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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

One part of Access' vision statement is to be a national leader in advocating for universal access to transportation. As autonomous vehicle technology develops, Access is in a unique position to ensure that this technology is accessible.

To that end, I am pleased to announce Access Services has been selected by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as a Transit Bus Automation Strategic Partner in conjunction with the Access Services Paratransit Autonomous Vehicle Pilot project. Access Services will receive \$120,000, via the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), of FTA Public Transportation Innovation funds (49 U.S.C § 5312) to perform specific activities centered around developing an accessible paratransit vehicle that is fully equipped with autonomous technologies. Congratulations are in order for Access Director of Information Technology Bill Tsuei who conceived of and executed the planning for this project.

Access is still waiting to hear whether it will be awarded a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Automated Driving System Demonstration Grant. Staff requested \$10 million for a duration of 4 years to build, test, and operate 8 purpose-built accessible paratransit AVs. For additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director



My First APTA Experience

From July 21-23, 2019, I attended my first APTA (American Public Transportation Association) Transit Board Member and Board Administrator Seminar in Jacksonville, Florida. This seminar was an amazing opportunity to hear speakers on how to be a better and more effective board member.



Saturday began with the theme of "National and Grassroots Advocacy". A panel spoke about the importance of "knowing who you serve" and what your role is in providing quality transportation to your riders. We learned about what APTA is doing on the legislative side in Washington, DC to enhance the rider experience and to lobby for more federal money for public transportation. Another interesting aspect that I learned was that if state funding doesn't come through, neither will federal funding.

Sunday was another exciting day where the theme of the day was "Understanding Ridership Trends." This sparked a lively conversation on how transit ridership across the country is going down because of Transportation Network Companies like Uber and Lyft. TNCs and high fares were cited as deterrents to using transit. Also, the issues of homelessness, safety and dirty stations were attributed to the ridership decrease.

Monday was another full day. The theme of the day was "The Changing Mobility Landscape: What Boards Need to Know and Do." Discussions centered around the ongoing changes in the board members responsibility to the agencies that we serve. "What is our agency today and where do we want our agency to go?" was a question posed to all board members. Speakers stressed that it is CRITICAL that the message of our agency is clear and known by all people that use the service. The question was presented, "Who do you think you're serving on the board?" After several different

My First APTA Experience *continued*

answers, the speaker replied, "You are serving the entire community, tax payers and all."

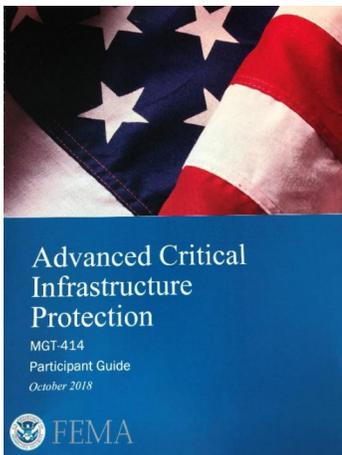
The day also included a tour of Jacksonville Transit Authorities (JTA) new facility, their monorail/light rail system, rides on autonomous vehicles and electric buses, and finally a tour of their yard. JTA treated all of us to the Opening Game of their Minor league team, The Jumbo Shrimp. Tuesday, we listened to speakers from Toastmasters on how to be a more effective public speaker. I feel that the highlight of the seminar was networking with board members of other agencies. They were impressed by Access' advances in technology that I shared with them, such as the "Where's My Ride" App and Online Reservations.

All in all, I learned a lot about how I can be a better and more effective board member. I learned a lot about fixed-route transit and I'm interested in learning a lot more. The days were long, but the knowledge and experience gained were priceless, as well as the friendships made throughout the nation. Thank you APTA, The Hyatt Regency (Jacksonville) and JTA for your hospitality and allowing me to be part of this experience. Thank you to Access for sending me to my first APTA Conference in my 11 years serving on the board of Access, and I would be remiss if I didn't thank my fellow board members, Lee Burner and Dolores Nason, as well as Access staffmember F Scott Jewell for ensuring a fun and memorable seminar in Jacksonville, Florida.

Theresa May de Vera
Access Services Board Member



Training to Protect Critical Transportation Infrastructure in Los Angeles County



Last month, I attended a two-part Infrastructure Protection Certificate program through the Federal Emergency Management Agency held in Glendale. The program, brought to the region by the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, trains emergency managers to identify, plan for, and respond to threats and hazards to the infrastructure systems that make up the critical lifelines communities rely upon every day. Instructors from the National Emergency Response and Recovery Training Center at Texas A&M University traveled to our region to deliver the course to a group of emergency managers representing multiple agencies and many of the cities within Los Angeles County.

Critical infrastructure includes the systems and assets so vital to a community that their destruction would have a debilitating impact to security, public health, and the economy. These systems include the energy, food and agriculture, and communications sectors, among many others. One such sector considered critical infrastructure is transportation, which includes paratransit services. As the Emergency Management Coordinator for Access Services, I paid special attention to how we can protect the transportation sector. A major objective of the program, however, is to highlight the interdependencies between critical infrastructure sectors. For example, the transportation sector is dependent upon the energy and information technology sectors to execute operations. Similarly, the healthcare and food sectors depend on the transportation sector to function.

Training to Protect Critical Transportation Infrastructure in Los Angeles County *continued*

A large portion of the program was dedicated to learning and applying the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and the Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR). The THIRA and SPR are comprehensive processes jurisdictions can use to identify the threats and hazards that are the most likely to occur and cause the most significant impacts. This process is integral to decision making about how to best prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies impacting critical infrastructure. In addition, the program covered the importance of resilience, the ability to tolerate, absorb, or adapt to an adverse occurrence. Resilience enables critical infrastructure agencies to continue providing services or to quickly reconstitute service delivery following a major disaster.

In order to apply the lessons learned from the classroom, teams were assigned to perform a site assessment of critical infrastructure locations throughout Los Angeles County. My team was assigned the Rose Bowl Stadium and conducted a thorough site assessment to identify threats and hazards with the potential to impact the stadium's operations. I plan to bring the lessons learned during this experience to Access Services by conducting similar site assessments at Access' and our contractors' facilities. The course also provided the opportunity to expand relationships between Access' emergency management program and emergency managers at partner agencies across Los Angeles County.

Matthew Topoozian
Emergency Management Coordinator

Access staff accepted to WTS and APTA Leadership Programs



I am pleased to announce that Randy Johnson, Access' Director of Government Affairs and Outreach, has been selected for the Leadership APTA Class of 2020. Leadership APTA is the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) flagship professional development program designed to develop and support those experienced managers and leaders aspiring to hold senior and executive leadership positions in APTA, their organizations, and the public transportation industry.

I am also pleased to announce that Melissa Mungia has been accepted to the 2019 WTS Mid-Career Leadership Program! Melissa serves as Access' Business Analyst and is responsible for data management, research and reporting, and oversight of various business processes. This week-long program is designed to bring new ways of thinking and new perspectives to help women become more effective leaders in the transportation industry. It also provides participants with powerful experiential learning and creative collaborations with other high-potential leaders in the industry.

Andre Colaiace
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Rider Commendations

"I would like to file a commendation for reservationist Karen from the west-central region. I would have never known Karen was new to the Access family. She did such an excellent job assisting me and provided exceptional customer service. I want to say Thank you, Karen, for being so kind and awesome."

Karyn Bradford
Rider since June 2008

"I would like to file a commendation for my driver. She's the best driver I received in over three months, and I think she deserves a raise. She was wonderful, fantastic, super, courteous, and sweet, what a beautiful personality. I had a great time while riding in her vehicle, and you couldn't get a better personality for the job. Thanks for the wonderful experience."

Robert Constantino
Rider since September 2004

Guide Dogs of America Training



Last month Access Services hosted a best practice session that concentrated on interacting and servicing blind or partially sighted customers that travel with service animals.

The session took place at Access Headquarters in El Monte where we had over 40 attendees that included risks management, safety staff, road supervisors and trainers from our contractors, as well as Access staff from multiple departments. Our special guest speaker was Lorri M. Bernson accompanied by her service dog Captain. Lorri is the Media & Community Liaison for Guide Dogs of America and has firsthand experience with Access as she is a frequent rider.

The attendees received insights on Guide Dogs of America, where training occurs for service animals, proper etiquette when interacting with people with service animals, frequently asked questions about people with guide dogs, and best practices for assisting customers. Lorri also provided stories about her experiences when riding Access and was very complimentary of our service and our knowledge of providing service to the visually impaired community.

Access also took the opportunity to review policies and procedures that were related to the topic. Lorri thanked Access for inviting her to speak and for our proactive engagement to ensure we are at the forefront of understanding the community we serve. Attendees were thankful to Lorri and Captain for their time and insight and Access was excited that so many contractors attended this session to ensure we deliver the best riding experience possible to our customers with service animals.

Rogelio Gomez
Operations Manager