

Los Angeles County MTA Leverages Progress to Unify Terminology and Streamline Public Access

CASE STUDY



INDUSTRY
Transportation

PRODUCT
Progress® Data Platform®
Progress® Data Cloud®
Progress® Semaphore®

COUNTRY
United States

SUMMARY
The system administrators of Metro (LACMTA) wanted to provide clear access to board and legal information for both internal teams and the public. However, inconsistent language across systems made it difficult to locate records, respond to legal requests and present board materials. By deploying Progress Semaphore as part of the Progress Data Platform, delivered via Progress Data Cloud, the team was able to use the solution's ontology modeling and auto-tagging capabilities to unify content while also meeting critical Federal Transit Authority (FTA) accessibility mandates.

“Progress helps us provide clarity and understanding to our customers in our content without the burden of understanding localized nomenclature within Metro.”

Omar Camacho,
Director of Systems Maintenance,
Metro (LACMTA)

Challenge

Over 10 million Californians living in Los Angeles County have numerous public transportation options, all of which are managed by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority (LACMTA). The agency also coordinates funding for many of the county's transportation systems.

LACMTA faced an issue involving a lack of consistent categorization for legal and agency-specific terminology. Systems administrators at LACMTA began noticing that, on the backend, certain words and definitions were not consistent. Keywords in their database would have multiple names, so if someone needed information for a legal request, they might use different terms to find the same records, slowing down legal holds and litigation requests. The same issue applied to other terms like project names and phases and the lack of a proper content classification tool made it difficult to manage.

While the issue first surfaced in legal and records-related processes, it also affected how information was accessed more broadly by staff, leadership and the public. Without consistent terminology and connections between terms, it became harder to reliably link related reports over time, making it increasingly difficult to present board actions in an accessible way to the public.

“When people weren't using the same nomenclature for the things they were talking about, depending on which department they were coming from, the inconsistencies became too obvious to ignore. Once we identified that as a real problem, we turned to Progress to figure out the solution,” said Omar Camacho, Director of Systems Maintenance at LACMTA.

Adding to this, the agency was subject to Federal Transit Authority (FTA) mandates requiring that public Board materials be accessible and easy to find online and needed to update its public-facing website for people accessing Board reports. Because the Board meets monthly and generates numerous reports, having a consistent and reliable way for users to organize and surface this information was critical.



Solution

Metro leveraged the Progress Data Platform to modernize its approach to organizing content and terminology for internal departments, delivered through Progress Data Cloud.

The Metro team used Semaphore ontology modeling to create relationships between similar terms, track the updated project names and standardize term names based on how other departments, board members and the public refer to them. This semantic approach moved beyond static definitions to reflect how terms are used and evolve.

To maintain the consistency they strived for, the LACMTA team implemented an auto-tagging capability on numerous pieces of content, including reports from the Board. The auto-tagging enables both the employees of Metro, and the commuters they serve, to access topics covered in the monthly board meetings, supporting discovery across a large volume of recurring Board and committee reports.

LACMTA enhanced the discoverability of its archived content by integrating the Semaphore solution into its federated search index, making it easier for users to find critical historical documents without reprocessing older files. With support from Progress, LACMTA utilized the Semaphore UI as part of the Progress Data Platform, delivered through Progress Data Cloud, to streamline database management and leverage the platform's capabilities to advance its data initiatives and better align with organizational goals.

Results

Metro is responding to legal requests through a consistently categorized database. The backend content is far more organized and easier to search for, and there is minimal-to-no confusion amongst the different departments. Commuters who are accessing the website can now discover what topics were covered within monthly board meetings. And the new consistent language made it even easier to be transparent, as insider terminology wasn't being used.

“A lot of reports done by our agency will have vocabulary included, or an index of terms included. Instead of having employees start that from scratch for each report, they can come to the ontology and access those terms. Progress has helped us increase transparency with the public and actions of the Board of Directors.”

Shelly Ray,
Manager of Information Governance, Metro (LACMTA)

“Progress helps us provide clarity and understanding to our customers in our content without the burden of understanding localized nomenclature within Metro,” said Camacho.

The solution allowed the team to efficiently scale, but also easily maintain the database without spending time updating systems. Automated workflows helped the team align with required publication timelines to deliver on the Board meeting agendas. As Ray explained, “The most visible way that we’re using Semaphore is the auto tagging of reports to the Board of Directors. That makes it easier for anybody who visits our website to really drill down into a topic.”

What’s next for the team at LACMTA? Camacho and Ray are eager to start integrating the Semaphore platform with other internal systems, such as Metro’s own Integrated Library System (ILS), which helps classify the agency’s digital assets. Ray is confident that an integration like this could increase collaboration across the organization.

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About Metro

Metro (LACMTA) is unique among the nation’s transportation agencies. Metro serves as transportation planner and coordinator, designer, builder and operator for the country’s largest, most populous county. More than 10 million people – nearly one-fourth of California’s residents – live, work and play within our 1,433-square-mile service area. For more information on Metro, visit www.metro.net



Unify your organization’s data in one platform to manage critical business data.

About Progress Software

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