DRAFT MINUTES

California Connect
Telecommunications Access for the Deaf and Disabled Administrative Committee (TADDAC) Meeting

September 26, 2025

California Connect's (also known as the Deaf & Disabled Telecommunications Program) Telecommunications Access for the Deaf and Disabled Administrative Committee (TADDAC) held a hybrid public Committee Meeting on Webex and at the Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton LAX El Segundo, 888 N. Pacific Coast Hwy., El Segundo, CA 90245.

TADDAC Members Present

Frances Reyes Acosta, At Large Seat -DDTP Spanish Services User (WebEx)
Jesse Acosta, At Large Seat - Veterans Community
Louie Herrera, Disability Community-Blind/Low Vision Community Seat, Vice Chair
Katie Wright, Late-Deafened Community Seat, Chair
Robert Sidansky, Deaf Community Seat (WebEx)
Darren Blackburn, CPUC Public Advocates Office Representative (WebEx)
Kevin Siemens, Disability Community – Speech-to-Speech User Seat (WebEx)
Kenneth Rothschild, Deaf Community Seat

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
Christopher Bartulo, 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
Angela Shaw, Field Operations Director, CSD
Aida Cerda, Outreach Director, CSD
Melissa McMahan, Programs Manager, Hamilton Relay

1 Molly Miller, Marketing Director, CSD
2 Matthew Myrick, Testing & Training Director
3 Phua Gilman, Senior Project Manager, CSD
4 Loulia Miller, Maximus
5 Erin Anhouvy, RAID Manager, Maximus
6 Abby Magtoto, Relay Account Manager, Hamilton Relay
7 Tamara Paul-Reeff, Senior Director, Maximus
8 Riva Usher, Contract Director, Maximus
9 Phua Gilman, Senior Project Manager, CSD
10 5102****00
11 6785****49
12 Amanda Raynal
13 April
14 Jessica J
15 John Baxter
16 Kerrie Danielsen
17 Laini Piva
18 Leigh Ann Hubbard
19 Melody Lujano
20 Michael Warburton
21 Miguel
22 Pamela Siebert
23 Richard Ray
24 Ryanna
25 Shaunee Cerny
26 Steve Longo
27 Theresa Emig
28 5102****00
29 Amit Chhabra
30 Andy
31 AS
32 Christman, Hope
33 Kerrie D
34 Kevin Sehlmeyer Sonic Alert
35 Melissa McMahan - Hamilton Relay
36 Melody Lujano
37 RH
38 Roger Pflieger
39 Shaunee Cerny
40 Sonic Alert Kevin Sehlmeyer
41 Steve Longo
42 Theresa Emig (PPCA)

TADDAC Chair Katie Wright called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.

I. Administrative Business

A. Roll Call of TADDAC Members

TADDAC Chair Katie Wright performed a roll call. Louis Herrera was absent during the roll-call but appeared after lunch.

B. Agenda Review and Approval

Moved by Jesse Acosta, seconded by Robert Sidansky, and with no opposition, the Agenda was approved as stated.

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 27, 2025

The minutes were approved without opposition and Kenneth Rothschild abstained.

D. TADDAC Action Items from April 25, 2025

Action Item #68: Committee members to assist CTAP and CRS Vendor outreach efforts by emailing information or reporting on community events to the DDTP Committee Coordinator.

No updates. This action item remains open.

Action Item #76: Katie Wright will work with the CPUC Representative to get amplified and captioned telephones for future emergency evacuation shelters throughout California.

Katie Wright emphasized the importance of this action item for the upcoming fire season. This action item remains open.

Action Item #99: TADDAC will make an effort to recruit new Members for its four open seats. TADDAC is seeking a Mobility Impaired, Youth, Hard of Hearing, and an At-Large Community Representative.

There are eight vacant seats in TADDAC: Disability representative, Spanish Services, Deaf Community, Hard of Hearing Community, Late-Deafened, Speech-to-Speech Community, Mobility and At-Large. Matthew Reinig shared an email template for members to recruit new members for the open seats. He also encouraged members to share quotes or create a video testimony that can be posted on social media. This action item remains open.

Action Item #112: Develop an emergency readiness kit (“go-bag”) to provide emergency readiness information to seniors and people with disabilities.

A webpage listing various resources shared by committee members relating to emergency preparedness will be developed by CSD Marketing. Additionally, social media posts and outreach efforts will ensue to raise awareness about emergency preparedness.

Action Item #113: Review the accessibility of the California Connect website.

Committee members shared their feedback with CSD Marketing on the website. Detailed feedback can be found in the 9-26-2025 meeting minutes.

II. EPAC Updates

EPAC Chair Steve Longo provided an update on EPAC. EPAC closed action item 32, pertaining to the equipment survey. They are in the process of receiving equipment to begin the testing process. EPAC is actively working on recruiting new members for the open seats, collaborating with Molly on the public relations/marketing efforts. There are two Disability Representative open seats.

III. CPUC & CA Connect/DDTP Update

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

Public Participation Hearings (PPH): A Public Participation Hearing took place in the Greater Los Angeles area on September 3, 2025, with two sessions: one at 2:00 p.m. had no public commenters, and another at 6:00 p.m. that featured two comments. The next Public Participation Hearing was on September 17, 2025, at the Ed Roberts Campus, following an educational session aimed at preparing participants to provide meaningful input. Outreach efforts were coordinated by the Center for Independent Living (CIL) aim to increase attendance. The turnout during the afternoon session was noteworthy, with nearly 30 attendees with disabilities, nine providing comments in person and another 20 participating remotely. The comments were helpful, since they were germane to the session issues. The evening session had two people providing comments.

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

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

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

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

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

Marketing of Open Seats: Matthew Reinig provided an update on the marketing of open seats. Matthew encouraged members to participate in creating videos or sharing quotes for social media posts in promotion of the open seats. A script and video guidelines will be shared before the next meeting. There are two potential leads.

IV. Katie's Presentation on COLR Panel

Katie Wright presented, and the presentation is on pages 23-38.

Kenneth Rothschild raised concerns regarding how changes to their charter might affect landline requirements and the potential influx of requests for new technology. He questioned whether this would lead to an expectation for the provision of devices like computers and smartphones, and services like Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). Katie acknowledged Rothschild's concerns, stating that the goal of modernization is to adapt the charter to support services compatible with the phasing out of copper wire. While recognizing the complexity of the transition, Katie emphasized the need to proceed with updating their technology.

Robert Sidansky added that while transitioning from old to new technology presents challenges, it is essential to keep moving forward and evolving. He highlighted the importance of having a solid transition plan in place, which would include addressing any unforeseen issues that might arise. Katie reminded the group that the responsibility for the transition work would fall to the CPUC, not the committee itself. They expressed the necessity of re-evaluating the definition of basic service, as it had not been updated since 2012, indicating that it is time to reassess the program's relevance and importance to the state.

Frances Reyes Acosta expressed her gratitude for the comprehensive work presented and highlighted the importance of addressing the Carrier of Last Resort issue, which she noted AT&T has pursued due to the financial implications. She emphasized the need for AT&T to support necessary changes to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, stressing that these changes are long overdue. Frances urged her group to be proactive in addressing these issues and noted that Katie had provided helpful information and resources for advocacy.

Katie acknowledged Frances's points and reflected on previous discussions about Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), cell phones, and iPad and their reliance on broadband, emphasizing that the program would be significantly impacted without the necessary resources. She emphasized the seven critical devices in the program that would be impacted by the COLR decision and phasing out of cooper wires. Kenneth Rothschild raised concerns about the financial implications of potential changes, questioning whether AT&T would provide assistance and where the funds would come from for new equipment. Katie pondered AT&T's profits and their ability to support necessary repairs, suggesting that cost-cutting measures could lead to job losses for technicians responsible for maintaining infrastructure.

Frances Reyes Acosta expressed her belief that financial considerations are central to the issue at hand. She noted that AT&T's transition from copper wire necessitates a reevaluation of how they address the needs of the community and the organization. Frances acknowledged the potential job losses that might occur as AT&T seeks to cut costs and suggested that the displaced workers could be retrained to provide broadband services in underserved areas. She emphasized that skill sets in any job are multifaceted and that employees often need to adapt to various tasks. Ultimately, she indicated that the responsibility lies with AT&T and what the community demands in return for their contract. Katie inquired about the possibility of a public participation hearing related to the rule-making process, and Brent Jolley replied that more information could be found on the COLR rulemaking website.

The discussion highlighted the group's collective responsibility to advocate for the needs of disabled individuals in California.

V. Emergency Preparedness Kit or “Go-Bag”

The discussion focused on the development of an emergency preparedness kit, or Go-Bag, specifically tailored for individuals with various disabilities. Katie sought input on whether members had created lists of essential items. Katie introduced the idea of utilizing resources from websites like ready.gov, which offer guidance on what should be included in emergency kits. Frances emphasized the importance of inclusivity in emergency planning, particularly for individuals who are blind or deaf, and suggested consulting organizations such as the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for additional resources.

Katie proposed creating a resource page on their California Connect website to provide essential information for people with disabilities regarding emergency preparedness. Frances supported this idea and recommended gathering input from the Access and Functional Needs (AFN) group during joint meetings to ensure the created Go-Bag list is viable and trustworthy. Frances also suggested reaching out to local independent living centers to understand their outreach on emergency preparedness and gathering feedback from various organizations within their communities to assess their preparedness levels, then compiling the resources page to share with organizations.

Matthew Reinig shared he had received three emails with valuable information. He indicated that he and a colleague, Molly, could collaborate on organizing these resources. Matthew also noted the ongoing development of emergency kit equipment, such as backup batteries, highlighting that these efforts were still in progress and tied to the broader program for emergency preparedness. He suggested that once the resources were refined, Molly could create social media posts to keep the community informed, particularly during fire season. Katie chimed in with a suggestion regarding the service center field agents, who have firsthand knowledge of the disabilities faced by clients. They proposed distributing flyers or equipment as a public service to raise awareness about emergency preparedness.

VI. Program Vendor Reports

A. Marketing Report

Molly Miller, Marketing Director, presented, and the presentation is on pages 39 to 50.

Molly Miller addressed several marketing topics that were raised earlier in the meeting. She noted that the team would be enhancing resources on emergency kits and preparedness over the coming weeks, with contributions from Brent, including materials from the AFN library. Additionally, they are in the process of developing next year's annual marketing plan, which will prominently feature emergency preparedness. Molly also discussed efforts to promote committee membership, mentioning targeted ads and upcoming social media posts and emails designed to encourage applications. She plans to provide both a detailed script and a more flexible outline for current members, along with tips for self-taping.

Jesse Acosta inquired about the caregiver campaign and its target audience. Molly explained that their research identified women aged 30 to 60, primarily English and Spanish speakers, as their main demographic. She described the campaign's goal of informing caregivers about communication difficulties faced by family members and encouraging them to explore the services offered by California Connect, including specialized devices. Jesse asked for specific examples of individuals who might need such devices. Molly shared the case of Theo, a child featured in their marketing campaign, whose mother was researching assistive devices for communication, an Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) device. Jesse then provided a personal example of his own challenges following a traumatic brain injury (TBI), asking about the devices available for similar needs. Molly mentioned that detailed inquiries about specific devices should be directed to the field operations team, who would be presenting later.

Louie Herrera expressed concerns regarding the accessibility of products for the blind and inquired whether resources, including a Braille handout and alternative digital formats on USB drives or SD cards, would be provided for newly blinded individuals who may not read Braille. Molly affirmed that her team was exploring these options to ensure accessibility for all consumers.

Louie went on to discuss issues with the California Connect website, noting that the search functionality was not compatible with any of the three major screen readers for Windows. He highlighted problems with improperly labeled headings that could confuse blind users navigating the site. Louie explained that ISO standards exist for digital content formatting, which stipulate that headings should be clearly defined to avoid creating confusion when navigating web pages. He also pointed out difficulties he and Jesse experienced when trying to access specific links, noting inconsistencies in how links appeared on different devices. Louie suggested that the development team investigate the link coding to resolve these accessibility issues, ensuring a smoother experience for users. Additionally, Louie shared that the California Connect website, highlighting that there were issues with color contrast that could affect accessibility for users.

Molly asked if Louie uses Mac or Windows, with Louie sharing he uses both, relying on various screen readers like JAWS, NVDA, and VoiceOver, depending on the platform. He mentioned utilizing Chrome and Edge on Windows and offered to share resources regarding ISO standards and their relation to WCAG guidelines. He specifically recommended a visit to the Accenture website, which adheres to these standards in web page construction. Molly expressed appreciation for Louie's input and planned to consult their developer about the different platforms. Matt indicated that he would compile all feedback to send to Molly.

Louie Herrera informed Molly Miller that he had sent an email to Matt regarding accessibility testing for their development team. He recommended using webaim.org, which provides a comprehensive, open-source tool to evaluate web accessibility.

Robert Sidansky raised concerns about how to reach individuals, particularly senior citizens, who lack access to technology and may be apprehensive about it. Molly Miller responded, highlighting the organization's challenges connecting with rural populations and seniors. She mentioned that they are collaborating with direct mail services and local media outlets, such as radio and news, to improve outreach efforts. Jesse Acosta inquired whether senior citizen centers had been considered as potential outreach locations. Molly noted that the outreach team was analyzing leads that included senior centers as a focus area. Jesse suggested identifying specific senior centers and independent living facilities for outreach, comparing the strategy to tactics used by religious groups that go door-to-door to spread their messages.

B. Testing and Training Report

Amanda Whyrick, CA Connect Division President, presented and the presentation is on page 51 to 57. Amanda introduced the new Testing & Training Director, Matthew Myrick.

Jesse Acosta raised concerns about the testing process for equipment intended for blind and low vision individuals. He inquired whether the recently hired testers and trainers would be involved in hands-on testing. Amanda confirmed that there would be hands-on testing with the Committee and that they could recruit volunteers for additional testing. Jesse then asked which devices would be available for blind users to test, to which Amanda responded that several options would be provided, including the BlindShell 3 and Orbit Reader.

Jesse expressed that a joint meeting twice a year was insufficient and suggested more time was needed for thorough evaluations. Amanda clarified that when products are received for testing, they would be sent directly to members’ homes with a proposed 30-day trial period. Jesse agreed that this approach was beneficial, noting a past example where phones were tested similarly. Katie raised questions about when the committee will test the equipment. Amanda assured her that details would be presented in the next month's meeting, explaining that equipment had already been ordered and that a procurement process was underway. She detailed the process for testing, including receiving devices, providing feedback through surveys, and reconvening to discuss recommendations based on the testing outcomes. Amanda promised to provide further clarification in the upcoming meeting.

Katie expressed concern about having more equipment presentations, as they prefer not to do that in their meeting time. She emphasized the importance of having hands-on experience with the devices, especially Louie and Jesse testing the reliability of certain devices as blind individuals. Brent acknowledged these concerns and wanted to ensure everyone on both committees had an equal opportunity to test the devices. Amanda contributed by mentioning the commitment to working with individuals with disabilities who can test and share their experiences with various devices. She offered to send the list of equipment to Matt, clarifying that testing would not occur during the meeting but rather on participants' own time at home.

Kenneth Rothschild sought clarification on the progress of the equipment testing process referred to as waves. Amanda explained that they had completed wave one, which involved testing eight devices, and were currently in wave two, set to test 24 new devices. Wave three was still in development and expected to be launched around November. Amanda proposed sharing the device list with the committee for feedback and planning the testing logistics for wave three.

Frances Reyes Acosta expressed her interest in testing devices, particularly the Smartwatch, but mentioned that she had not received any feedback after submitting her preferences. She requested a brief overview of the devices being considered by the company to better understand their purposes.

Louie Herrera raised two points, first inquiring about a knowledge base that would compile information on the testing of devices and their respective pros and cons. He stressed the importance of having this resource to assist consumers in the event of issues. Additionally, he showed interest in testing the 3S device to evaluate its accessibility for individuals with dexterity problems. Amanda Whyrick responded, noting that the RIVO3S was officially part of the program and would be distributed accordingly. Louie emphasized the necessity of including a deaf-blind member on the EPAC to evaluate tactile devices effectively. Amanda reassured that volunteers with specific disabilities are recruited to test products, ensuring that each device is reviewed by someone who would use it.

Katie highlighted the need for balanced dialogue during joint meetings and proposed that EPAC present selected items for discussion, ensuring collaboration without undermining their role.

C. Field Operations Report

Jennifer Minore, Field Operations Director, presented and the presentation is on page 58 to 66.

Minore addressed Jesse Acosta's concerns regarding his difficulties after returning from service. Jesse explained that he faced both challenges in getting words out and being understood. Jennifer presented various options to help, including an antistutter device that utilizes delayed auditory feedback, iPads for speech generation, speech-generating devices (SGDs), and voice amplifiers for those with weaker voices. She emphasized the importance of consulting with a speech therapist to determine the most suitable approach for Jesse.

Kenneth Rothschild inquired about a noticeable spike in visit reasons in July, questioning the data chart that showed over 94 reasons for visits. Jennifer acknowledged the confusion and clarified that each visit might involve multiple reasons, such as processing applications and receiving equipment or training.

D. Outreach Report

Aida Cerda, Outreach Director, reported on Outreach updates, and the presentation is on page 67 to 73.

Aida Cerda addressed questions from Jesse Acosta regarding senior services and centers. She noted that their organization includes seven senior centers as part of their target sectors. Aida explained that they would soon begin public outreach, focusing on face-to-face interactions while also leveraging existing contacts in their database. This outreach is expected to take place within the next two to three months.

When asked about a previous pause in public-facing activities, Aida clarified that the organization had temporarily halted active outreach to focus on team onboarding and the launch of a new database. Now that the team is fully established, they have received permission to engage actively with the public.

Katie inquired about opportunities for webinars, expressing a willingness to promote them through the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Aida confirmed that her team could facilitate presentations regarding the California Connect program and offered to share outreach contact information for further coordination. She emphasized the importance of establishing relationships with organizations to ensure ongoing collaboration and effective outreach efforts.

Louie Herrera inquired about the correlation between the outreach efforts and field operations. He also questioned why the Braille satellite office in Echo Park was chosen over the Braille Institute on Vermont and Melrose, which is more centrally located and accessible. Jennifer Minore responded that the decision was led by Angela Shaw, the former fields operations director, who evaluated over 70 potential locations. Among the few that expressed interest, Echo Park was deemed the best fit, although the exact reasons for not selecting the other site were unclear. Aida Cerda added that their departments have different focuses but do collaborate. The outreach team, which she is part of, is dedicated to creating and maintaining partnerships through various interactions, while the FO team, represented by Jennifer, is more focused on staffing service centers and providing individualized assistance.

E. CRS-5 Report

Abby Magtoto, Relay Account Manager, presented, and the presentation is on pages 74 to 77.

Melissa provided an update regarding a recent experience her team had while working with a speech-to-speech consumer in California who needed to make a phone call to a Spanish-speaking individual. This situation was new for the team and required thorough investigation into their processes. They discovered that, according to FCC regulations, a second Communication Assistant (CA) was needed for calls involving different types of Relay Services. After consulting with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), it was confirmed that having two CAs was justified for accessibility reasons.

Initially, they faced a hurdle when they learned that a specific tag on the customer's profile prevented the bilingual CA from joining the call. With the customer's agreement, the team removed the tag and made adjustments to the customer's profile. They recommended creating a speed dial option but ultimately found that the most effective solution was to maintain the regular process by connecting the user to a Telecommunications Relay Service CA and transferring them to a bilingual assistant as needed.

After making these changes, they conducted a successful test call where the caller was able to communicate effectively, thanks to the bilingual CA. Melissa expressed her gratitude for the CPUC's support and acknowledged the collaboration with Matthew Reinig, as well as the customer's patience during the process.

F. Equipment Processing Center (EPC) Report

Chong Vang, EPC Operations Director, presented and the presentation is on page 78 to 87.

VII. Public Input – PM Session

There was no public input at this time.

VIII. New Business

A. Future Meetings and Agendas

Katie Wright inquired about having pieces of equipment presented during the joint meeting. Matthew Reinig stated there is a full agenda but Brent Jolley interjected, saying there can be a table to demo equipment during the meeting, separately from the agenda. The November joint meeting agenda will be from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM at the Hyatt Regency LAX Hotel and includes presentations from Tobbi Dynavox on ACC and Hamilton Relay on Visual STS, followed by vendor presentations in the afternoon.

B. Report from the Chair

No report.

C. Member Reports

Louis Herrera emphasized the importance of cybersecurity and installing the latest updates on your devices.

IX. Meeting Wrap up and Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 PM.

Matthew Reinig prepared the minutes.