



Metro Management Audit Services

Metro Access Services Town Hall Meetings

Final Report

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Introduction

Metro invited users of Access Services to come to six two-hour Town Hall forums to engage in open discussion of the services provided by Access Services in their respective areas. These forums were held from May 5, 6, and 7, 2014, in the following service areas.

- Eastern Region, Diamond Bar
- West/Central Region, Los Angeles
- Santa Clarita Region, Santa Clarita
- Antelope Valley Region, Lancaster
- Northern Region, Encino
- Southern Region, Long Beach

The forums were widely marketed to encourage broad participation. Flyers were developed and distributed in English and Spanish. These flyers also included how to obtain information on the Town Hall Meetings in 9 other languages. Copies of flyers were mailed to rehabilitation centers, independent living centers, senior centers, assisted living centers, multipurpose centers, regional centers, and Veterans' centers throughout the County. Each agency was asked to post the flyers where Access Services' customers could see them.

Flyers were also provided to each of Access Service's contract providers with instructions to place them on the seats of vehicles from April 23rd to May 7th. Each contract provider was also asked to play a recording announcing the Town Hall Meeting in each region to those on hold to make a reservation for an Access Services' trip.

Each forum began with a welcome, introductions, and meeting overview. The facilitator explained the discussion topics and ground rules for participant discussion. The participants were asked to discuss the following topics and address "What Is Working Well and What Is **Not** Working Well" when making a reservation, taking a trip, calling for immediate assistance, and calling to commend or complain.

Access Services representatives were not allowed to be in the room during the first 90 minutes of each meeting to encourage participants to engage in honest and frank discussion. For the last 30 minutes, Access Services representatives were invited in to answer questions and respond to individual, specific concerns.

While there were a number of complaints and comments asking for improvements to the program, a large number of Town Hall participants expressed heartfelt gratitude for how the Access program has changed their lives, allowing them as disabled persons to live independent lives of dignity.



Making a Reservation

The factors involved in making a reservation can be broken into several categories:

- Interaction with the reservationist: Attitude, helpfulness, clarity of discussion
- The phone queue: Ease of getting through to the agent, automation, hold times, dropped calls
- The reservation window: Availability of pick-up times requested, booking more than one trip.

The top criticisms were the lengthy hold times, but there was also praise for the expanded reservation hours Access Services offers. Callers must wait in a queue of as many as 15 calls or more to make reservations. A number of riders said the calls are often dropped, just as they are reaching the head of the queue. There was praise for some reservation staff but there were also complaints about rude operators and those who spoke too quickly or who could not be easily understood.

The reservation window is too wide and considered unresponsive to riders' needs to make appointments on time. The express, automated line for reservations and cancellations worked very well but seems to have been discontinued. Regarding scheduling a ride, one rider said Access Services provides two choices of times, which can be an hour earlier or later than the time requested. As one rider says, "When I call Access and ask for a certain time to be picked up, they can give me an hour before or after the requested time. It's impossible to plan and schedule two or three Access rides in a row; for example, going from work to the doctor to home. The reservations window is too wide."

Ride share affects timing as well. Reservationists ask riders when they want to be picked up, coming and going. Since the rider has no idea how many riders will be on a trip, it is difficult to gauge the times required. Depending on the ride share passengers, the trip may take an additional one to two hours.

A number of riders said they had received messages from Access Services on their land lines rather than their cell phones. This is a problem because the riders are generally at the curb waiting for their ride in the 20-minute window and never receive the call. As one rider states, "It would be a big improvement to ensure Access operators call riders on their cell phones, particularly if drivers are arriving early or late."

Taking a Trip

The discussion of effective and non-effective practices involved in taking a trip included:

- Pick up: Wait times, unclear communication about pick-up points, wrong addresses
- Unfair issuing of no shows



- Drivers: Attitude, sensitivity
- Vehicles: Size, safety, maintenance, comfort
- Ride share
- Circuitous routing

The circuitous routing, which is sometimes caused by picking up other riders along the trip, was a major concern for many. Routes don't make sense and riders are late for appointments and often suffer prolonged waits of many hours at a time for pickup and return. This is due to both badly planned routes and adding riders to the trip, according to participants.

It does not seem fair for riders to have to wait for 20 minutes before and after their pick-up time while drivers only have to wait 5 minutes for the rider to be at the pick-up point. If the driver or dispatch makes a mistake or is given the wrong address, the rider is issued a no show. There is confusion about pick-up locations in large buildings where there are a number of entrances and possible pick-up points.

Regarding call outs and ETAs, one rider said he understands the driver cannot control traffic or the time for loading wheelchairs, but he thinks drivers should call in the ETAs to dispatch so riders have a better idea of when the driver will arrive.

Many drivers were highly praised for their respectful attitudes and helpfulness, but not all. Driver turnover makes continued training a must. The vehicles were found wanting. The Prius is simply too small for larger passengers to sit three across in the back seat or for physically disabled people to be crowded together. Many vehicles need better maintenance, including fixing the air conditioning and heating systems and repairing the wheelchair ramps. More driver training is required to safely secure and transport guide dogs and expensive wheelchairs.

A number of blind riders said reservationists should note that a rider is blind on the reservation so drivers will approach. There were pleas for more safeguards and consideration of guide dogs. One rider said, "Access needs to provide safe transport for dogs. Drivers are required to secure scooters and wheel chairs, but not dogs." Another noted that ride shares can cause drivers to exceed the in-vehicle time limit for guide dogs. "I have had three hour ride shares. The handbook states the rider will not be in a van with a guide dog longer than two hours."

Calling for Immediate Assistance / Calling to Commend or Complain

Forum discussions on these topics were abbreviated and much more general in nature. Some riders have had very good service at times, with polite and accommodating operators responding to their calls, but a number of riders felt the customer service response to complaints is inadequate. One comment noted staff does not seem to be



well educated on how things really function and should receive more training. Another said there are never any solutions from Customer Service.

Some participants suggested Access should add a separate line for Immediate Assistance to provide needed backup vehicles. "I was on hold with Access trying to determine my ETA and was given a no show while I was on hold," said one rider. The number of people ahead in the queue prevented her from communicating with Access.

In the Santa Clarita Region, riders have some very positive things to say about how things work, including the personal attention of the drivers and the simple reservation system, but the lack of weekend service or transfers in this region is a problem. On the weekends, Access riders can't get rides anywhere but Santa Clarita. "It's like a lockdown," said the mother of a disabled rider. If there was a connection so riders could travel beyond Santa Clarita, it would open up the world for this population. Santa Clarita created an Accessibility Committee 13 years ago, with representatives from Access, the city, and the rider community that enables an ongoing dialogue on the service, educates riders, and continually enables improvement.

Other Comments

Participants at several meetings thanked Metro for sponsoring these Town Halls and suggested these meetings continue to be held. They thought it would be valuable for drivers to attend as well. As one rider said, "I hope Metro realizes Access's role in making the disabled productive members of our community."

Many participants have been using Access Services for as long as 18 years. A rider in a wheelchair said, "I remember what life was like without the Access program. I received my Master's degree in May. I would not have been able to attend school at night without Access."

The first 32 comments at the Southern Region meeting essentially mirrored that of this participant, "Access is a Godsend. It is a life-changing program that helps me get to my doctors and therapists. I am more independent. I am not a burden but can maintain my dignity. Although I live in a dangerous neighborhood I feel safe because of Access even when I travel at night."



APPENDICES

Verbatim Comments From Town Hall Meetings



Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- Advanced automated booking system, where customer could book over phone by typing in Access ID number and zip codes was working well, but the program has disappeared.
- Vast improvements of call outs for Eastern Region.
- Blind riders appreciate being approached from the van.
- Reservations people are courteous.
- Eastern and Western regions have automated systems to cancel a ride for the next day, which cuts down on the need to talk directly to reservations.
- Reservationists are courteous.
- Hold times are shorter than they used to be.
- Riders appreciate that the reservation office is open for longer hours, until 10 pm, rather than cutting the hours to 5 pm as was suggested.
- Longer reservation hours are working well.
- Rider appreciates the free fare program because, like many, she lives on a very limited income.

Making a Reservation - What is Not Working Well?

- Rider who was promised free ride tickets never received them.
- Reservationists don't care what time the customer needs to be at their destination. Many times customer does not make his appointment time.
- When rider calls Access and asks for a certain time to be picked up, they can give you an hour before or after the requested tie. It's impossible to plan and schedule two or three Access rides in a row; for example, going from work to doctor to home. The reservations window is too wide.
- Access does not provide times that will get riders to their appointments on time. She asked for a 12:30 ride for today, but Access provided 11:45 time.
- Reservationists should note rider is blind on the reservation so drivers will approach.
- Another rider has an issue with the wide reservation window.
- A driver arrived early and left when rider was not outside. The supervisor refused to grant her another Access ride.
- Sometimes reservationists are rude and argumentative.
- Some reservationists have slurred voices and are difficult to understand.
- Reservationists have transposed numbers in the address with the result that the driver goes to the wrong address.
- When repeating the reservation information back to the customer, reservationists speak too fast to verify the information.
- The automated phone options offer too many choices for those who are intellectually challenged. There should be an option to speak directly to a reservationist rather than having to push a number of buttons before the caller can reach an actual person. So many possible selections are confusing.



- Reservationists' instructions are confusing to the driver. The routing error may be caused by the reservationist.

Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

- Drivers are magnificent, so courteous and sweet, helpful and understanding.
- Rider appreciates Access services. She would not be where she is today without Access; she has been riding for 18 years and is able to go to work and has completed her degree at college.
- Another rider has also been riding for 18 years and calls it a great program. She remembers what life was like without the Access program. She received her Masters' degree in May and says she would not have been able to attend school at night without this program.
- A wheelchair rider said he believes Access is a lifesaver for many people who prefer independent living. The journey to the bus stop would be impossible.

Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- Access has added small cars and this size is a problem. Fitting three people into the back seat of a Prius is a problem. The older Crown Vic vehicle is six inches larger in the back. Access users may have multiple disabilities. Drivers just cannot crowd three people in the back seat. On his last trip, the rider rode with three people and two dogs. It was just too crowded.
- If a large passenger doesn't fit, Access will issue a no show.
- When riding in the vans, two people in the back plus a scooter requires the guide dog to jump over the scooter.
- Drivers need more training on how to work with guide dogs. They are not supposed to touch them, etc.
- Access needs to provide safe transport for dogs. There is no ability to secure the dogs. Drivers are required to secure scooters and wheel chairs, but not dogs. A wheel chair ran over this rider's dog.
- Ride shares exceed the time limit for guide dogs. This rider has had three hour share rides. The handbook states the rider will not be in a van with a guide dog longer than two hours.
- This rider's guide dog gets very hot on the rear flooring of vans where the catalytic converters are located.
- This rider's guide dog is terrified of vans because of Access experiences. She suggests securing her dog to her seat belt as she also needs her dog to be at her side.
- Regarding the size of the vehicle, this customer has pins in her back and cannot be crowded and pushed into the back of a car. This crowding could have medical repercussion.
- Ride share causes problems. This rider was traveling to her reservation, when the driver stopped to pick up another rider, making her late for her trip.
- Some drivers are bullies and are intimidating and rude. This is a minority of drivers, but where it occurs it is serious and should not be happening.



- Other drivers cinch wheelchairs too tight and ignore requests to loosen this rider's large, power wheelchair. He was forced to get off the van because he argued about this. He has also been forced into a van that where his wheelchair did not fit. These wheelchairs are very expensive and must be properly secured.
- Drivers take circuitous routes at times.
- When this rider asked for help, the driver cited Access rules that state drivers may not help rider a few steps to a doorway. Some drivers ignore the rule and have helped him but this is contrary to Access rules.
- Drivers take riders all over the place, way out of the way of the pick up and drop off destinations.
- A rider waiting in the heat said she called Access for an ETA and was placed on hold. She suggested creating a separate queue for ETAs and cancellations.
- Rides often arrive outside the 20-minute window. When this rider called to check on her ETA, she had to wait on hold and the operator had a negative attitude during her call.
- This rider has been jolted when the wheelchair moves during the ride or during sudden stops.
- Rider asked to be dropped off with ramp on sidewalk, the driver dropped her at wrong address on a grassy hill. This was too far for her to walk and she fell.
- Other riders have also have been dropped at the wrong address.
- There are too many new drivers who need more training.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Working Well?

- Rider has had very good service at times, polite and accommodating.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Not Working Well?

- Sometimes customer service is rude and belligerent. An operator suggested the rider call 911.
- This rider needed to get home quickly. She wished Access assistance was more responsive.
- Access immediate assistance should add a separate line for needed backup vehicles. This rider was on hold with Access trying to determine her ETA and was given a no show while she was on hold. The number of people ahead in the queue prevented her from communicating with Access.
- If the driver or dispatch makes an error, the rider gets a no show letter.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Working Well?

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Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Not Working Well?

- Customer service response to complaints is inadequate. They don't seem to be well educated on how things really function and should receive more training.
- This rider was waiting for ride on a very hot day but the driver did come to the right place for pick up. The Access operator was not helpful. The driver said he



was at the appointed pick up spot, but she was not there. The next ride available was three hours later. She has called Customer Service, but they provide no relief.

- When the driver doesn't show up at the pick up location, customer service provides no solution for rider.

Other Comments

- Rider complained of insensitivity of Access reps on the phone when there is an issue.
- Many issues are never resolved.
- The onus is on the riders.
- Access changed this rider's profile without his knowledge.
- The line is often busy. Access should change to another system to avoid busies.
- The Access policy does not recognize common sense issues for persons with medical needs, citing their non-discriminatory policies on rider priority. This rider could tolerate a three hour wait and would be happy to wait longer if, for example, a person with a breathing problem needed priority pick up,
- This rider thanked Metro for doing this survey, calling it much appreciated and encouraging Metro to host more meetings like this in the future.



Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- The express, automated line for reservations worked very well.
- Another rider had a positive comment on the automated service for scheduling and cancelling.
- The hold time to schedule a ride with Western has improved.
- This rider is very grateful for Access services. Receptionists are very helpful to him. He noted in particular operator 61322, Claudia, is an excellent operator.
- This rider is very pleased with Access services, saying when he could have been stranded, he received service in short order.
- When this reader asks for a specific time, the reservationists will provide two options for alternative times.
- This rider has had very good experiences with the Western Region.

Making a Reservation - What is Not Working Well?

- This rider is frustrated that Access has ended the automated phone system.
- This rider is frustrated when calling to ask for a time. She often has to call back numerous times to get a time that works with the appointment. She has not had the experience of being offered alternative times that work for her.
- Today this rider had a 12:50 pickup, but the driver arrived at 12:40 per what the computer showed. If she had not been ready, she would have been issued a no show. This could be a computer error.
- When rider calls for an ETA, he is told ten minutes, but when he calls back he is told the ETA is another ten minutes. He would appreciate being told the truth up front.
- Guide dog safety is an issue in all regions. Dogs are not considered in the program. They need to be secured just as riders and wheelchairs.
- Reservationists are not trained to help their clients. For example, this rider tried to call customer service about the meeting today and the Access operator did not know about it.
- Rider either does not understand what the reservationist is saying or they don't understand her request.
- This rider calls Access to return home from the Braille Institute. If Braille students are on break, he can get a 2:00 ride, but if the students are in session, he cannot get a ride until 3:00 when the big bus comes to return students home.
- Large-size riders don't have option of choosing an appropriately sized vehicle. He tells the reservationist he is an oversize rider but they don't respond to the request.
- Dispatchers double back and drive in circles to pick up a ride share along the route.
- The Access hold button did play a recording that discussed the Town Hall meetings, but the recording was very lengthy and difficult to hear.
- Often riders call in and have to wait a long time, with as many as 15 calls or more ahead of you. It is especially frustrating to wait in the queue and experience a hang up just as the rider's number in the queue is about to come up.



- Rider has waited as long as two hours in this center when it is ready to close.
- Rider had doctor's appointment, with a pick up to be at 3:55 pm. She was waiting at the assigned pick up spot and called to ask for an ETA. The reservationist was angry and told her to wait. She was told the driver was there, but he was not. Customer service closed. The rider needed to cab home eventually.
- Driver didn't show up due to a car problem. An alternate driver was dispatched but did not approach the blind rider and left him. The rider has asked reservations to tell the driver to approach this rider.
- Rider waits in queue following a number of others calling, then the phone call is dropped.
- This rider addressed the unfair designation of no shows when it is not the rider's fault.
- This rider said there were 20 people in the queue. When she reached her number 3 in the queue, the line rang twice and she was pushed farther back in the queue.
- Access needs 24/7 assistance at customer service. Customer service reps need to be trained in problem-solving skills. Riders cannot be left stranded.

Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

- The drivers are the first line of Access. They work well with the riders and this rider thanks them for their assistance.
- The drivers don't cause problems; they are approachable and respectful, and have a pleasant attitude.
- Drivers for the most part are very courteous and willing to walk a rider to the door if blind. Some will not, but most try to help as much as possible.
- Access drivers are more courteous than cab drivers.

Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- This rider requested a call out prior to being picked up because he can't see the driver or car due to blindness.
- It is frustrating when drivers do not have authorization to enter parking lots.
- When the dispatcher does not recognize the needs of blind riders, it causes problems. Access should change the policy and procedure for these interactions. The safety of blind riders is at risk when waiting for a pick up. Drivers should approach blind riders.
- This rider was coming home from the Braille Institute on the bus with ten others. The bus took a very circuitous route, creating a very long ride home. The driver questioned the Access dispatcher but was told to stick to the route.
- Another rider commented on the questionable, circuitous route.
- Seating a blind rider with a guide dog with too many other riders can cause serious health concerns for multi-disabled persons.
- There is no concern for the health and safety of guide dogs.



- This blind rider was being picked up from the store on a very hot day. She sat by the door in the store and would have been seen if the driver had looked, but he did not and left. She understands the rules of curbside service, but driver need to show compassion and use common sense.
- Rider and his mother are both Access customers and find it very difficult to be booked on same trip.
- Access exhibits poor planning of routes and how/when various riders are dropped off.
- Small cars are an issue. This rider has a broken foot with large boot and cannot fit in the car. Access needs larger vehicles or vans.
- Rider feels drivers need more training on how to secure wheelchairs. He has had issues with the chair rolling.
- The floors of the vans get very hot from catalytic converters creating a health hazard for dogs.
- Riders experience very late arrivals of drivers.
- This rider has never had a problem with West Central, but has had problems with the Southern region. Rider went for an interview to qualify for the program and his new Access ID took a very long time to come. When he asked to show his CA ID instead, the driver would not accept it and asked him to get out of the car. This was a very painful experience for this blind rider.
- Access should prioritize phone lines for those seeking an ETA on vehicles.
- The access line in Spanish is answered by an English-speaking reservationist. He would like the call answered in Spanish.
- Sometimes there is a communications problem about the location of the drop off/pick up spot, particularly in large buildings with a number of entrances.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Working Well?

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Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Not Working Well?

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Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Working Well?

- Rider has been pleased with service from Access and is grateful for callouts. She compliments the reservationists when they call her.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Not Working Well?

- Customer service line not responsive. The rider will press a number for Spanish but the operator answers in English. She tells the caller to wait a moment, but the call is never answered.

Other Comments

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Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- Rider likes the ability to call Access 1 or 7 days ahead. This is a good accommodation for this customer. In some other zones, riders cannot call ahead.
- The Santa Clarita region has done very well with reservations, notification of meetings, etc.
- The reservation process is simple via one phone call. There is a decision tree to choose options including making reservations out of the area.
- Customer service makes rider feel like “family.” Rider knows reservationists by name and feels they are friendly and provide what she needs. Access has personable and professional staff.
- This group mostly makes reservations in Santa Clarita, where there is excellent service. Complaints are definitely handled. The experience in other regions, in the Valley, and “over the hill” is not the same.

Making a Reservation - What is Not Working Well?

- Rider would like same day service.
- At certain times, calls are answered promptly. Other times lines are clogged. Rider suggests separate lines for reservation and ETA calls.
- Customer has a problem entering the ID number into phone prior to reservationist answering. He would rather bypass that step, especially since the reservationist asks for his ID number when the call is answered.
- Rider says when she enters the confirmation number, the reservationist says the number didn’t show up.
- Reservationists ask riders when they want to be picked up coming and going. Since the rider has no idea how many riders will be on a trip, it is difficult to gauge the times required. Depending on the ride share passengers, the trip may take one to two hours.
- Riders are required to get two confirmation numbers for trip, outbound and inbound. Why not one number?
- Rider had problems last year prior to changing the system. When making reservation, he received a specific time for pick up, but after waiting on hold, he was given a different time for pick up. The operator’s response was the computer changed the time. Why? There is no notification while the rider is waiting for the pick up. It is frustrating for both the rider and reservationist because it seems the computer makes arbitrary time changes. This can be recorded as a no show, and, if it happens multiple times, the program can be at risk for the rider. This is frustrating when a rider is forced to choose another option to return home.
- The biggest problem is making reservations over the hill on the weekend. Santa Clarita offers no service on Saturdays and Sundays and requires riders to find alternative transportation. There is no transfer available on the weekend.
- Rider travels a lot around the country. If he is returning home anytime on the weekend or after 6pm, he cannot book a ride because there is no reservation



service on the weekend or after 6pm. It is very frustrating to take a five-hour flight, then wait an additional two or three hours at the airport. If he had a fixed route coming to Santa Clarita, he would be able to make reservations similar to the access provided in the Valley and over the hill.

- Rider made a reservation and received times for pick up and return trips. On that day, the wait went beyond 20 minutes. The rider called, waited 15 minutes on the phone for an answer, and asked for the new ETA. Reservationist said he could not find her on the computer. She waited an hour, called back three times, and got no satisfaction. Eventually she was picked up.
- Another rider had the same problem. She also had confirmation numbers but was told her reservation was not in the computer. The operator researched the problem and found that the delete button is next to the enter button in the Access computer. Perhaps it was an entry/computer error.
- Rider said the computer booked her at a later time then she had been told. She feels their computer system doesn't work well.
- Rider creates his own trip plan to ensure he is available to the driver. In one case, the driver arrived 30 minutes early. When the rider came out at the appointed time, the driver had left. He suggests the driver call the rider if they arrive early.
- While rider understands the driver cannot control traffic and/or time for loading wheelchairs, he thinks drivers should call in the ETAs to dispatch so riders have a better idea of when driver will arrive.
- There is inconsistent communication about the times riders should expect drivers. Calls back to reservations often result in greatly changed times.
- It would be a big improvement to ensure Access operators call riders on their cell phones, particularly if drivers are arriving early or late.

Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

- No breakdowns yet.
- Client thanks God for Access services, which enables her son to live independently.
- Drivers have been very good, people oriented, and concerned. For the most part, the trips have been very good.
- If the length of a trip is longer than anticipated, the driver will alert Access that the rider will need a new time.
- The City of Santa Clarita is very serious about sensitivity driver training. Regular riders almost get personalized service about rider needs, doctor's offices, etc. There is very reliable service for dialysis patients who need to have dialysis on time.
- Rider is glad drivers have GPS to correct driving to wrong addresses.
- Riders and drivers know each other by name. Drivers understand some riders need a bit more time to get to van.
- Rider has been riding Access for 16 years and feels the good outweighs the bad [60/40]. He knows the drivers in Santa Clarita, but has had different experiences



over the hill. Some new drivers need to learn how to assess various situations of disability so they are aware of how to approach a particular situation.

- Santa Clarita created an Accessibility Committee 13 years ago, with reps from Access, the city, and the rider community that enables an ongoing dialogue on the service, educates riders, and that continually enables improvement. It is important that riders undertake the responsibility to know the system and their rights.
- Blind rider has been riding Access for years. Drivers are very courteous, assist him in loading shopping, etc.

Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- Rider had a 2:30 pick-up time at a market when driver was about to pull away from the stop. At home, the rider received a message on the land line that the driver would be early but rider was not called on the cell phone.
- Rider is confused about the 20-minute window.
- The length of time in the vehicle is a big problem. A fixed route goes one direction. For Access riders, the routes are understandably longer, but the routing is inexplicable and circuitous. Routing is always a problem.
- Access vehicles 'suck', are uncomfortable, with rider bouncing all over, and causing serious back aches for rider. Rider understands there is no regulation on comfort, but many other riders have same complaint. Additional rider says he has developed curvature of the spine from the rough ride of the back suspension.
- Access seems to have a serious problem with their maintenance. Coaches are old and there is always something going wrong.
- Air conditioning and/or heating is a problem. In the Santa Clarita Valley, AC is essential.
- Buses need to be redesigned. Wheelchair riders are always in the back, "like riding on a horse with no saddle."
- On the weekends, Access riders can't get rides anywhere but Santa Clarita. If there was even a connection to San Fernando, riders could travel beyond Santa Clarita and open up the world for this population. "It's like a lockdown."
- Why is Santa Clarita region treated differently than other regions? Santa Clarita has designated times unlike other regions and no weekend service. Response is Santa Clarita does not have a fixed route.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Working Well?

- Stranded rider has been picked up by supervisor within 30 minutes.
- Stranding over the hill and in Santa Clarita are two different experiences: over the hill, the wait is much longer.
- Stranded rider had to take a cab at the cost of \$85 when the computer showed no scheduled ride, but the rider sought reimbursement and received it from the city. This reinforces the importance of educating riders. Metro could issue this information.



- A blind rider was shopping and the driver returned her to the wrong address and left. She could not see so did not know she was not at her home. A supervisor was able to take her home.
- If rider has an ETA, they should not be stranded.
- Rider understands reservationists are fast typists and can make mistakes at times, but he would appreciate it if they review their entries to determine whether a mistake has been made.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Not Working Well?

- Stranded rider was told by Access there was nothing they could do.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Working Well?

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Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Not Working Well?

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Other Comments

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Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- Rider commends reservationist known as Caesar. He is a good listener, takes his time, and knows the area very well. He understands how long it takes to travel from one area to another and arrive on time.
- Rider doesn't have to worry about walking to public transportation. Rider likes curb service.
- Rider thinks reservationists are good about repeating information back to the rider to confirm it is correct.
- Customer service has improved.
- When this rider calls reservationists Edwin and Chris, she gets good service but the women don't care to listen or hang up on her and tell her the rider's phone is not operating properly.
- Reservationists are very patient with options for scheduling.
- Rider says Access reps know her and treat her very well.
- Additional comment on Christian and Edwin as most improved staff.

Making a Reservation - What is Not Working Well?

- Driver waits no more than five minutes while rider must be available in 20 minute window.
- Rider has tried to make reservations on the weekend, but scheduling made them 45 minutes late for an appointment. She was incorrectly informed about the hours the service runs.
- Access drivers ask this PCA why she is riding with her client.
- Rider can get a reservation but the ride is out of the way and circuitous. Rider is informed that driver must follow the GPS route given.
- Rider was trying to return home from LA and was told to stand in an intersection outside of the complex where she was staying. Driver did not see her and didn't appear to try to see her. Reservations told her she could not have another driver for two more hours. She was also issued a no show.
- Rider was going to doctor in Norwalk. The first trip was scheduled for 5am. She was picked up at 7 or 8 am with four or five other people and was late for the appointment.
- Rider was not picked up by driver. She may have been overlooked because driver had an erroneous expectation about what she might look like because of her name.
- When making an appointment, rider asks for a specific time. Reservationist provides times either way earlier or later. Times are also affected by drop offs on the way. Rider says it seems ridiculous that she could not get on time to an Access meeting.



Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

- The drivers are great but rider feels the drivers are not respected for all they do.
- A lot of drivers do a phenomenal job. Many times they may have to clarify the destination with the rider, e.g. assuming they are going to a regular destination when it is a new one.
- Drivers show respect for rider as he enters the bus, e.g., letting rider know there may be an AC problem and suggesting rider open the window for comfort.
- If enough riders complain about an issue such as AC, Access will respond, in one case with a supervisor riding the van herself to confirm.
- Seats are comfortable, more so than city buses even though rider has back issues. Rider feels driver is genuinely concerned with her safety.
- Wheelchair rider had experience of being forced to wait to board after other passengers and was unable to board the vehicle she was waiting for at all.
- Rider has been with Access for many years and never had any problem with drivers. They are respectful and useful. Some riders can be very demanding and have unreal expectations about the shared ride experience. This rider always adds a cushion of 45 minutes to her time to destination because she knows shared rides take time.
- Drivers should be part of the communication process, e.g., by participating in a similar Town Hall meeting as this

Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- Lack of heat and AC are issues during hot and cold trips.
- So-called "new" buses are not new.
- Two riders arrived at this meeting almost an hour late due to Access routing.
- Van's ramp was not working. Driver was rude to rider. Two weeks ago, the same driver came to pick her up, made a U turn, and left. Her daughter tried to stop him by calling out but he left.
- PCA and her rider were ten minutes from their destination and rode for an hour. There was a driver at the destination but he refused to pick them up because he had other pick ups. No answers from Access after a call to customer service.
- Rider arrived late to meeting because wheel chair ramp was not working.
- Understands Access is to function as an auxiliary to the fixed route, but as the driver picks this rider up for work, picks up another rider, etc., this rider would have arrived more quickly through a fixed route.
- Riders who live in LA have a very hard time getting to Lancaster or Palmdale. Long waits and long rides.
- Lifts on van often do not work. Recent experience where rider sat for 20 minutes while driver manually took lift apart.
- Access says they have new vans but they are not in Lancaster.
- When rider calls to make appointment, the driver arrives at a different space number in the mobile park where he lives. He has tried to correct the address numerous times but the problem continued for three months. Driver is not allowed to come to the proper space and rider has to walk a mile to catch ride.



Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Working Well?

- Access has worked well for rider so far in these cases.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Not Working Well?

- When rider was stranded, staff did not seem to care.
- Access staff in Palmdale do not choose to be helpful. The bus was late and rider called the office; more time passed. Finally the bus approached from the wrong direction and she didn't see it. Staff says she can't be helped.
- Rider got sick and asked to go to Urgent Care. Access told her they do not offer same day service and told her to call an ambulance. Staff was rude to her.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Working Well?

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Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Not Working Well?

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Other Comments

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Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- Generally staff is courteous, efficient, and professional.
- When staff knows exactly what to do, rider is grateful.
- Rider compliments Metro on their phone staff.
- Making reservation one day in advance works fine, but if riders had the ability to make same day service, it would enable drivers to drop riders from one zone to another as they drop off one rider and pick up another. This would be more efficient and save money.

Making a Reservation - What is Not Working Well?

- Rider understands wait times can be long, even when Access predicts short waits. Access provides two choices of times, which can be an hour earlier or later than the time requested. If time does not work for the rider, the rider has to call back. This rider spends an immense amount of time to schedule rides. Rider calls at various times of the day and it is generally a problem no matter what time he calls.
- Rider called and received message that there are 10 people in the queue. As the number gets closer to her turn, the line is disconnected. She asked for a supervisor and was told there no supervisor was available. When rider called reservations to learn where her driver was, she was switched to dispatch, who told her the driver was 25 minutes away, which would have taken the ride beyond the 20 minute wait time.
- Rider has to wait 20 minutes, but driver only has to wait 5 minutes. This is unfair and illogical.
- Rider asked to be let out at the second level of a building. On the return trip, driver tried to pick her up on the lower level at a second, different location. Dispatch said the Access vehicle was not allowed to go to the second level and requested she walk to the lower level at a different location from the drop off point. Rider said she could not and requested second vehicle. Rider waited for another hour for a second driver that could access the second level. The second vehicle also could not access the second floor parking lot. After a number of calls and three hours later, she was finally picked up.
- Access has a large safety hazard with wheelchair ramps that shake and are very noisy. Ramps seem to need some maintenance. This is also a hazard for drivers.
- Rider always asks for confirmation number for pick up and return. Staff gives her a hard time about asking for both numbers in the middle of reservation process.
- Drivers have gotten lost because some radios are broken and they need to pull over to use cell phones. Rider makes it a habit to call and ensure drivers know how to get to her house but they can't be contacted if they have no radio communications.
- Transfer services needs better coordination. Riders in Thousand Oaks go from Gold Coast transfer to Ventura and on to LA. Connecting and scheduling



transfers mean some riders miss their connections and have long waits to return home.

- Access only provides the ability to ask for two reservations.
- Rider would like uniformity in the way various reservations staff across the areas respond, answer requests, and provide names. Rider asks that operators speak clearly, slowly, and distinctly. Some re-state the reservation so quickly, it is very hard to understand and/or hear. Rider keeps written record of call, date, destination, confirmation number, and driver to verify the record. Access sometimes disputes the information but he can verify what happened.
- Access staff can be impatient or even hang up if the rider does not speak/respond quickly. They can be short with the rider and seem to want rider to get off the phone.
- Another rider says, in defense of the operators, the staff has to listen to many complaints all day.
- Rider suggests that other riders always get the name of the person you are speaking with.
- Rider asked to be picked up from Super Bowl event at 8:00 pm. Staff said they had no scheduled reservation for the rider. Rider had confirmation number and name of staffer who made it. Rider asked to speak to the staff person who made the reservation but was told she could not and had to speak to a supervisor. She was on hold for 30 minutes and never got a return call. Rider called emergency number for a pick up. Driver told rider to complain at main number the next morning.
- Reservationists schedule riders via ride share. Rider was on trip, and next rider was to be picked up at a location way beyond the original route. This rider feels this routing is a waste of taxpayer money.
- Rider made reservation and either he or the staff made a mistake with the address. He was told the address could not be changed, but he would need to call back and get in the queue to correct the address.
- Rider says calling early doesn't get better results in terms of queue/hold times.

Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

- Vehicles are fine and drivers do a tremendous job. There is no comparison with the poorer job done by reservations.
- Drivers do a lot of work. They may encounter difficult driving situations and deal with unhappy clients who may be complaining.
- Rider has found Access drivers are far more respectful of riders. Taxis violate rules, drive extra miles, talk on their cell phones, etc. Access needs more control of taxi driver behavior.
- Rider said reservations put in the wrong address. The driver called the rider and got clarification. The driver was kind and courteous and got her to the proper address.
- Driver picked up a ride share on this rider's trip. The ride share rider was very upset with the driver. The original rider said the fault was not with the driver.



- Drivers are helpful, courteous, and professional.
- Drivers understand various types of disabilities. Drivers are very good with riders, ensure safety, and are thoughtful
- Access is mostly on time.
- This rider feels other riders are hard on the drivers. Drivers have to follow directions from dispatch. It would be nice if Access gave drivers more choices/common sense options but their hands are tied. Riders need to be more understanding.

Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- Rider was going to the dentist. The driver got on the freeway and she wondered why. Rider told driver which exit to take but driver said he had to take another route and that he was taking her to North Hollywood, not the correct address for the dentist. Although he had been given the wrong address, he insisted he was required to take her to the scheduled address. She left the vehicle and took the bus.
- Rider was on ride share with a paralyzed patient and nurse. The driver stopped the vehicle for the nurse to aspirate the patient. In the interim, the driver received another call, taking the vehicle almost back to this rider's house to pick up another passenger.
- Rider noted that if there is a disagreement regarding the cross street, Access is required to take rider to the address requested and given to driver by dispatch. They can review audio tapes to verify who is right, but the driver must take the rider to the address provided by dispatch. The only other place they can bring the rider is home.
- Blind rider has been declared a no show when she was waiting at the curb. This has occurred many times. She called to find out where vehicle was and was told it was running late but on the way. The same person she spoke with to verify that she was outside waiting subsequently approved a no show when this rider did not answer her land line.
- Rider was at street address outside of the cruise ship terminal waiting for a ride. Access in Southern and Northern regions will not answer a request for driver location until the 20 minute window. The driver could not find this rider and she was issued a no show and spent \$70 on a taxi.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Working Well?

- Rider says Access comes right away.
- Access has dependability issues. There are so many things about Access that are good, but one never knows how things will work.
- Rider says it depends on who you speak with that determines what they can do to help.
- Sometimes there is a lack of coordination between dispatch and the drivers. For example, in some cases, the pick-up time is past due before the driver has even left the yard.



- If the driver is going to be more than an hour late, Access should call and let the rider know there has been a vehicle problem/accident/traffic issue. Only once has this rider been called in this regard.

Calling for Immediate Assistance – What is Not Working Well?

- Rider has waited three hours for an emergency vehicle.
- It is frightening to be older/disabled waiting for a ride late at night.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Working Well?

- If there are 100 people on the line, Access will allow a rider to leave a name and number on voice mail.
- Customer Service generally works well. The staff says they will solve problem, but complainants don't always get answers. For example, a wheelchair was damaged and the rider called. According to the rider, staff said the driver stated he did not do it and this seems to be the end of the matter. [Access staff was to examine the chair at today's meeting and determine its condition.]
- Rider calls different regions and finds staff courteous and helpful.
- Rider received response from Customer Service and resolution of problem.
- Rider greatly appreciates Access.
- This meeting had very little advance notice with inadequate publicity. A number of people agreed. Notices were sent to social services as well as flyers in the vans and on some help lines.
- This rider suggests if the ride is late, the rider should call Customer Service, press option 2, and tell them what is happening. They may be able to help. Rider can get better results than by calling reservations.

Calling to Make a Commendation or Complaint – What is Not Working Well?

- Rider called Customer Service and received no satisfaction.

Other Comments

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Making a Reservation - What is Working Well?

- Global rider used services for 15 years; certified rider for the last 5 years. Access has been a Godsend and enables him to travel out from his nursing home.
- Rider appreciates Access services and says they have been improved in recent times.
- Access allows rider to go many places she would not be able to go as she has an extra heavy chair. She has been riding for 15 years. She knows many drivers now. She is very appreciative.
- Access helps this rider go to low-income shops for example.
- Before this rider's injury, he did not know about Access. Mobility was important for therapy. Money was very tight. He agreed this service has been a Godsend. Drivers are kind and courteous.
- Rider lives six blocks from bus stop and appreciates being able to use Access.
- It is a privilege to have Access pick this driver up at home. Drivers are very kind.
- Rider takes Access five days a week to go to work.
- Rider has been riding 15 years; Access allows her to be an independent person.
- Rider has been riding for 18 years.
- Hold times for reservations are getting shorter.
- Access is good for taking rider to areas that do not have a bus route, e.g., the Valley.
- Rider has been using Access since 2005 and agrees it is a Godsend, particularly when he needs to travel late at night. He has witnessed a blind person being robbed at gunpoint while waiting for a bus. He appreciates the safety issue as well.
- Rider and her mother have been Access users for 15 years. It is good to know this service exists. It is necessary. Drivers are "social workers." Hold times are improving.
- When rider calls, staff picks up the calls quickly and alerts rider to where she is in the queue. Rider loves the curb to curb service.
- Access is the epitome of independence to this rider. She used to spend five hours a day on the bus. Being in the wheelchair for a long time dealing with potholes, rain, and the risk of being hit by a car is alleviated by this service.
- There is a good window of opportunity to reserve a ride as they are open from 6am to 10pm.
- A client has two children with mental disabilities who use the service with her as their PCA. It is a relief to know they will be able to be independent and safe. Her mother also uses the service and is grateful.
- Rider has been in wheelchair for 22 years and is so grateful for Access and the 24/7 access to the service.
- Rider is grateful for ability to go to church and doctor's appointments.
- Rider, originally from Minnesota, said coming to California and this service was an eye opener for he and his wife, who both needed nursing care. Access has been amazing, helping the couple get to the doctor and rehabilitation, and



enhancing their independence. The curb to curb service is excellent. She has called staff to find out if her Access rider husband was on the way home and was reassured by Access staff.

- Rider has used Access for the last 10 years and is very grateful for the services from the drivers. She is not sure she would still be here without this service as she had many serious issues.
- Rider, retired veteran, comes to Long Beach three days a week. Power wheelchairs do not do well in the rain so he appreciates the service.
- Access user of 13 years thanks them.
- Rider thanks Access for this life-changing program. Access helps her get to doctors and therapists, which has changed her life. She has become more independent. She feels she is not a burden but can maintain her dignity. She lives in a dangerous neighborhood but because of Access she feels safe when she travels even at night.
- Access is much needed and appreciated. Rider hopes Metro realizes Access's role in making the disabled productive members of the community.
- Rider thanks Access for allowing riders to have service animals with them.
- Access has a much shorter wait time than other services.
- Rider has been riding Access for 15 years, and is grateful for ability to go to church and the doctor.
- This coordinator of adult day care thanks Access for assisting her population.
- This clients' rights advocate for United Cerebral Palsy thanks Metro for making Access available. The program makes a quality of life difference every day so members can participate in the community. Drivers are excellent. She appreciates the evening reservation times. Thanks for new vans. She hopes to see a variety of vehicle types for various needs.
- Any program has little problems and the need for tweaks, but this rider will never give up her Access card.

Making a Reservation – What is Not Working Well?

- Getting the desired reservation time is very difficult, e.g., West Central region allows flexibility of time choice and rider can call back to tweak the time to better fit the needs. This rider has had to call as many as 20 times to get desired times in the Southern region.
- The hold times to make cancellations or learn an ETA are outrageous.
- Rider feels she has been issued no shows because she has a guide dog.
- The TAP card is underutilized and much money was spent on the program.
- The reservation process takes too long because reservationists are entering information. Computers should update the screen [need improved automated data fill]. Operator should ask for the type of wheelchair and what time the rider needs to be at an appointment.
- Rider has complaints about attitude. Reservationists sometimes make mistakes. She gets a no show when she is attending her college class because she can't leave the class to meet the driver.



- Access employees need attitude training.

Taking a Trip - What is Working Well?

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Taking a Trip - What is Not Working Well?

- The size of the Prius vehicle, with four people and a guide dog doesn't work.
- Rider's biggest complaint is how Access treats guide dogs. They are highly trained living animals who need to be safe and secure. Drivers need to be trained on how to load wheelchairs so they don't roll and hurt dogs.
- Many drivers have a hard time being on time due to the routing and share ride. Drivers quit often. Some receive a lot of hours and they get no breaks.
- Rider makes a reservation every day. When she calls to reserve, she generally spends about 20 minutes on the line, but has waited from 20 minutes to one hour.
- Rider has an issue with transportation. She is picked up at 6am, takes two hours to get to a clinic. The driver passes her home two or three times while picking up other patrons. If she is late for her appointment, she needs to make another.
- Vans are too small.
- Blind rider has an issue with having to climb over wheelchair with her dog when entering the vehicle. When the driver is supposed to approach, they often yell or honk instead of approaching.
- The Southern Region is the worst culprit for cramming riders into a Prius. Those with multiple disabilities can be hurt by being crowded.
- Rider agrees drivers try to fit too many people in the car. Riders can be blind, in wheelchairs, or have many other disabilities. Service must be mindful of diverse needs and of living, breathing dogs.
- Three large people do not fit in the back seat of some vehicles.
- Two riders live next door to each other and travel to same place every day but must take two different rides.
- This rider was at the curb, but the driver could not park because of a red curb and she was issued a no show. She called Access to get another ride and had to wait two more hours. She suggests drivers call out the names of their riders when a number of people are waiting at the same location for different Access rides.
- Rider has been left three times because driver does not see her.
- The Southern region is huge; rider suggests dividing region to enhance service.
- Rider was missed and did not receive a courtesy call as she had been told to expect.
- The cleanliness of the vehicle seats is an issue.
- Driver was looking for a Jose and rider's name is Josephine. She missed her ride.



- Drivers continuously try to put two oversize wheelchairs in one van and they will not fit, meaning one person has to wait for another ride.
- Access should ask customers what time the rider needs to be at their destination. This could alleviate some ride shares.
- Rider has been at church and Access has passed her by. When driver is taking her to her destination which is close by, they bypass it if they receive another call and make another pick up, even if it is some distance away.
- Some drivers act as if they are doing riders a favor.
- This rider knows of persons who were trying to get to airport and arrived two hours late.
- Driver went to the wrong address. When rider called to complain, staff had a bad attitude.
- Rider at church was bypassed and issued a no show.
- Rider has problems with no show particularly when driver passes her by.
- Many problems with no shows; drivers do not wait designated 5 minutes. Operator does not provide call out.
- Rider has problem with GPS, which sends driver to wrong address.
- For blind rider to go to animal services, driver drops riders off at a security entrance, which is ¼ mile away from the entrance. Riders have to walk to security entrance for return pick up.
- Circuitous and strange routing that takes rider way out of her way during a trip that started two blocks from her home.
- It would be helpful if Access LA would cross the county line for a mile or two, e.g., those going to senior center one mile into Orange County. Seniors have to wait for transfer for extended times.
- Getting over the jump seats in some vehicles is difficult.
- Access could benefit from updated technology.
- Rider speaks slowly to reservationist but the operator does not always repeat it back with the result that drivers don't always show up. Rider is blamed for the miscommunication about the address.
- The no show system needs to be revamped. People with serious and multiple disabilities cannot always comply with the regulations. Jump seats block the ability for wheelchairs to turn on a radius. Jump seats are also dangerous and feel precarious.
- Better technology would make the routing better.
- Add variety to the sizes of the vans to meet differing needs.