Executive Report

In previous editions of Behind the Scenes, the 2013 Grantee Management Review of Access was discussed. As many of you know, a deficiency was found and a finding was issued regarding the Access not complying with the 2005 Guidance issued by the Department of Transportation in regards to “origin to destination” service. In short this guidance stated that some individuals may need more than curb to curb service to utilize public transportation and in those cases systems such as Access should provide some form of door to door service. The position of Access has been that Guidance is not binding and the regulations as currently written leave the decision of door to door versus curb to curb up to the local community to decide. Access continues to work with the FTA on resolving this finding but Access staff expects that those fixed route operators going through the Triennial Audit process this year will have a similar finding issued with their reports. If you have any questions on this issue please contact Andre Colaiacce, Deputy Executive Director of Planning & Government Affairs or I.

Shelly Verrinder
Executive Director

Women in Transportation Workshop

The workshop covered basic “soft” skills used in transportation planning such as decision making, time management, running meetings, prioritizing your problems and effective teamwork. These skills are non-technical, yet practical, invaluable and often overlooked. The workshop was open and the environment intimate as attendees were encouraged to share personal anecdotes and real world experiences relating to the material. The event also provided an opportunity to network with transportation professionals from throughout Los Angeles County.

On Thursday, August 8th, Operations Intern Ramon Garcia and I attended a workshop hosted by the Women in Transportation Seminar (WTS) organization. The workshop, which was titled “What You Don’t Know Can Hurt Your Transportation Career”, took place in downtown Los Angeles and was headed by Carl Selinger. Mr. Selinger is a strategic consultant who has worked in transportation planning at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for over thirty years, and has taught graduate-level aviation and transportation planning courses at SUNY Maritime College, Pace University, New Jersey Institute of Technology and City University of New York (York College and City College).

As interns, this workshop provided Ramon and me with skills that will undoubtedly prove to be essential in jumpstarting our careers in transportation. What I have taken away from the workshop is this: while technical skills are very important, your soft skills are the foundation upon which you build your technical skills. Knowing how to communicate, write and manage your time well are all skills that we must not take for granted. Furthermore, it is essential that we identify those soft skills and seek to improve them at each stage of our career.

Mike Tobin
Planning Intern
Diversified Transportation (DT), service provider for the Antelope Valley region, has made great strides in continually providing a safe ride experience for Access customers. One goal that they set was to reduce the number of preventable collisions incurred by Access drivers. As of this writing, DT has gone two hundred and sixty one (261) days without a preventable collision and as each day passes the record continues its upward trajectory.

But DT’s accomplishments don’t end there. DT has also placed emphasis on monitoring events recorded through the on board camera system, SmartDrive and coaching drivers for greater performance. They have stayed consistent maintaining a nearly perfect coaching percentage regarding high risk observations over the last few months. In addition throughout the last three reporting periods, DT has excelled coaching 100% of observations in all SmartDrive categories. Congratulations to Diversified Transportation for maintaining a high standard of safety.

Geoffrey Okamoto
Project Administrator

Standard of Safety!

Western University of Health Sciences Vision & Health Seminar

The Access Services Mobility Management staff, along with Access Intern Justin Catoe, was invited to participate with over two dozen Southern California exhibitors, each playing a vital role in the “Vision and Health Seminar”. The event was sponsored by the Foundation Fighting Blindness and the Western University of Health Sciences, thus providing Pomona residents and the University student body an opportunity to explore current treatments and research advancements for people living with low vision and other health related issues.

The Foundation Fighting Blindness history of funding vital research throughout the world is renowned for its assistance in treatments, cures and prevention for people affected by macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa and the entire spectrum of retinal degenerative diseases. Joining forces in hosting the seminar, Western University is one of the largest graduate schools for the health professions in California. By providing and improving mobility on public transit for over 130,000 clients living with disabilities, Access generates its own “Good Will” publicity through word of mouth. The word most patrons used when stopping at the Access kiosk was “Independence”. The service helps to establish a more self-reliant life. This educational event which showcases Californian exhibitors, is meant to cultivate awareness about retinal diseases and the options that are available for Southern California consumers, PCA’s (Personal Care Attendant) and families.

Erik Washington
Mobility Management Counselor
I am pleased to announce that Mobility Management and Outreach Counselor Steve Wrenn was one of two employees who received the Employee of the Quarter award. Steve’s duties as Mobility Management and Outreach Counselor involve assisting customers who were found ineligible for Access paratransit, and help them find other transportation options. In some cases the customer may require additional referral or assistance that goes beyond traditional transportation services. Often times, in addition to his role as Mobility Counselor, Steve will take on the role as a case worker. In this capacity, Steve will sometimes call family members, social workers or other agencies to inquire or assist on behalf of the customer.

One example of Steve going above and beyond is when a customer called Steve to help her with available transportation options in her area. During the course of their conversation the customer explained to Steve that her wheelchair was not working properly. One thing led to another and the next thing you know Steve was calling various wheelchair repair facilities around the area. After multiple phone calls Steve was able to help the customer by referring her to a repair facility near her house. The initial call started off as a request for transportation referrals but Steve took it upon himself to assist the customer with other mobility-related matters. Steve is a team player who is always willing to assist or do what it takes to get the job done. If there is a community outreach event that falls on a weeknight or weekend, Steve (and his colleague Erik Washington) does not hesitate to attend the event. Access Services congratulates Steve on his award!

Matthew Avancena
Manager, Planning and Coordination

In early September Access Operations Supervisor, Faustino Salvador was honored with the Employee of the Quarter Award. This was well deserved and as Mr. Salvador stated, “hard work does not go unnoticed at Access Services.” Faustino is what some would consider a super sports fanatic, especially when it comes to football. So I thought it would be fitting to quote from the recently retired, Baltimore Raven Linebacker Ray Lewis to paint a picture of Faustino, even though he is a huge Dallas Cowboys fan: “Greatness is a lot of small things done well, stacked up on each other.” Faustino is always willing to assist; his winning attitude, his willingness to learn, his hard work and commitment to Access has definitely not gone without notice. Congratulations Faustino and continue to keep stacking your greatness!

Geoffrey Okamoto
Project Administrator
Rider Comments

“I want to file a ‘smile’/thank-you for all of your drivers since I started with Access. You have all made it possible to get to and from work--without further injury, on time, and to continue earning an honest living.

I’ve learned more about your system—how to book, where you operated and how much time it takes. God Bless you All!

I don’t know how many people know what a ‘hidden treasure’ that Access is—-you are helping people both physically and psychologically/emotionally--preventing isolation and improving the quality of lives.”

Phyllis, Altadena

Presentation Skills and Power Closings for Professionals

On September 11, I had the opportunity to attend and participate in the training “Presentation Skills and Power Closings for Professionals”. The training was offered through the Los Angeles County Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) and was presented here at Access headquarters. The full one day training was conducted by Kevin Catlin, owner, of Insight Strategies, LLC.

The course was offered as primarily a “hands-on” training in which the participant has the opportunity to conduct at least for many presentations to the attendees, and the instructor. Mister Gatlin than would provide constructive feedback as to what had been done correctly, and what improvements could be made for future presentations.

After conducting for miniature presentations, and receiving for periods of critique from both the instructor and the other attendees, I felt I had gained some insight into my methodology for making presentations.

The training was well received, and well attended. There were 15 attendees, including staff from Access, San Gabriel transit, Los Angeles Department of Transportation and numerous other transportation entities.

While I have created and conducted training for many years, this course had me learn several new techniques. I look forward to attending a further advanced course on presentation skills, and would highly recommend it to others.

Kurt C Hagen  
- Access Manager of Eligibility