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Behind the Scenes

Executive Director's Report

The Access Services Board of Directors met on December 2, 2019.

A presentation was given highlighting the Jerry Walker Commitment to Quality Service Award to Ms. Vanessa Angel.

The Board approved the Consent Calendar, which included items that extended the contracts for TAP card production, on-board vehicle camera/recording system services and demand forecasting services. The Board also awarded a contract for state advocacy services and reappointed eight Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members. The Board approved the extension of the Executive Director's contract to December 2, 2022.

The Board tabled the item related to an award of a contract for Brokerage Services, which included an expansion of the Parents with Disabilities program.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be on January 13, 2020.

Andre Colaiace
Executive Director



CAC and TPAC elect new officers

Access' Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee (TPAC) recently elected new officers for Fiscal Year 2020. The CAC elected Dina Garcia as chairperson and Tina Fofoa as vice-chair. TPAC elected Gracie Davis as chairperson and Luz Echavarria as vice-chair.

Dina Garcia was born and raised in the Los Angeles area. As a person with a disability, Dina learned the importance of advocacy from a young age. She watched her parents advocate for her to attend a "regular" school, convince her teachers to allow her to use a typewriter in school, and fight for her to attend her neighborhood high school.



Dina Garcia

Resources Center since 2007. Tina's passion is to help people and advocate for disability rights.

TPAC Chair Gracie Davis joined the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in March 2000 and is a Section Manager in the Community Transportation Department. She is primarily responsible for coordinating and administering the eligibility

Dina's biggest passion has been her advocacy with Access Services. She has been a rider for almost 25 years. In this time, she has been a member of the CAC as well as the Quality Services Subcommittee. Dina has also been an active part of the Paratransit Riders Coalition since its inception in 2002.

CAC vice-chair Tina Fofoa is a long-term member of the CAC and a volunteer for the Disabled

CAC and TPAC elect new officers *continued*

certification program for the company's ACCESS Paratransit service as required by the ADA. Gracie ensures that the application, assessment and appeal procedures are fair and equitable to ensure compliance with the intent of the ADA law.



Gracie Davis

Gracie is a strong advocate for persons with disabilities with more than 30 years' experience in the medical industry and over 18 years in the paratransit field. She is a certified Yoga instructor, holds a Transit/Paratransit Management Certificate from Pepperdine University, and is certified as an Emergency Rescue Analyst for Los Angeles County.

TPAC vice-chair Luz Echavarria is the Supervising Transportation Planner overseeing the Specialized Transit Section of the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT). She manages a diverse team of planners, responsible for two distinct on demand transit services "LANow" and the Cityride program. LANow is an app-based service serving several areas in West Los Angeles.

Ms. Echavarria also manages the City's on demand paratransit service and City's Charter Bus program. LADOT Cityride Program provides accessible demand response transportation service to individuals within the City of L.A. who are 65 years old and older or who have a qualifying disability.

Matthew Avancena
Director, Planning and Coordination

CalACT's fall 2019 Conference

The California Association of Coordinated Transportation (CalACT) held its annual fall conference in Santa Barbara, California attracting transit professionals from throughout the state. The theme of this conference focused upon addressing concerns that "keep transportation professionals up at night."

The Opening Keynote focused on how public transit is a valuable service throughout the world that responds to the needs of a community. The closing session made by the Federal Transit Administration's Region 9 Administrator, Ray Tellis, spoke of existing and anticipated funding opportunities from FTA.



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CalACT's fall 2019 Conference *continued*

The entire conference had a variety of educational sessions, presented by industry professionals which addressed issues that transit is wrestling with today.

In the area of paratransit, there were sessions on recent ADA regulations and ways that agencies are reducing the high costs of paratransit through the introduction of innovative technologies.

Access has been a member of CalACT for many years and the annual conferences are an opportunity for staff to learn from their colleagues. Many different systems are facing the same challenges and it is always valuable to have a forum where experts can speak to how they have addressed those challenges in their system.

Eric J. Haack
Strategic Planner

CTSA Extension debuts Guest Speaker Forum

Access' CTSA Extension Program expanded its Learning and Development Program to include the launch of the agency's Guest Speaker Forum. Desmond Blackburn, with IGNITEU Peak Performance Coaching, led this initiative in his well-received presentation, "How to Survive and Thrive: Building a Dynamic Team in the Organization".



The key note address touched upon topics such as welcoming change, progressing in the work place, and personal development. Participants engaged in discussions highlighting the significance of team building and collaboration in meeting organizational goals. During a lively networking hour, participants were given the opportunity to share and interact with one another in smaller groups. The forum concluded with a brief Q & A session and an opportunity to reflect on final thoughts.

With the success of its opening Guest Speaker Forum, CTSA Extension continues to deliver valuable and versatile training platforms: fulfilling its mission to connect transportation professionals and social service representatives to bridge Los Angeles County's transit needs.

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Rider Commendations

"Valencia Young's customer service went above and beyond and I would like to file a commendation for her. She was patient, informative, and has a sense of humor. Thanks to her I can now better understand the booking procedure."

Monique Jones
Rider since January 2011

"I am filing a smile for my reservationist Mariana. Mariana is an angel and was polite and professional. I admit I was a little cranky at moments but un-swayed, Mariana maintained a patient demeanor throughout the call. She deserves a raise!"

Karyn Bradford
Rider since June 2008

Metro's Aging and Disability Forum

Last month, L.A. Metro hosted its Aging and Disability Forum in the historic train ticketing section of L.A.'s Union Station. The event coincided with the release of a report by Metro on the anticipated demand on transportation services throughout Los Angeles County by members of the senior and disability community.

Metro CEO Phil Washington and Jonaura Wisdom, Metro's Chief Civil Rights Officer and Access Boardmember, presented on the efforts that Metro has made to make their fixed route service more accessible.

L.A. County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl presented on the importance of improving existing fixed route and paratransit services and spoke specifically to Access Services' efforts to develop a unique program like the Parents with Disabilities Program and praised Access for its plans to expand the program county-wide.



The Forum had two panels in which advocates and social service representatives spoke of different resources available to the senior and disability communities and the importance of coordination. The Forum concluded with a valuable

and interactive session in which audience members could provide their own input on the challenges they see associated with the anticipated growth in demand for services by the community.

Metro's Aging and Disability Forum and the corresponding Aging and Disability report were the result of considerable efforts from disability and senior advocates and staff from Metro, Access Services, and other organizations.

Eric J. Haack
Strategic Planner