers was tentatively scheduled for June of 2013 when a number of transit agencies may introduce service changes at the end of the fiscal year.

For further information on the San Gabriel Valley Transit Providers meeting, please feel free to ask either Matthew Avancena or myself.

*Eric Haack  
 Strategic Planner*

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