

# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

The Access Services Board of Directors met on April 17, 2023.

The Board approved the Consent Calendar, which included approving contract extensions for fleet inspection services and third-party insurance administrator services. The Board also approved renewals of the self-insured retention automobile liability program, commercial business package insurance and employee health and benefit contracts.

The Board heard a presentation on the upcoming Eligibility Services RFP and received an update on the FY24 budget process.

Upcoming Board committee meetings are scheduled for May 22, 2023 and the next full meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled for June 26, 2023.

**Andre Colaiace**  
**Executive Director**

## Access staff participates in the Abilities Expo



A number of Access staff recently participated in the Abilities Expo, a three-day event for people with disabilities held at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The Expo had a variety of activities from an adaptive

wall climbing exhibition, technology showcases, sports zone, support group sessions, free loaner scooters, and free wheelchair repair. Other booths provided service dog information, wheelchair fitness classes, planning for special needs children, face painting, wheelchair football, and a performance from the dancing Rollettes. The event provided many opportunities to network with other paratransit professionals and transportation agencies, and to learn about resources available to our ADA community and Access customers.

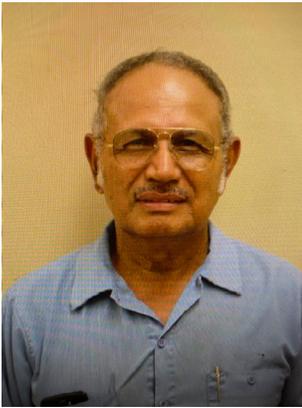
Access staffed a booth during the Expo. It was a great experience to be able to serve our customers, provide support, answer their questions, and assist them with their individual needs. It was rewarding to see their satisfaction when they received answers to questions!

Access' Eligibility Contractor, Medical Transportation Management (MTM), provided free Marking and Tethering (MAT) services. MTM staff marked and tethered a total of 88 mobility devices at the event. In addition to providing the service, MTM also assisted customers by answering questions and providing information regarding the eligibility process.

**Special thanks to Access employees:** William Kim, Faustino Salvador, Bruce Frink, Jimmy Flores, Cesar Alexander Mendez, Thao Bui, Kim Nimori, Eric Haack, Tamika Arana, Josh Southwick, and Steve Wrenn.

**Karen Gilbert**  
**Manager of Eligibility**

## Stories from the Front Line: Long-time Southern Region driver aims to help the community



People maintain jobs for many reasons – to earn money for their family, to pay expenses and use their time productively. Long-time Southern Region paratransit driver Dennis Rizo is in it for all the above, as well as a strong desire to help the community. Access provides quality and safe transportation for the disabled community; it is drivers like Rizo that are the tip of the spear in this effort.

For Dennis Rizo, his journey with Global Paratransit, our Southern Region paratransit contractor, began at a swap meet 19 years ago. He saw a help-wanted ad in the *La Opinion* newspaper and decided to reach out. A man of faith, he wanted to give back to the community in a direct way through his vital labor transporting people with disabilities to their appointments and destinations. Whether going to the grocery store or Disneyland, Rizo has been there to provide transport for countless riders.

He pilots his white MV-1 paratransit vehicle through the streets of Los Angeles and the South Bay, being sure to help riders with their bags and luggage. He shared that he appreciates the structure that Access provides, and the instruction given over the years by Global Paratransit. He wants to do a great job and feels strongly that he gets the support needed to carry out his work.

"I thank Access and Global for their policies, which help me do my job," he shared. He explained that over time, Access has refined its policies and procedures to be more helpful to riders and drivers. He appreciates the professionalism of Global Paratransit and shared that they have shown their care for him over the years. When Rizo's back started hurting, Global moved him from a larger vehicle to an MV-1 which was easier for him. He also had kind words for General Manager Luis Garcia, dispatcher Reyna and company Chief Executive Officer and President, Reza Nasrollahy.

His training has paid off, with numerous positive observations from the Access Road Safety Inspectors over the years. Inspector Anthony Santiago wrote of Rizo, "[he] did a good job exiting the vehicle and assisting the rider with boarding [and] was observed doing a good job communicating with the rider and was polite."

Rizo has spent a lot of time driving the streets of Los Angeles over the years, and wishes the public would drive in a safer, more defensive manner. He once witnessed a speeding driver fly off the road, up a hill, before being stopped by a tree. He is a fan of the Los Angeles Dodgers and recommends Norm's Restaurant as a good place for a steak meal. Rizo is one of Access' longest tenured drivers and we wish him many more years of making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities through his work providing Access paratransit service.

**Alex Chrisman**  
*Emergency Management Coordinator*

### Commendations

"Jeanie is an excellent driver, and I am filing a Smile for her. She made me feel safe and secure and even walked me to my door."

**Mary Watkins**  
*Rider since June 2003*

"Michelle, my driver provides great customer service. She was courteous, helpful, and deserves a Smile."

**Alvin Hicks**  
*Rider since July 2015*