

DRAFT MINUTES

**California Connect
Equipment Program Advisory Committee (EPAC) Meeting**

September 12, 2025

California Connect's (also known as the Deaf & Disabled Telecommunications Program) Equipment Program Advisory Committee (EPAC) held a hybrid public Committee Meeting on Webex and at the Oakland City Center, 500 12th Street, Suite 105, Oakland, CA 94607.

EPAC Members Present

Antoinette Warren, Senior Citizen Community Seat, Vice Chair (Webex)
Danyelle Cerillo, Blind/Low Vision Seat (Webex)
Janice Armigo Brown, Hard of Hearing Community Seat
Judy Viera, Deaf Community Seat (Webex)
Monique Harris, Mobility Impaired Seat
Steve Longo, Deaf Community Seat, Chair (Webex)

EPAC Non-Voting Liaisons Present:

Brent Jolley, Communications Division, CPUC

CPUC Staff Present:

Matthew Reinig, Committee Coordinator, Communications Division
Tyrone Chin, Communications Division
Karen Luong, Communications Division
Darren Blackburn, Public Advocate's Office
Charles Abeghe, Communications Division

Others Present:

Amanda Whyrick, California Connect Division President
Chong Vang, Equipment Processing Center Operations Director, CSD
Jennifer Minore, Field Operations Program Director, CSD
Matthew Myrick, Testing and Training Director, CSD
Aida Cerda, Outreach Director, CSD
Melissa McMahan, Programs Manager, Hamilton Relay
Molly Miller, Marketing Director, CSD
Loulia Miller, Maximus
Erin Anhouvy, RAID Manager, Maximus
Abby Magtoto, Relay Services Account Manager, Hamilton Relay

1 Amit Chhabra
2 Antonio Serna
3 Bartulo, Christopher
4 Captioner-Brenda Perin
5 Guy @ Earzz
6 John Baxter
7 Kim Fisher
8 Leigh Ann Hubbard
9 Michael Abramowitz
10 Prad from Earzz
11 RH
12 Riva Usher
13 Robert
14 Roger Pflieger
15 Shaunee Cerny
16 stephen
17 Theresa Emig
18

19 **I. Administrative Business**

20 **A. Roll Call of EPAC Members**

21 EPAC Chair Steve Longo performed a roll call at 10:05 A.M. Antoinette
22 Warren was absent during the roll call due to technical difficulties but
23 appeared later.
24

25 **B. Agenda Review and Approval**

26 Moved by Judith Viera, seconded by Janice Armigo Brown, and with no
27 opposition, the Agenda was approved, as stated.
28

29 **C. Approval of Joint Meeting Minutes from June 13, 2025**

30 Steve Longo provided corrections to the meeting minutes. Moved by
31 Judith Viera and seconded by Monique Harris, the minutes were approved as
32 corrected.
33

34 **D. EPAC Action Items from June 13, 2025**

35 **Action item #32:** The committee members will complete the equipment
36 evaluation survey to determine which pieces of equipment from January 2025
37 production recommendation list they want to evaluate.

38 All members completed the survey. This action item is now closed.
39

40 **II. California Connect/DDTP Update**

1 Tyrone Chin provided updates on the Public Participation Hearings,
2 PPCA, ERP, EPC, CRS-6 RFP, and staffing updates.

3
4 **Public Participation Hearings (PPH):** A Public Participation Hearing
5 took place in the Greater Los Angeles area on September 3, 2025, with two
6 sessions: one at 2:00 p.m. had no public commenters, and another at 6:00
7 p.m. that featured two comments. An upcoming Public Participation Hearing is
8 scheduled for September 17, 2025, at the Ed Roberts Campus, following an
9 educational session aimed at preparing participants to provide meaningful
10 input. Outreach efforts coordinated by the Center for Independent Living (CIL)
11 aim to increase attendance.

12
13 **Primary and Program Contract Administrator (PPCA):** On
14 September 4, 2025, Maximus received orders by California Services for the
15 Deaf CSD) for testing and training equipment. CPUC is moving through the
16 procurement process for distribution to committee members.

17
18 **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP):** The California Department of
19 Technology is expected to release new bids around April or May 2026, with
20 plans to award contracts by July 2026.

21
22 **Equipment Processing center (EPC):** The existing EPC contract will
23 undergo amendments for two six-month extensions through a non-competitive
24 bid to avoid service disruptions.

25
26 **CRS-6 RFP update:** The Communications Division continues to work
27 with the California Department of Technology on the CRS-6 RFP.

28
29 **Staffing update:** Charlotte Taylor is no longer with the California Public
30 Utilities Commission (CPUC). Her contributions to the DDTP, particularly with
31 speech-generating device applications, will be missed.

32 Janice Armigo Brown asked if the September 17th PPH meetings will
33 have a hybrid format. Tyrone responded that it will only be an in-person public
34 participation meeting; the exemption was the May joint meeting. Otherwise,
35 PPHs are in-person.

36 Steve Longo asked for updates on the RFP structure, as it was
37 mentioned changes were being made. Tyrone did not recall mentioning
38 changes to the RFP but he will send his notes to Matt to share with the
39 committee.

40
41 **III. Earzz Presentation**

1 Dr. Pradyumna Thiruvengatanathan presented, and the presentation is
2 on pages 19 to 41.

3 Judy Viera raised two questions. First, she inquired about the presence
4 of a monthly service charge for a subscription-based service, which Prad
5 Thiruvengatanathan clarified is currently available in the UK, but a model for
6 the U.S. market is still being developed in collaboration with Teltex. The
7 pricing structure will vary based on the end application, such as care homes
8 versus individual consumers. For her second point, Judy suggested that Prad
9 reach out to ALDA (the Association for Late-Deafened Adults), highlighting
10 their upcoming annual conference in Denver, Colorado, which would provide
11 timely input for their plans. Prad confirmed he had recently received an email
12 from ALDA regarding the conference.

13 Monique Harris asked whether there is a backup system in the event of
14 a Wi-Fi outage. Prad responded that a mobile modem solution is in
15 development with Teltex to ensure continued service. Monique then inquired if
16 the system could detect seizures, to which Prad explained that while
17 movement-related sounds can be detected, they do not yet have the capability
18 to specifically identify seizures. However, they are considering the potential for
19 incorporating such detection in future updates.

20 Steve Longo inquired about the number of monitors optimal for a typical
21 home setup, highlighting that a common scenario might involve multiple
22 devices in different rooms. Prad responded by explaining that the number of
23 monitors needed depends on the size of the home and the variety of sound
24 "scenes" present, suggesting a guideline of one monitor per sound scene,
25 which could mean two to three monitors for most homes. He emphasized the
26 system's ability to learn and adapt to new sounds, a feature that sets it apart in
27 the market, ultimately aiming to enhance user independence. Longo agreed
28 with Prad's points, noting that individual home layouts could lead to different
29 needs for sound monitoring.

30 Antoinette Warren inquired whether wearing a smartwatch would
31 enhance its utility, to which Prad explained that the device could send
32 notifications to a smartphone, which would also alert the smartwatch. This
33 would provide clear information about the sound's source and location through
34 vibrating notifications. Prad reassured the audience that they could reach out
35 directly for further questions and emphasized the importance of establishing a
36 local presence in the U.S. market for service support.

37 38 **IV. Public Input – AM Session**

39 40 **V. Lunch Break**

1 VI. Program Vendor Reports

3 A. Marketing Report

4 Molly Miller, Marketing Director, reported on Marketing updates. The
5 presentation is on pages 42 to 53.

6 Antoinette Warren inquired about which regions in the North Coast were
7 targeted during campaigns one through four. Molly replied she will look into it
8 and share the list.

9 Steve Longo highlighted the need for more aggressive recruitment for
10 TADDAC and EPAC members, suggesting a vlog to generate interest. Molly
11 Miller mentioned that she and Matt were already working on social media
12 outreach and gathering community testimonials to promote open committee
13 seats. Steve expressed his desire to share his experiences with TADDAC and
14 EPAC through a vlog and asked for help in making it visually appealing.
15 Matthew Reinig confirmed that he and Molly were finalizing Steve's script.

16 Monique Harris raised the point that they should also seek members
17 with speech difficulties, as the focus seemed to lean towards deaf and hard of
18 hearing individuals. Brent Jolley encouraged Monique to create a video, which
19 she agreed to do. Matthew noted they had three volunteers for videos and that
20 outreach would target various organizations, not just those focused on specific
21 disabilities.

22 Danyelle Cerillo thanked Molly for her presentation and offered her help
23 in reaching out to blind organizations. Matthew appreciated her support and
24 mentioned that he would be in touch with all members to streamline the
25 outreach efforts. Molly encouraged the creation of more testimonials, which
26 could enhance their marketing.

28 B. Testing and Training Report

29 Amanda Whyrick, CA Connect President, reported on Testing & Training
30 updates. The presentation is on pages 54 to 60. Amanda introduced the new
31 Testing & Training Director, Matthew Myrick.

32 Judy Viera inquired about the evaluation of the Earzz equipment that
33 had been shared earlier. Amanda Whyrick responded that she had added it to
34 their pipeline for analysis, explaining that there was still uncertainty regarding
35 the subscription-based plan and how it would be paid for in the U.S. Steve
36 Longo emphasized the importance of understanding the financial implications
37 of a subscription model before proceeding.

38 Steve also brought up the challenge of getting the equipment for
39 committee members due to CPUC's ordering freeze. Amanda elaborated that
40 the CPUC's annual financial audit period halts all orders, but the freeze had
41 recently lifted, allowing them to move forward with equipment procurement.

1
2 Matthew Reinig then brought up a request from Monique Harris for a
3 specific type of user-friendly cell phone that simplifies calls for individuals with
4 mobility challenges, ideally featuring one-button dialing. Monique confirmed
5 the request, expressing a preference for tactile buttons over a flat screen.
6 Amanda noted the availability of several cell phones with simpler interfaces
7 and promised to investigate options that fit Monique's needs, including the
8 possibility of physical keyboards and configurable button features. Monique
9 clarified her intention to use the phone solely for calling, without the additional
10 functionalities typical of modern smartphones. Amanda assured her that she
11 would explore suitable options.

12 13 **C. Field Operations Report**

14 Jennifer Minore, Field Operations Director, presented, and the
15 presentation is on page 61 to 69.

16 Judy Viera inquired about the number of in-home visits conducted for
17 residents of senior housing. Jennifer Minore responded that while she didn't
18 have specific numbers, visits are made to various locations, including assisted
19 living and senior housing. Viera expressed concern that many individuals in
20 such housing might have hearing difficulties, suggesting the development of
21 tailored services for them. Minore assured that in-home visits are available for
22 anyone unable to reach a Service Center.

23 Steve Longo mentioned that the relocation of Service Centers might
24 inconvenience some individuals, particularly those who need accessible
25 transportation options. Minore indicated they promote new Service Centers
26 through outreach efforts, including social media and flyers.

27 Viera then raised an issue about the lack of disabled parking spaces at a
28 Service Center she visited. Minore responded that there are indeed accessible
29 spaces nearby, specifically referencing the Sacramento center, and shared
30 her excitement about new reserved parking spaces being designated for
31 California Connect. Viera maintained her stance that no accessible parking
32 spaces were available at that time, prompting Minore to offer assistance to
33 find the spots if Judy wanted to revisit the center. Judy plans to visit the
34 location after the meeting to verify the information herself and send pictures.

35 Antoinette Warren asked for details on cities where in-house visits are
36 planned, locations of the centers, and areas where home visits are conducted.
37 Jennifer responded that she recognized the request, mentioning that they
38 would work on providing the information and create an updated map including
39 the Fresno Service Center. Additionally, she noted the possibility of adding a
40 part-time office in Los Angeles and potentially in the Bay Area.

1 Janice Armigo Brown inquired about the locations Jennifer was
2 searching for office space in the Bay Area. Jennifer explained that her initial
3 search for a full-time office had shifted to seeking part-time arrangements in
4 existing spaces, as their needs had changed. She noted the challenges in
5 finding suitable locations, mentioning that a potential site in Concord was too
6 far for most people and an agreement at Jack London in Oakland fell through
7 due to lease issues. Antoinette Warren suggested that Jennifer connect with
8 the aging and adult services in Oakland, particularly highlighting the senior
9 centers that offer parking. Janice also proposed considering libraries as
10 potential part-time service centers, which Jennifer had not thought of before
11 but found worth exploring. Antoinette further recommended reaching out to the
12 Alameda County Board of Supervisors for referrals. Jennifer appreciated the
13 suggestions, stating she now had a list of new leads to pursue.

14 15 **D. Outreach Report**

16
17 Aida Cerda, Outreach Director, presented, and the report is on page 70 to
18 76.

19 Janice Armigo Brown posed a question to Aida Cerda about how her
20 team manages outreach to various communities. Janice mentioned that she
21 has been forwarding upcoming events to Matthew Reinig, as she believes
22 California Connect could be beneficial to those communities. Aida explained
23 that they currently have over 1,600 leads, including those Janice forwarded,
24 and are in the process of organizing them in their database to establish
25 sustainable partnerships. Aida emphasized the importance of building
26 relationships rather than just focusing on events. As her team is now fully
27 staffed, they plan to enhance their outreach over the next three to six months,
28 leveraging both webinars and in-person workshops to connect with potential
29 partners. Janice reiterated the significance of attending events to build
30 connections, while Aida acknowledged the need for strategic planning due to
31 limited staff and a large area to cover. She encouraged Janice to continue
32 sharing event information as early as possible for better planning.

33 Antoinette Warren expressed her appreciation for Aida and suggested
34 that Aida compile a list of referrals from their committee to track progress, to
35 which Aida agreed to offer at future meetings.

36 37 **E. California Relay Service (CRS) Report**

38 Abby Magtoto, Relay Account Manager, presented, and the presentation
39 is on page 77 to 80.

40 41 **F. Equipment Processing Center (EPC) Customer Contact Report**

1 Chong Vang, EPC Operations Director, presented and the presentation
2 is on page 81 to 90.

3
4 **VII. Public Input – PM Session**

5 There was no public input at this time.

6
7 **VIII. New Business**

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9 **A. Nomination and Voting of Successors or New Members (if
10 necessary)**

11 Steve Longo mentioned he is following up with a former TADDAC
12 member who may be interested in joining EPAC. He noted the need for new
13 members due to upcoming term expirations and suggested collaboration with
14 Matt and Molly to recruit from the community.

15
16 **B. Future Meetings and Agendas**

17 The next meeting will be on October 10, 2025. Matthew Reinig inquired
18 about agenda items for the next meeting. The November joint meeting is on
19 November 14, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency LAX in Los Angeles. The planned
20 agenda is: One from Hamilton Relay about Visually Assisted
21 Speech-to-Speech, a presentation on AAC (augmentative alternative
22 communication) by Tobii Dynavox, and presentations by the vendors including
23 Maximus.

24
25 **C. Report from the Chairs**

26 No reports.

27
28 **D. Member Reports**

29 Judy Viera shared that the Association of Late-Deafened Adults will
30 have it's annual conference in October. More information is on www.alda.org.

31 Antoinette Warren shared that CPUC launched a rulemaking
32 R23.11.001 to review and consider potential revisions to the DDTP. This
33 followed a recent statewide needs assessment conducted by the CPUC's
34 communication division to gather input from Community Based Organizations
35 and program participants.

36 Danyelle Cerillo shared her experience using Meta AI smart glasses,
37 highlighting their benefits for visually impaired users. She inquired about the
38 timeline for testing equipment that participants had signed up for. Matthew
39 Reinig responded that the equipment was ordered and should arrive within the
40 next month, although the timeline was dependent on the CPUC. He assured

1 the group that they would receive updates as soon as a shipping date was
2 confirmed.

3

4 **IX. Meeting Wrap up and Adjournment**

5 The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 PM.

6

7 Matthew Reinig prepared these minutes.