



Board Report

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FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
JANUARY 17, 2024

SUBJECT: ACCESS SERVICES - SEMI-ANNUAL UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

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

ISSUE

This is a semi-annual 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 110,000 registered riders. Access’ paratransit service is a next-day, shared-ride, curb-to-curb service with additional assistance available to qualified individuals. The service is operated by six contractors in the following regions: Eastern, Southern, West Central, Northern, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valley. Access provides service to customers traveling between locations within 3/4 of a mile of local bus routes and rail lines. Customers call Access service providers directly to make trip reservations or book trips online.

DISCUSSION

FY24 Operational Performance

Access has provided more than 1.1 million trips as of October 2023, which is 7 percent higher than forecasted. Passenger trips are currently at 88.4 percent of pre-Covid levels compared to 2019.

Overall, Access’ contractors are now fully staffed with drivers and key personnel in all six service regions, which has helped Access meet nearly all of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) through October 2023; complaints per 1,000 trips continues to decrease from the prior fiscal year.

Attachment A has the KPIs established to ensure equitable service levels are provided throughout all regions of Los Angeles County. For more detailed information on Access’ overall system statistics by

service region, please see Access' monthly Board Box report at http://accessla.org/about_us/publications.html.

Other Operational Initiatives - Update

Antelope Valley Operations and Maintenance Facility: One of the main goals of Access' recently adopted 2022-2026 Strategic Plan is the development of Access-owned or controlled paratransit operations and maintenance facilities. In November 2022, the Access Board approved the purchase of land in Lancaster, CA for the development and construction of a paratransit operations and maintenance facility. This year, the Access Board approved the purchase of additional land to accommodate future fleet expansion, provide for on-site fueling and electric charging infrastructure. The facility is projected to open in early 2026.

Access Flex Transportation Network Company (TNC) Pilot Program: Access' Southern Region has implemented a TNC pilot program called Access Flex where the contractor provides a limited number of ADA paratransit trips with TNCs such as Uber, as well as non-Access certified taxis. Access Flex is a "rider choice" program whereby TNCs and taxis are only sent to customers who opt into the program. The program was developed to provide additional operational capacity during peak times. Implemented in July 2023, the program now has over 150 riders that have fully opted into the program and more than 900 trips have been completed. The pilot program is being evaluated on an on-going basis for cost effectiveness, efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

Electric Paratransit Vehicle Pilot Program: Access has a total of 1,319 vehicles available for ADA paratransit service including taxis, minivans, and sedans. The majority of the fleet is regular gas with 16% CNG powered. Access has identified the large Dodge Ram ProMaster as the most suitable model for conversion to an accessible electric vehicle. The ProMaster is scheduled to clear federally required safety testing in February 2024, after which it will be available for purchase. Access staff are also proactively working with other vehicle manufacturers to determine if their electric vehicles may be a fit for Access' operational needs.

2028 Olympics/Paralympics Planning: Access staff recently met with Metro to discuss the 2028 Olympics/Paralympics and to discuss concepts for an Access operations and maintenance facility to support the games. Furthermore, Access discussed operational planning for the Olympics/Paralympics, including site planning and security requirements at the Olympic venues.

Other Community Initiatives - Update

Aging & Disability Transportation Network (ADTN) Summit: Metro, Access, and the Aging and Disability Transportation Network (ADTN) recently held a virtual summit. The public was invited to share ideas on how Metro and Access can enhance their support for the transportation needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities. During the summit, ADTN members acknowledged the advocacy efforts and the successful initiatives that have been implemented to address the transportation needs of this population, including the expansion of the Parents with Disability program countywide.

Community Meeting: Access hosted a virtual community meeting on September 23, 2023. A variety of operational topics, such as Access' Flex program and transfer locations were discussed and riders in attendance were able to ask questions and get assistance with operational issues directly from Access staff. Assistance was provided on how to use the Where's My Ride app and how to apply for Access.

Spirit of Accessibility Award: Access held its Annual Membership meeting in November, which was attended by Metro and numerous municipal and local operator representatives. One of the highlights of the meeting was the presentation of Access' *Spirit of Accessibility Award* to Metro's *On the Move Riders Program*, which has been instrumental in showcasing how public transportation can be a transformative force in enhancing the lives of older adults in Los Angeles County.

Working with Community Partners: Access continues to consult on a variety of issues with its community and public agency partners, including its own Community Advisory Committee (CAC), the Aging and Disability Transportation Network (ADTN), the Los Angeles City and County Commissions on Disabilities (LACCOD), Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, and various Metro departments.

EQUITY PLATFORM

By federal mandate, Access exclusively serves people with disabilities. Most recently, Access analyzed its service area map to determine the percentage of riders served in Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). From January 1, 2023, through October 31, 2023, about 46.1 percent of all trips taken by 45,000 Access riders were picked up in EFCs. As EFCs comprise approximately 40 percent of Los Angeles County, this shows that EFCs are being proportionately and well served by Access.

Access recently completed an analysis of the equity impacts of Metro's NextGen plan on its service area and riders. ADA paratransit services must be provided up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a fixed-route bus or rail line. Thus, paratransit service areas can grow or shrink based on the fixed-route footprint. The analysis focused on trip data from October 2022 to March 2023. Over that period, the service map reductions would have affected 681 riders and 412 locations for a total of 7,854 trips, mostly in the Porter Ranch area of the San Fernando Valley. Based on this data, the Access Services Board of Directors approved a new service area map policy that effectively kept the boundaries of the ADA paratransit service area the same, maintaining service to existing customers in the affected area.

On a semi-annual basis, Access conducts countywide community meetings designed to allow customers and stakeholders to receive information about Access and ask staff direct questions about their service experience. Closed captioning, language translation and interpretation services, braille, and large print materials are available upon request to ensure all customers throughout Los Angeles County can participate. The next community meeting is planned for early 2024.

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 working on the following:

- Implementing a contract award for paratransit services in Access' Eastern (San Gabriel Valley) region to San Gabriel Transit, Inc.
- Seeking grant funding for Access-owned operations and maintenance facilities and its electric vehicle pilot project.
- Developing the FY25 budget request.
- Initiating the FY24 customer survey via both text message and telephone. Results should be available in April 2024.

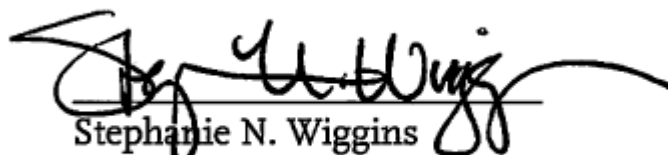
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Access Services Key Performance Indicators

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