



# Behind the Scenes

## Executive Director's Report

Director of Government Affairs and Outreach Randy Johnson and I recently traveled to Washington, DC for meetings with the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation as well as Federal Transit Administration staff. This was our first in-person visit to the Capitol since the start of the pandemic.

We briefed new staff members about Access, our Covid-19 response, technology initiatives, and our capital priorities, particularly our request for federal funding for an operations and maintenance facility in Lancaster, CA.

I am pleased to report that both Congressman Mike Garcia (\$3 million) and Senator Alex Padilla (\$7 million) have recommended to their respective appropriations committees that our Lancaster facility receive a federal earmark. While there is a long way to go in the appropriations process, it is a good start to have momentum in both the House and the Senate. I would like to thank Congressman Garcia and Senator Padilla for their support of this important project.

**Andre Colaiace**  
*Executive Director*

## Antelope Valley dispatchers make all the right moves



Each day, a team of chess players sit at their computers within the walls of the First Transit facility in Lancaster. The pieces they move are not knights or bishops but are instead Dodge Caravan minivans and Cutaway mini-buses. They are the dispatchers that work behind the scenes to allow Access to deliver its promise of quality, timely transportation in the Antelope Valley.

Speaking about his team, Assistant General Manager Victor Garate said, "A dispatcher is an integral part of the operation. They are in essence the glue that holds the operation together. It is not merely that they are safety-sensitive individuals, but a dispatcher must be savvy, fast-paced, and calm all at the same time. They have to be able to keep their composure in very stressful situations, and they have to be able to follow instructions and manage up whenever possible. A dispatcher is important because they hold the keys to a successful operation."

The Antelope Valley is a sprawling Access region, stretching from Palmdale to the south, to Lancaster to the north, Quartz Hill to the west and all the way out to rural Lake Los Angeles to the east. "The Antelope Valley has many unique challenges. We occasionally get snow, lots of black ice on our roads, flooding, and very high winds and blowing sand. We get very hot in the summer and have a unique region because we perform in city, suburban and rural settings. Dispatch is aware of the challenges and is able to adjust with the changing seasons which is why they have been very successful these past few months," Garate explained.

Each day, the dispatchers at First Transit manage as many as 600 trips, depending on the demand. It is the job of the dispatch

team to watch for service issues and try to get in front of them by rerouting trips. They also optimize routes, which are created by computer each evening after the close of reservations. Some trips are not grouped via the batch routing process, and these must be placed into routes manually. Since the 5M dispatch system went into place in May of 2022, efficiencies were gained, but it still takes a watchful dispatcher and management eye to keep the service running smoothly.

Dispatcher Alisi Tuivai has been with the Antelope Valley region for four years. She puts herself in the place of her riders.

"I try to consider everyone, the rider, their family, the drivers. I like to put myself in their shoes and I would not like to be stranded waiting for a vehicle. I also consider our safety, our performance and comfort, I want to make sure we have a smooth operation".

During the second quarter of this fiscal year, which encompasses October, November and December, on-time performance was 95.1%, excessively late trips were at 0.01% and excessively long (inefficient) trips stood at 1.8%. Preventable missed trips, which is a measurement of dispatcher error during the no-show process, were non-existent. All of these key performance indicators were well within target, and because of that the dispatch team received \$100 dollar Visa gift cards as part of the Dispatcher Incentive Program that Access maintains for contractor dispatchers. Tuivai plans to use her gift card for groceries and gas, due to recent inflationary pressures.

The staff of the Antelope Valley region have a good familiarity with the area. Many of the employees live there.

"I like to visit the country stores such as Charlie Brown Farms because they have fried Snickers, fried Twinkies, funnel cake, and other delicious items. There is also a musical road on Avenue G, your car creates a song as you drive on it. I also like to visit Apollo Lake and you can see all of the military airplanes and military equipment. Another beautiful place to take pictures with my nieces and nephew is the California Poppy Reserve."

Based on recent performance, the region is in good hands. Dispatchers will continue to make a difference for the Access rider community.

**Alex Chrisman**  
**Emergency Management Coordinator**

## Access attends Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance



Montebello Bus Lines (MBL) recently hosted the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) Substance Abuse Management and Program Compliance training. Part of USDOT's mission is "to provide safety and security training to all modes of transportation." TSI is known as the official "training arm" of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

**Continued**

Hosted in-person at Quiet Cannon in Montebello, CA, the three-day training was comprised of 14 key modules on various federal regulations, including 49 CFR Part 40 and 655. Participants gain the necessary knowledge and skills to manage a successful drug and alcohol-testing program. Access' contractor and subcontractor staff were in attendance which includes San Gabriel Transit, Global Paratransit, First Transit, Silver Ride, and Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc. (ASC).

By the end of day three, participants took a test on all the material we learned from the training. The instructors were impressed as the entire class passed with flying colors; followed by a small certificate ceremony for successfully completing the training.

Because of the contributions of instructors Leila Procopio-Makuh, Edin Memic, and Carolina Lagunas, participants were equipped with the fundamentals of administering DOT-regulated substance abuse policies, programs, and procedures.

***Onnika Payne***  
***Transportation Planner***

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## **Commendations**

"Yvonne has assisted me with reservations many times and is always professional. She is always friendly, thoughtful, and considerate when assisting me. Please give Yvonne the highest commendation for the great service she provides us riders."

***Rhonda Naness***  
***Rider since Dec 2017***

"This is a Smile for Tiare. When booking my ride Tiare was very patient and accommodating. I would like to return her kindness."

***Gloria Hymes***  
***Rider since June 2020***