Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

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FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
October 19, 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 112,000 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 can book trips online.

DISCUSSION

COVID-19 Service Restoration

As the region emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, Access is making progress in addressing operational challenges as outlined below:

- **Continuing shortages of qualified drivers and key personnel:** Like other transit systems in Los Angeles County and nationwide, Access' contractors are having difficulty hiring and retaining qualified drivers and other key personnel, which affected some Key Performance Indicators in FY22. However, recent funding in the FY23 budget, including wages combined with other efforts, including a social media advertising campaign, has improved driver hiring and retention. Since May, Access' contractors' have added a net of 129 drivers to the system,

and four (Northern, Southern, Santa Clarita & Antelope Valley) of the six operating regions are fully staffed with drivers.

- **Continuing shortages of taxi subcontractor capacity:** Prior to the pandemic, approximately 50 percent of Access' trips were serviced by taxicabs, which enhanced system performance and overall cost efficiency. The pandemic has reduced available taxicabs in the region and, as a result, 32 percent of Access' trips are currently serviced by taxicabs. The proposed FY23 budget also included funding to compensate taxi drivers for significantly increased costs to encourage them to continue serving Access' clients. In addition, Access' staff has been working with the taxi industry to determine if other barriers prevent additional taxis from performing trips. This effort will be helped by the recent appointment of Access' Executive Director, Andre Colaiace, to the City of Los Angeles Board of Taxicab Commissioners by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

- **Continuing shortages of replacement vehicles:** The FY23 budget contained funding for 363 replacement vehicles. At this time, Access expects production of 103 vehicles to start later this year, with potential delivery in early 2023. Access staff is working with suppliers to get a delivery timeline on the remaining vehicles. As detailed in prior reports, the timing on vehicle deliveries remains uncertain due to supply/chain issues.

FY22 and FY23 Operational Performance

In FY22, Access provided 2,339,891 trips, which is approximately 8 percent less than projected. This is about 61 percent of the trips provided during the same pre-pandemic period in FY19.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are in place to ensure optimal and equitable service levels are provided throughout the region. Overall system statistics are published monthly in Access' Board Box report. After an internal review and consultation with its stakeholder committees and its Board, Access recently modified two of its KPIs. The KPI for preventable collisions was changed from .50 collisions per 100,000 miles to .75 collisions per 100,000 miles to reflect the operational environment better while still emphasizing safety. The new KPI is more realistic but still aggressive compared to peer agencies. Secondly, Access modified its "Denial" KPI to conform to federal regulations and exclude denials due to call taker error. These errors, while rare, will still result in additional training of the call taker and possible liquidated damages for the contractor.

A comparison summary of the main KPIs is provided below:

Key Performance Indicators	**Standard**	**FY22**	**FY23 YTD***
On Time Performance	≥ 91%	89.8%	92.5%

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Excessively Late Trips	≤ 0.10%	0.14%	0.03%
Excessively Long Trips	≤ 5.0%	3.6%	3.6%
Missed Trips	≤ 0.75%	0.59%	0.41%
Denials	0	6	0
Access to Work On Time Performance	≥ 94%	95.8%	97.1%
Average Initial Hold Time (Reservations)	≤ 120	66	63
Calls On Hold > 5 Min (Reservations)	≤ 5%	3.2%	2.6%
Calls On Hold > 5 Min (ETA)	≤ 10%	2.8%	1.7%
Complaints Per 1,000 Trips	≤ 4.0	3.2	3.0
Preventable Incidents per 100,000 miles	≤ 0.25	0.20	0.32
Preventable Collisions per 100,000 miles	≤ 0.75	0.74	0.84
Miles Between Road Calls	≥ 25,000	58,746	54,212

* Statistical data through August 15, 2022

Overall, while most KPIs were met or close to being met in FY22, it was a more challenging year due to increased demand, traffic along with driver and other staff shortages. FY23 is off to a strong start, but the start of school in mid-August signals the start of a more difficult operating environment characterized by increased demand and substantially more traffic. Contractors who do not meet KPIs must provide a service improvement plan and are also assessed liquidated damages.

Other Operational Initiatives

Analyzing the use of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs): Access staff has proposed a pilot project that would allow its contractors to provide a limited number of ADA trips utilizing TNCs like Uber, as well as non-Access certified taxicabs. The proposal, which was developed to provide additional operational capacity to Access' contractors during peak times, envisioned a "rider choice" program whereby TNCs and taxis would only be sent to customers who opt into the program. Anecdotally, Access knows that many of its customers use TNCs and will be conducting a survey to obtain additional insight into this issue. After consultation with its Board and stakeholders, a Working Group has been formed and will further analyze this proposal.

Facilities Plan: Access relies on its contractors to provide suitable operating facilities to perform ADA paratransit services. While this has generally worked for Access since its inception, staff believes, for both economic and operational reasons, that they should control, and ideally own their own operating facilities to ensure that quality, consistent ADA paratransit services are provided over the coming decades.

Access has submitted its Facilities Plan to Metro for consideration as Metro develops the Mobility Concept Plan in support of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic games. Access will seek other outside grant funding opportunities going forward as it develops projects. More information on this project will be provided in future reports.

Working with Community Partners

Community Meeting: On Saturday, August 6th, Access hosted a virtual community meeting via Zoom. The meeting was available in English and Spanish with closed captioning. Almost 90 members of the public participated. The agenda included a Customer Relations update about the Operations Monitoring Center (OMC) and Access' new coupons. Staff also provided a technology update on the Where's My Ride application (app); information on Eligibility and Renewals; and an Operations update. After the presentations, riders were given the opportunity to ask questions of Access staff.

Access Community Advisory Committee (CAC): Access staff continuously works with CAC members to discuss initiatives and ideas to improve service. Recently, the following three (3) CAC Subcommittees were established to work on a variety of issues:

- The Operations Subcommittee completed a thorough review of KPIs and service standards and a revamping of lost & found procedures;
- The Communications Subcommittee has developed an outline for a rider-facing video to provide tips on making reservations (new);
- The Eligibility Subcommittee will focus on reviewing the eligibility and certification process (new).

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 committees continue to inform Access' policies. As the pandemic recedes, Access anticipates increased attendance at community events.

EQUITY PLATFORM

By federal mandate, Access paratransit exclusively serves people with disabilities. As detailed in prior reports, Access' most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey collected a wealth of demographic data and can be found on the Access website www.accessla.org. The survey showed high satisfaction (85 percent) with Access' paratransit services. Staff is in the process of analyzing the results to determine potential initiatives to enhance the service. Enhanced technology, which includes online reservations and the Where's My Ride application (real-time trip information/trip rating/customer comments via smartphone), is now available and accessible to all Access customers. Access is planning a systemwide marketing campaign to increase awareness of these options. 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 is forming a Working Group comprised of transit professionals, customers, and Board

members to discuss and analyze opportunities to add operational capacity by potentially including TNCs and non-certified taxis in Access' service model. Access countywide community 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. Closed captioning, translation services, and braille and large print materials are available upon request to ensure all customers throughout Los Angeles County 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:

- Forming a Working Group made up of transit professionals, customers, and Board members to discuss and analyze other ways of increasing operational capacity, such as the use of TNCs and non-certified taxis

- Initiating pilot program for accessible electric paratransit vehicles

- Continuing to assist Access contractors through Access' Contractor Hiring Assistance Program

- Seeking other grant funding for Access' operating facilities

- Enhancing *Where's My Ride* (WMR) app using $330,000 Mobility for All federal grant funds (anticipated completion by November 2022)

- Launching marketing campaign to raise awareness of Where's My Ride and online reservations

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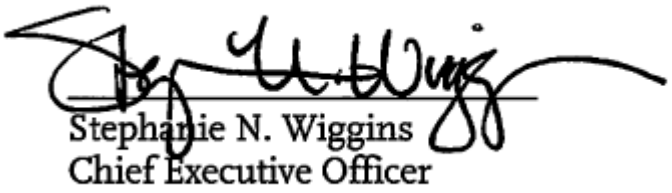


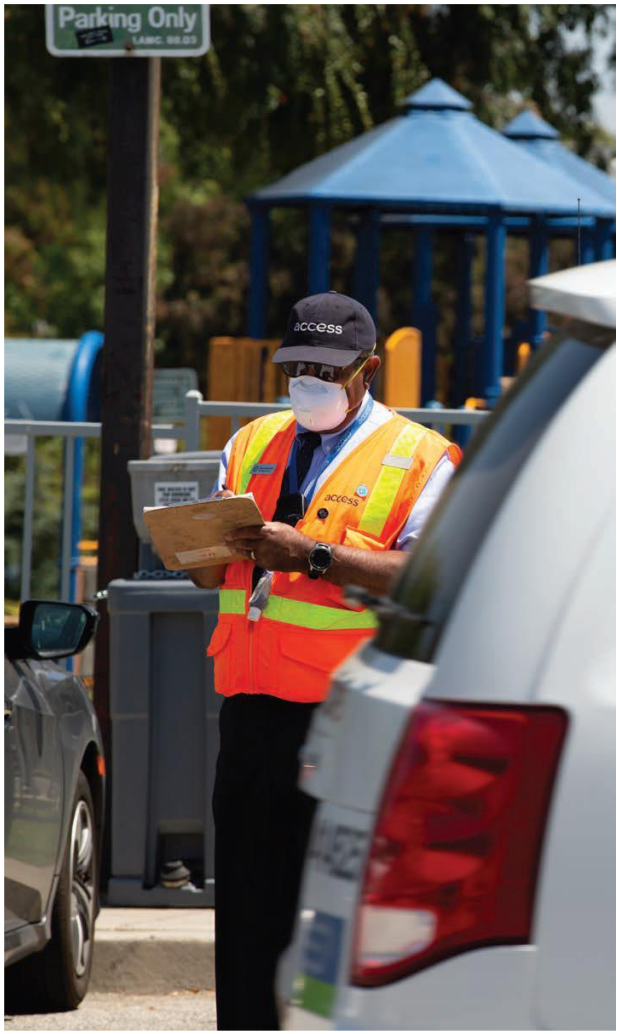
Quarterly Update

Finance, Budget & Audit Committee

October 2022

Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Qualified vehicle operators and other personnel are in short supply, but situation is improving
  - Increase in FY23 funding for contractor wages
  - 129 drivers added since May 2022
- Taxi subcontractor usage at 32% vs normal 50%
  - Increase in FY23 funding for taxi reimbursement
  - Working with taxi industry
- Fleet replacement significantly impacted
  - 103 vehicles to be replaced later this year
  - Additional 260 vehicles need to be replaced by end of FY23



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Key Performance Goals

Key Performance Indicator	Standard	FY22	FY23 YTD*
On Time Performance	≥ 91%	89.8%	92.5%
Excessively Late Trips	≤ 0.10%	0.14%	0.03%
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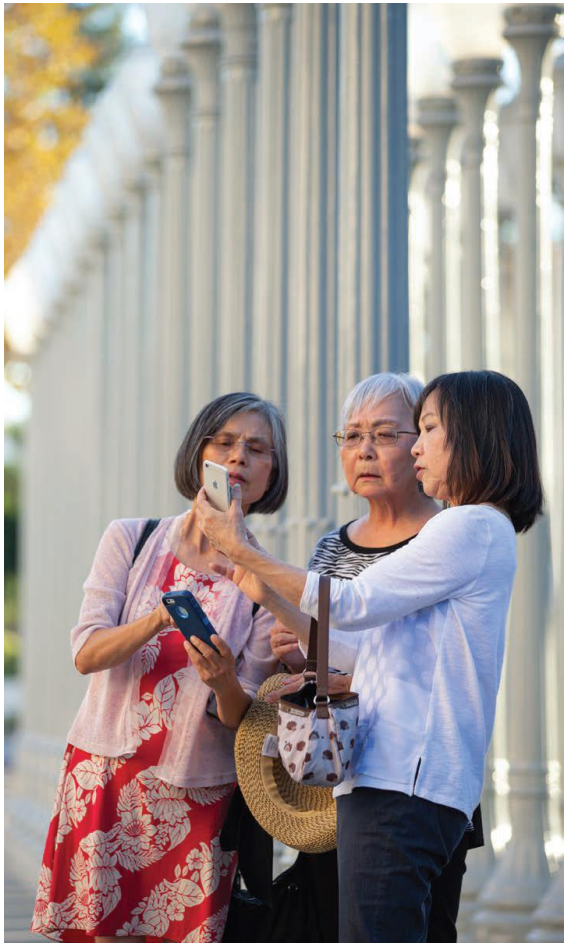
Working with the Community

- Community Meeting
  - Held virtually on August 6, 2022
    - 90 attendees
- Access Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - New subcommittees focusing on review of KPIs, service standards, and development of how-to videos for riders



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Operational Initiatives

- Analyzing the use of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)
  - “Rider choice” pilot proposal
  - Allow contractors to provide limited number of TNC ADA trips like Uber & non-Access certified taxicabs
- Facilities Plan
  - Ownership of facilities
  - Enhance competition of bids
  - Lower long-term operating costs & providing operational stability

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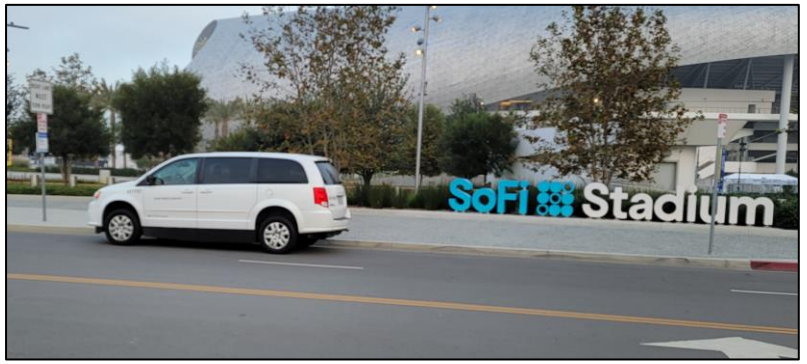
Access Update/Next Steps

- Forming a Working Group to analyze increasing operational capacity through TNCs and non-certified taxis
- Initiating pilot program for accessible electric paratransit vehicles
- Continuing to assist Access contractors through Access' Contractor Hiring Assistance Program
- Seeking other outside grant funding for operating facilities
- Enhancing Where's My Ride (WMR) app using (Mobility for All) federal grant funds - $330K
- Launching marketing campaign to raise awareness of Where's My Ride app and online reservations



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