



Board Report

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FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MARCH 16, 2022

SUBJECT: ACCESS SERVICES - QUARTERLY UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status report on Access Services - ADA Paratransit.

ISSUE

This is a quarterly update on Access Services (Access).

BACKGROUND

Access is the Los Angeles County transit agency that provides paratransit services on behalf of Metro and 45 other fixed route operators, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Eligibility for Access is based on a person's ability to utilize accessible fixed-route buses and trains in Los Angeles County; Access currently has 117,000 registered riders. Access' paratransit service is a next-day, shared-ride, curb-to-curb service with additional assistance available to qualified individuals. The service operates throughout most of the County of Los Angeles and is operated by six contractors in the following regions: Eastern, Southern, West Central, Northern, Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley. Access provides service to customers who are traveling between locations that are located within 3/4 of a mile of local bus routes and rail lines. Customers call Access' service providers directly to make trip reservations or can book trips online.

DISCUSSION

Recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic

In FY22, Access has been operating its pre-pandemic, next-day, shared-ride service model. Other developments of note include:

- The most recent Omicron COVID surge in Los Angeles County led to a decline in paratransit trip requests in late December and January, which, combined with far less traffic congestion, resulted in the system's best monthly on-time performance of the fiscal year at 95 percent.

Agency operations staff continues to be in touch with Access' contractors on a daily basis to monitor how this COVID surge, in addition to overall labor shortages, is affecting their ability to deliver service. Access' contractors are preparing for a return to more normal conditions over the coming months as the Omicron surge fades and trip demand and traffic increase.

- As of late December, Access staff decided to temporarily cease in-person eligibility evaluations at the Commerce, Palmdale and Santa Clarita evaluation centers. All new applicant evaluations will be conducted via phone until further notice.
- Global supply chain issues, particularly for automotive computer chips, have led to substantial delays in vehicle deliveries to Access. At this time, the Agency has issued purchase orders for 128 replacement accessible replacement vehicles (27 Ford cutaways and 101 Dodge ProMaster vans) and now expects delivery starting in June 2022. Overall, an additional 231 vehicles will need to be replaced by the end of Fiscal Year 2023 as part of the Agency's capital program.
- Qualified vehicle operators and other personnel continue to be in short supply in Los Angeles County and across the United States. The taxi industry, which provided 50 percent of Access' trips pre-pandemic, has been slow to recover and several taxi companies have ceased operations entirely.

Overall, Access' contractors have been working diligently to recruit and retain qualified employees and are exploring partnerships with various Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) as well as other innovative partnerships as a way to build future capacity. Access has launched a campaign to assist with this effort by publicizing that our contractors are looking for qualified personnel. These efforts include disseminating information via the Agency e-mail list, the Agency website and through the Agency reservations phone tree. A partnership is also being discussed with Metro Human Resources. Also, a social media advertising campaign is being considered.

FY22 Operational Performance

In FY22, from July 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021, Access has provided 1,132,849 trips, which is approximately 4.1 percent less than projected. This is about 67 percent of the number of trips provided during the same pre-pandemic period in 2019.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are in place to ensure that optimal and equitable levels of service are provided throughout the region. A comparison summary of the main KPIs is provided below through January 2022:

Key Performance Indicator	Standard	FY21	FY22 YTD*
On Time Performance	≥ 91%	92.6%	90.6%
Excessively Late Trips	≤ 0.10%	0.07%	0.10%
Excessively Long Trips	≤ 5.0%	0.5%	3.3%
Missed Trips	≤ 0.75%	0.36%	0.45%
Denials	0	4	4
Access to Work On Time Performance	≥ 94%	97.8%	96.8%
Average Hold Time (Reservations)	≤ 120	52	58
Calls On Hold > 5 Min (Reservations)	≤ 5%	2.2%	2.6%
Calls On Hold > 5 Min (ETA)	≤ 10%	1.5%	2.1%
Complaints Per 1,000 Trips	≤ 4.0	2.5	3.1
Preventable Incidents per 100,000 miles	≤ 0.25	0.15	0.21
Preventable Collisions per 100,000 miles	≤ 0.50	0.50	0.76
Miles Between Road Calls	≥ 25,000	64,040	63,220

*Statistical data through January 2022

While overall service remains strong and most KPIs are being met, on-time performance year-to-date is still slightly below standard as a result of the challenges outlined above. As discussed, on-time performance did rebound in January. The increase in Excessively Long Trips year over year, while well below standard, reflects the reintroduction of shared rides and increased traffic congestion. The increase in preventable incidents and collisions reflects an increase in passengers and traffic. Contractors who do not meet certain KPIs must provide a service improvement plan and are also assessed liquidated damages.

Other Operational Initiatives

Rancho Los Amigos Pilot Project: As part of the federal Mobility for All grant Access received in 2020, Access has partnered with Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey to test technologies to help customers and drivers connect at large facilities. Bluetooth beacons are being installed to help drivers know they have arrived at the correct location and to alert customers via their smart phones that their ride has arrived. This project is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2022.

Antelope Valley Contract Start Up: Access recently awarded a new operations contract in the Antelope Valley region to First Transit, Inc. who will be taking over the region's operations from incumbent Keolis Transit Services. Access recently issued a Notice to Proceed to First Transit in anticipation of a May 1, 2022 start-up date. Staff from Access and both contractors are working collaboratively towards a smooth transition and riders should benefit from several technology enhancements that will be new to the region, such as online reservations and access to the Where's My Ride App which will allow them to check their trip status and provide feedback via their smartphone.

Working with Community Partners

Community Meeting: On Saturday, January 15, Access hosted a virtual Community Meeting. There were 75 guests who called in or participated via Zoom. Staff from multiple departments presented on a variety of topics. Some of the discussion topics included information on the customer satisfaction survey, technology enhancements, paratransit operations, updates to the eligibility process, and a no-show process overview. After the presentations, Access staff opened the floor for customer questions about the presentations and any other concerns they wanted to discuss.

Independent Living Center Coordination: Access staff from Operations, Government Affairs and Mobility Management recently met with representatives from five of the six LA County Independent Living Centers (ILCs), as well as a representative from the California Foundation of ILCs. The discussion focused on how the ILCs and Access can collaborate and break down barriers to transportation. Topics of discussion included participating in Access' customer satisfaction survey and how to better communicate about various Access programs. Participants agreed to have regular meetings going forward.

Customer Satisfaction Survey: Access began conducting a customer satisfaction survey in January 2022. The survey will give Access customers who have taken trips on Access in the past year the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences using the service. The survey will be conducted via e-mail, text, and phone, and the results will be made available in April.

Access continues to consult on a variety of issues with its community and public agency partners, including the Aging and Disability Transportation Network (ADTN), the Los Angeles City and County Commissions on Disabilities, Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center and various Metro departments. Feedback and suggestions from these groups and Access' own Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee continue to inform the Agency's policies.

EQUITY PLATFORM

,Access' most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey, in which demographic data was collected, will become available in April 2022. Enhanced technology, which includes online reservations and the Where's My Ride application (real-time trip information/trip rating/customer comments via smartphone), are now available to most Access customers and Access is working on expanding access to all customers by the end of this calendar year. According to Access' recent survey, 74 percent of customers have access to the internet, and of those, 75 percent have a smart phone. Riders who do not have access to technology like a smart phone or the internet can call the reservation line to get the same information regarding their trips.

Access staff have been included on several important task forces, such as the I-710 Task Force and the Access for All Program working group modeling how Metro's Equity Platform seeks to better address the transportation needs of people with disabilities. As stated above, Access recently held a community meeting and plans to hold another one in the summer. These meetings are held via Zoom and designed to allow any customer to both receive information about Access and to ask staff direct

questions about their service experience. Accommodations are made, such as closed captioning, translation services, materials in braille and large print are available upon request to ensure all customers can participate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system

Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity

NEXT STEPS

Access is in the process of completing the following:

- Preparation of the Agency's FY 2023 draft budget;
- Enhancements (as detailed above at Rancho Los Amigos) to the *Where's My Ride* (WMR) app using \$330,000 Mobility for All federal grant funds;
- Customer testing of online reservations in the Northern region (San Fernando Valley);
- An analysis of customer satisfaction survey results;
- Continued implementation of the recently-awarded Antelope Valley region contract.

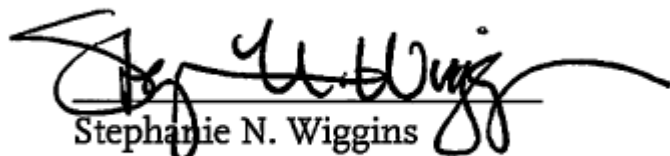
Prepared by: Andre Colaiace, Executive Director, Access Services, (213) 270-6007

Fayma Ishaq, Accessibility Program Manager, (213) 922-4925

Giovanna Gogreve, Sr. Manager, Transportation Planning, 213-922-2835

Michelle Navarro, Sr. Executive Officer of Finance, 213-922-3056

Reviewed by: Nalini Ahuja, Chief Financial Officer, 213-922-3088



Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer