

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SB826 ACTION PLAN UPDATE (2000 – 2002)**

*SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION
AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN*

prepared by:

Access Services

Los Angeles County's Consolidated Transportation Services Agency

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	1
Proposed Action	2

2000-2002 Plan Tasks

<i>I. Access Mobility Services (Mobility Maximizer)</i>	3
• Consumer Education Programs	
• Accessible Transit Integration	
<i>II. Access Information and Referral Services</i>	5
• RIDEINFO	
• Directory of Specialized Transportation Services	
• Website Referrals	
<i>III. Access Education and Training Programs</i>	7
• Transit / Paratransit Management Certificate Program	
• CTSA Scholarships	
• Specialized Technical Training Workshops	
<i>IV. Coordinated Mobility Planning</i>	8
• Information Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance	
• Section 5310 Coordination and Technical Assistance	
• Access Paratransit Operations	
• North County Coordination	

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SB826 ACTION PLAN UPDATE (2000 – 2002)
SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION AND IMPROVEMENT
PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This document is provided pursuant to the Social Services Transportation Improvement Act (AB120, 1979, as amended by SB826, 1988), requiring all Regional Transportation Planning Agency's (RTPA's) in California to biannually update the region's specialized transportation coordination and improvement activities. The following plan summarizes the workplan, activities, and performance objectives to be undertaken by Access Services, Los Angeles County's Consolidated Transportation Services Agency, during the plan period 2000-2002.

BACKGROUND

In 1979, the state legislature passed AB120, the Social Services Transportation and Improvement Act. This law required County Transportation Commissions to develop an inventory of providers of public and private non-profit social service transportation services, and to develop an action plan for the coordination and improvement of these services. The law further required that each transportation commission designate a Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) to implement the action plan. At that time, the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) directed staff to implement the coordination elements but did not designate any agency as the CTSA.

In 1989, the state legislature amended AB120 by SB826, which required each transportation planning agency without an active CTSA to prepare a new action plan for social service coordination and improvement. In addition, SB826 required all transportation planning agencies and county transportation commissions to prepare an update to the social services transportation inventory every four years and a bi-annual update on their social service transportation coordination efforts.

In 1989, the LACTC conducted a countywide inventory of social service transportation and adopted an Action Plan which identified seven tasks to improve coordination and efficiency of social service paratransit. In 1990 LACTC designated itself as the CTSA for the county and assigned staff to implement the coordination strategies identified in the plan. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) later that year, the CTSA staff assumed responsibility for the development and implementation of the overlapping ADA mandated complementary paratransit requirements for the public fixed-route transit systems in the county.

The SB826 Social Services Transportation Coordination Action Plan and Updates adopted by LACTC for, 1990-1992, 1992-1994, and the MTA for 1994-1996, described the progress and accomplishments on tasks in previous plans and added tasks for succeeding years. In February 1994, the MTA Board directed that a public benefit corporation, Access Services, be established to continue implementation of the Countywide Coordinated ADA Paratransit Plan; this agency was also designated the CTSA for the county. Access Services is responsible for ADA and specialized transportation coordination and specific improvement plan elements.

The 1996-1998 Action Plan identified coordination tasks, including paratransit information, training programs, risk management coordination strategies, joint procurement, and ADA complementary paratransit services.

The 1998-2000 Action Plan was the eighth plan year, and thus required an inventory update and included additional tasks and coordination efforts to be undertaken by the CTSA; most were continuations or deferments to tasks identified in earlier action plans that were implemented by the MTA.

PROPOSED ACTION

Since 1994 the coordination task elements have been maintained with no significant additions or changes. After 10 years of experience with the coordination tasks of the CTSA, Access Services proposes to further develop an action plan which represents the commitments on the part of the region's specialized transportation services, Access Services and the fixed route mass transit services to maximize travel options for consumers in the LA Basin.

Accordingly, the four initiatives outlined below are considered responsive to the changing operational climate, services and resources available within the Los Angeles County region. Collectively these strategies have the effect of creating better access through shared use of existing resources, education and training, and coordinated planning, and are identified herein due to specific circumstances or opportunities to coordinate efforts with other agencies and organizations in the near future.

2000 – 2002 PLAN TASKS

I. Access Mobility Services (Mobility Maximizer)

As a part of its 1999 Paratransit Plan Update, Access Services introduced the Mobility Maximizer program, defined as various strategies formulated to encourage persons with disabilities to utilize more traditional forms of accessible public transportation. This component of the 2000-2002 Coordination Plan details the scope of Access Services' work tasks and performance objectives that will receive the greatest emphasis during the Plan period.

In the last twelve months, Access Services has initiated and promoted a number of strategies to provide various incentives to Access Paratransit (ADA-eligible) riders to utilize existing transit and paratransit services throughout LA County for certain trips which can effectively be served by such public, human, medical, private, and other service providers, at a much lower per trip cost.

A. Consumer Education Programs

- 1) ***Accessible Travel Planning and Orientation*** serves to offer ADA paratransit applicants, users, and other special needs consumers assistance with informed transportation choices and resources. Access Paratransit's Eligibility specialists are expanding their role by evaluating each paratransit applicant as a transit user, and realigning the in-person eligibility review process to include an individualized menu of accessible services.

The proposed effort will include providing personalized travel itineraries, issuing of regional reduced fare card(s), travel training resource referrals, and other pertinent services. This program is being initiated in FY00.

- 2) ***Transit Independence and Free To Go*** are two specially developed education and orientation seminars, offering a curriculum targeted toward familiarizing participants with the

accessible transportation options available to consumers with special needs. Access Services has partnered with Easter Seals Southern California (ESSC), member transit agencies, the cities and communities of the East San Gabriel Valley and Southbay areas, the Los Angeles County Commission on Aging, and community human service organizations to deliver the seminars.

Since the first quarter of FY 99/00 more than 300 individuals have participated in these programs. Each program includes a professionally developed curriculum with specific learning objectives locally adapted to address the operating environment of the region. Participants are all offered hands on experience and individual demonstrations of accessible bus and rail services, free fixed-route transportation passes, personalized trip itineraries, and a "Travel Buddy" to assist people using the bus for the first time.

- 3) ***Travel Training*** will teach individuals the skills and strategies necessary to successfully use local public transportation. With the cooperation of regional transit operators and the human services community, the CTSA proposes to initiate a research and pilot program to define the optimal format and responsiveness of a focused travel program.

At the research level, Access Services will first identify what program model is most effective in an area where unlimited paratransit services are available and a network of more than 40 accessible fixed route services operate. Cooperating paratransit and human service agencies will contribute through referrals, educating riders about mobility options, and where appropriate, actual delivery of the training program.

The demonstration pilot will include sample bus boarding and/or sample trial bus trips, individualized instruction to master skills associated with independent travel, route planning, orientation and problem solving.

The first two program components (reference A.1 and A.2) are fully developed and recommended for full implementation in FY00. The third component (A.3, Travel Training) will require time to implement and an investment of approximately \$90,000. A demonstration project involving at least two agencies is recommended for implementation in the second quarter of FY00. The CTSA anticipates consumer education services will be provided to approximately 5000 consumers in the coming year; if effective, an estimated \$2 million in transit community savings could be realized.

B. Accessible Transit Integration

Accessible Transit Integration includes the promotion and implementation of a variety of incentives and marketing programs, whereby the coordinated ADA paratransit fares and eligibility are seamlessly tied into the existing fixed route system of fares and eligibility. To further advance this effort, the CTSA proposes to establish a cooperative technical assistance program with mass transit providers to improve accessibility and attractiveness of transit to its special needs consumers.

1) *Standardized Fares*

Access Services is currently working with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), to approve a free fare for ADA eligible patrons and personal care attendants (PCA's) on all operated bus and rail lines.

Nationally, there is an emerging trend to coordinate the use of fixed route services for ADA eligible persons that can use these services. From a coordinated policy perspective, this action will create a stronger linkage between the fixed route and paratransit system. From a financial perspective, the opportunity to better utilize the lower cost per boarding fixed route systems decreases the demand on the more expensive paratransit systems.

Access Services estimates that the impact of such a fare policy would move about 275 daily boardings from costly paratransit services to fixed route service. The resultant cost savings to the region would be approximately \$19 per boarding, or \$1.6 million annually. If approved, the proposal will be implemented as a two year demonstration project beginning in 2000.

Similar agreements with all 42 fixed route transit providers serving Los Angeles County will be proposed over the next two years. Access Services intends to further develop a plan for modal transfer coordination to facilitate transfers to and from paratransit to commuter rail, light rail, and fixed route.

2) *Regional Eligibility*

The 1989 Action Plan identified the need for a universal service eligibility program to remove service restrictions and limitations created by multiple client and eligibility requirements of varying jurisdictions. The Los Angeles County's 12 included municipal operators have recently formally sanctioned a reduced fare identification card. The Los Angeles County Transit Operator Assistance (LACTOA) card.

The LACTOA card is a regionally accepted identification card, qualifying its holder as eligible to receive the transit operator's reduced fare available for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the card can be used as a monthly pass with pre-purchased media affixed to the card.

The CTSA has committed to become an authorized issuer of the LACTOA card. Concomitant with the in-person eligibility process, Access Paratransit applicants will be evaluated for LACTOA eligibility. The applicants who qualify for the LACTOA card, including those denied Access Paratransit eligibility, will be issued a free LACTOA card which will enable the holder to pay the reduced fare offered by each of the 12 included municipal operators.

It is estimated that approximately 94% of Access Paratransit applicants will qualify to receive the LACTOA card.

3) ***Technical Assistance for Accessible Service Providers***

Access Services will design, market, provide and evaluate a cooperative peer review and training program for the purpose of assisting fixed route transit and rail operations in meeting and managing the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

The purpose of a peer review is to apply additional expertise to study performance, product, process, or service, to assess compliance, determine service & policy shortcomings, and propose solutions.

Operators who participate in accessible integration programs, or who struggle to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their compliance efforts will be eligible. Teams of professional staff will be assigned to an operation to collect and organize specific data for review and analysis such as fixed route service requirements, complaint procedures, mobility training, sensitivity training, vehicle and passenger stop specifications, and other aspects of ADA compliance. Teams will prepare management reports providing a summary of the issue(s) at hand, an evaluation of the operation's actions, and recommendations for further action.

II. Access Information and Referral Services

A. **RIDEINFO** is a telephone referral service providing callers with quick, accurate referrals to over 200 public, human service, and private specialized transportation providers in Los Angeles County. Since 1992, the CTSA has maintained and updated the database to provide telephone information to callers requesting transportation service options. Enhanced

training techniques have enabled telephone agents to act as “mobility managers” and problem solvers, who can match an individual’s needs with available and accessible transportation options.

During the fiscal year 1998-1999, RIDEINFO handled 15,101 referral calls. Through enhanced marketing and outreach, Access Services estimates the volume of telephone referrals to increase at a rate of 6-7% annually.

- B. **The Directory of Specialized Transportation Services** is a compilation of an extensive database of public, social service, medical and commercial organizations serving the County of Los Angeles by offering various types of transportation services or assistance. The directory serves two important functions. First, as agencies serve myriad specific interests (e.g., medical, nutrition, rehabilitation, employment, transportation) it is provided as a resource for those agencies needing alternative methods for transporting their consumers. Second, it provides those offering transportation services an excellent information resource for future planning and coordination efforts. Since its first publication in 1982, three editions have been released. The 1999 –2000 Directory of Specialized Transportation Services (The Gray Book) has been updated and improved to include easy to use color maps and reference guides, specific information on accessible services in adjacent counties, program’s advanced reservation requirements, eligibility information, Website addresses, and client profiles. Distribution of The Gray Book has increased to 5000 users; Access Services will continue to manage its database by verifying and updating its listings annually.
- C. **Website Referrals** will add a third tier of information to this extensive integration of Los Angeles County’s customer/agency accessible information system.

Access Services recently launched its new Internet Website. The Website, which can be found at www.asila.org provides basic information about Access Services/CTSA products and services, it also provides Internet “links” to other related sites.

The Website is still undergoing construction and some new features will be added shortly. An immediate priority is to have the complete specialized transportation service database accessible from the Website by April 2000.

III. Access Education and Training Programs

- A. The **Transit / Paratransit Management Certificate Program (TPMC)**, now in its fifth semester, continues to offer a

university based professional transit management training program. A series of 10 thematic courses aimed at providing key industry essentials for successful management are offered in Southern and Northern California. In cooperation with our statewide partners and cosponsors: the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Association for Coordinated Transportation (CalACT), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), classes have convened in the cities of Los Angeles, Irvine, Sacramento, Oakland, and Hayward. To-date more than 300 transportation practitioners have enrolled in the program and have earned Pepperdine University's certification.

In 1999, the TPMC was nominated for National Transit Institute's, Achievements In Transit Training Model Program Award. Although not selected, the program was recognized for its outstanding cooperative efforts and implementation under the administration of Pepperdine University.

The CTSA is presently leading a program expansion and improvement plan. This action plan of program goals and enhancements will ensure that the program continues to be relevant and effective for industry professionals. The program's administration & management, marketing, curriculum, materials, and faculty are currently under review and evaluation. Evaluations will be completed in FY 1999/2000; the recommendations will be implemented concurrent with the 2000 fall term of courses.

- B. **CTSA Scholarships** are offered annually to assist Los Angeles County transportation providers develop management skills, and to encourage their participation in service networks. Scholarships are offered as subsidies and redemption certificates. Each mechanism allows participants to offset the expense of attending training seminars, workshops, and conferences.

Scholarships are offered at up to 80% of program costs and are used to attend programs which focus on issues of concern to urban specialized transit operations. Reputable programs offered through educational institutions, transportation commissions, associations, and consultants are generally eligible.

Since 1997, nearly 100 transportation agencies in Los Angeles County have received awards totaling \$12,400 in financial assistance. Access Services will continue to aggressively market and expand its program to Los Angeles County transportation agencies.

- C. **Specialized Technical Training Workshops** are sponsored by Access Services in an effort to bring nationally recognized training opportunities to Los Angeles County's transit and paratransit operators. Over the last eight years the CTSA has facilitated almost 70 low or no cost training seminars and technical workshops for this region's transit providers.

Access Services sponsored/hosted programs during the past two years and plans for next year include:

- 11/98 *Paratransit Rodeo (CalACT)*
- 12/98 *5310 Grant Writing Workshop (Access Services)*
- 03/99 *ADA...The Bus Stops Here (Project ACTION)*
- 09/99 *Bus Maintenance & Safety Inspection Workshop (Caltrans)*
- 10/99 *Air Conditioning & Lift Maintenance Workshops (Caltrans)*
- 12/99 *Professional Development Seminars (CTAA)*
- 01/00 *5310 Grant Writing Workshop (Access Services)*
- 04/00 *Certified Community Transit Manager - Preparatory (CTAA)*
- 07/00 *Certified Community Transit Manager – Examination (CTAA)*

During the 2000 program year, Access Services expects to support the enrollment and participation of at least 125 candidates throughout its program offerings. Access Services will continue to improve upon its program by surveying the local public, non-profit, human service, and other agencies delivering specialized transportation services to assess and plan for the future interest, subject matter, and participation in future technical workshops.

IV. Coordinated Mobility Planning

Access Services has a policy of proactively identifying specialized transportation coordination opportunities and potential mobility needs. The CTSA will initiate specific coordination efforts aimed at managing the demand for Access Paratransit services and the related operating costs.

A. Information Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance

The 1989 Action Plan determined that one of the impediments to coordination in Los Angeles County was the lack of easily available information on services and available resources. In this regard, Access Services and the MTA continue to act as an information clearinghouse through its technical workshops, publications, conference planning, announcements, and committee involvement.

Assistance related to the preparation of Section 5310 grant proposals remain an integral part of the technical

assistance provided under this program (**see Section 5310 Coordination and Technical Assistance**). The CTSA acts as technical assistant to applicants and as liaison to the Local Review Committee (LRC) to facilitate efforts and understanding of coordination as a major component of grant success.

The 1998 plan outlined a reorganization of CTSA's holdings of technical documents, plans, and briefs, such that a formal circulation process would be undertaken and marketed. Concurrent with the reorganization, a peer questionnaire was circulated to assess the needs and possible utilization of a "resource library". In summary, respondents generally indicated the five most frequently used resource types (in order of majority) are 1) Committee/ Board Agendas, 2) Legislative/Regulatory Publications, 3) Legal Documents, 4) Federal/State Reports, and 5) Training Modules. All respondents indicated that targeted networking is the most reliable resource mode used. 80% of the respondents also indicated that the Internet was a reliable source; others identified newsletters, libraries, and Access Services reports.

In keeping with these findings, along with the significant number of publications, videos, technical briefs and more, made available at the federal, state, and local level, the CTSA will continue in the coming plan year by locally publicizing access to the multitude of resources available by researching and linking each program to Access Services' Website (www.asila.org). The links are scheduled to be operational by June 2000.

B. Section 5310 (formerly Section 16B2) Coordination and Technical Assistance

The 1996-1998 Action Plan introduced the Section 16 Coordination Program as a task undertaken originally during FY 1994-1995 to fulfill the coordination requirement of the former Section 16 grant process.

Access Services continues to assist applicants in meeting the coordination requirements of the grant process while assisting the Local Review Committee, Caltrans, and the California Transportation Commission in ensuring that the grant funded projects are reviewed in accordance with regional coordination priorities.

Traditionally, the County of Los Angeles has received a disproportionately small amount of 5310 capital grant

funding. In 1998 the CTSA provided local applicant training in an effort to increase the “success factor” of local applicants. Local applicants were subsequently awarded 23% of 98/00 funding, almost double that historically achieved. The increased capital to our region will likewise increase the available capacity of transportation services to the elderly and persons with disabilities. The CTSA will continue to refine the curriculum and offer grant workshops on an annual basis.

C. Access Paratransit Operations

During the initial five years Access Services focused its attention upon the establishment and refinement of the ADA complementary paratransit program that now services virtually all of Los Angeles County and parts of neighboring counties. Now that the paratransit service fundamentally satisfies the ADA compliance requirements, Access Services plans to shift its focus to concentrate upon a broader mission, one that serves to increase transit mobility for all. While still meeting its responsibility for the delivery of Access Paratransit, improving mobility in the region is a more important long-term responsibility of the organization.

D. North County Coordination

The North County is comprised of the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys. Access Services entered into agreements with the City of Santa Clarita (Santa Clarita) and Antelope Valley Transportation Authority (AVTA) in 1996 to integrate Access Paratransit into the existing local Dial-a-Rides. The majority of Access Paratransit riders in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys are also registered riders of the local Dial-a-Ride

In order to address these issues and simplify service delivery, Access Services is proposing to change our contract arrangement to a direct subsidy arrangement in these two geographical areas. As such, Access Services would subsidize the cost of the North County ADA paratransit service based upon the population of the area served by fixed route transit, in each area. This subsidy will be used for funding all normal and reasonable expenses in the provision of service for transporting severely disabled (ADA complementary paratransit eligible) individuals. This change in structure will provide continuity and enhanced community ownership of the program, as well as more accurately reflect the true cost of providing the service in each area.

E. Service Coordination Agreements

Access Services is committed to developing cooperative agreements to provide the most appropriate and cost effective service. Three different coordination models are proposed:

User-side Subsidies, where Access Services provides incentives to eligible paratransit users in order to divert demand to a different service provider.

Direct Operations, where Access Services authorizes an agency to deliver trips, which would otherwise be provided by Access Paratransit, for a negotiated fixed fee.

Group Sub-Contracting, where an agency may purchase services from Access Paratransit on a cost basis, depending on availability of excess capacity.

Access Services is committed to implementing at least two coordination agreements, based on one or a combination of the models discussed above.