



PARATRANSIT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

TABLETOP EXERCISE

CRITICAL TRANSPORTATION

AFTER ACTION REPORT



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Exercise Overview

Exercise Name	Bay Area Critical Transportation Paratransit Roles and Responsibilities Tabletop Exercise
Exercise Dates	August 28, 2019
Scope	<p>This tabletop exercise was conducted from 9:00 AM-12:30 PM Pacific Time (PT) at the Bay Area Metro Center Building at 101 8th Street, Oakland, CA, 94607.</p> <p>At the beginning of each of three modules, participants received a scenario briefing that summarized key events. Following each of these updates, facilitators led a plenary group discussion that was driven by questions about critical transportation related to heat, wildfires, and air quality concerns affecting the San Francisco Bay Area.</p>
Mission Area(s)	Response
Core Capabilities	<p>Critical Transportation</p> <p>Operational Coordination</p> <p>Situational Assessment</p> <p>Public Information and Warning</p>
Objectives	<p>Discuss plans and processes for initial emergency response.</p> <p>Discuss interagency communication and coordination in an emergency.</p>



	Clarify the process for requesting and providing mutual aid.
Threat or Hazard	Heat/Wildfire/Air Quality
Scenario	Sustained record high temperatures with low humidity have sparked wildfires near Calistoga, CA. Poor air quality and high heat have forced the opening of cooling centers across the Bay Area. Additional wildfires in Sonoma, Napa, and Solano lead to evacuation orders.
Sponsor	Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)



**Participating
State and
Federal
Agencies**

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
Caltrans
Center for Independence of Individuals with Disabilities
NASA Ames
World Institute on Disability

**Participating
Local
Agencies**

Alameda County Office of Emergency Services
Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiatives
Chabot - Las Positas Community College District
City of Alameda
City of Hayward
City of Livermore
City of Oakland
City of Pleasanton
City of Richmond
County of Marin
County Resource for Independent Living
East Palo Alto Police Department
Independent Living Resource Center San Francisco
Independent Living Resources of Solano & Contra Costa
Monterey County Office OF Emergency Services
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services
Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management



Santa Clara Emergency Medical Services
Santa Clara Social Services
San Francisco Department of Emergency Management
Silicon Valley Independent Living Center
Solano County Office of Emergency Services

**Participating
Transit and
Paratransit
Agencies**

AC Transit
Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
County Connection
East Bay Paratransit
Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority
First Transit/Redi-Wheels
Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District
Marin Transit
MV Transportation
Napa Valley Transportation Authority
Petaluma Transit
Rio Vista Delta Breeze
SamTrans
Santa Rosa City Bus
SF Paratransit
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)



- San Mateo County Transit District (SMCTD)
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
- SolTrans
- Transdev (East Bay Paratransit)
- Union City Transit
- Vacaville City Coach
- Valle Transportation Authority
- Western Contra Costa Transit Authority
- Whistlestop Transportation

See Appendix B for detailed listing of exercise participants.

Analysis of Core Capabilities

Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent approach for exercise evaluation that supports preparedness reporting and trend analysis. The exercise objectives and core capabilities selected by the exercise planning team are listed below.

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Core Capabilities

Exercise Objective	Core Capability
Discuss plans and processes for initial emergency response.	Critical Transportation; Operational Coordination



Exercise Objective	Core Capability
Discuss interagency communication and coordination in an emergency.	Operational Coordination; Situational Assessment; Public Information and Warning
Clarify the process for requesting and providing mutual aid.	Operational Coordination; Logistics and Supply Chain Management



Summary of Exercise Results

This After-Action Report (AAR) includes strengths and areas for improvement identified during the exercise. Corrective actions are outlined in the Improvement Plan (IP). Following are some key highlights.

Strengths

The major strengths identified during this exercise include:

- Most paratransit agencies have a variety of communications systems in place, including Nixle, Everbridge, Nextdoor, Facebook, and Twitter. These communication platforms are used to notify internal and external stakeholders of an emergency event.
- Many agencies have multiple methods to communicate with workers and drivers, such as cell phones, radios, Mobile Data Terminals (MDT), and satellite phones.
- Paratransit staff are very willing to work during an emergency event, although they may not live near their respective workplaces. Additionally, contracted personnel are not mandated Disaster Service Workers (DSW) under California state law, which would otherwise **require** them to work even though they want to help during an emergency.
- Some paratransit agencies coordinate with private-sector companies such as Uber, Lyft, school bus companies, and ambulance services, and look to them for assistance during an emergency event.

Areas for Improvement

The major areas for improvement identified during this exercise include:

- All agencies need ongoing emergency preparedness education. Additional drills and exercises that include a paratransit component are essential.
- Not all paratransit agencies have an Emergency Operations Plan and/or a Continuity of Operations Plan. Currently, these plans are not consistent from one jurisdiction to another, and some have not been updated for some time.



Updated plans that incorporate lessons learned and best practices will enhance interagency coordination and preparedness across the Bay Area.

- As contracted employees, paratransit operators do not fall under the California Disaster Service Worker designation. Paratransit agencies should incorporate emergency roles and responsibilities into service contracts.

The following section provides more detailed assessment of strengths and areas for improvement as they relate to each exercise objective and associated core capabilities.



Objective 1: Discuss plans and processes for initial emergency response

Related Core Capabilities: Critical Transportation; Operational Coordination

Strength 1

Communication and coordination are good between internal and external stakeholders after an emergency alert is issued.

Strength 2

Nixle, Everbridge, Nextdoor, Facebook, and Twitter are used to communicate emergency situations and updates to external stakeholders.

Strength 3

The Bay Area has a strong Joint Information System, resulting in a more consistent and unified message to the public, particularly during larger incidents.

Area for Improvement 1.1

Paratransit agencies need to practice activating and operating their Departmental Operations Centers.

- **References:** Bay Area Paratransit Toolkit, Section 5: Training, Exercises; Per NIMS definition, regular training and practice exercises will improve coordination and cooperation between public and private entities in a variety of incident management activities and provide a common standard for overall incident management.
- **Analysis:** Each agency is at a different level with respect to emergency preparedness training and expertise. An Access and Functional Needs (AFN)/paratransit component is not always included in exercises and drills.



Area for Improvement 1.2

Expectations for emergency response operations are not typically included in contract language with paratransit service providers. It is important to establish clear expectations about contractor roles in emergency response. This typically starts at the Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

- **References:** Bay Area Paratransit Toolkit, Section 2: The Paratransit Emergency Operations Plan; Section 5: Training; Appendix B, Core Curriculum; ICS-300 Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents; ICS-400 Advanced ICS; IS-700; and IS-703: NIMS Resource Management.
- **Analysis:** Most agencies contract with private-sector providers for paratransit service delivery. Not enough thought is given to operational interruptions, emergency response and assistance, and emergency training for paratransit staff.

Area for Improvement 1.3

Participants discussed the need for an AFN database that identifies paratransit facilities, paratransit client addresses, and facilities served for emergency planning and response purposes.

- **Reference:** Bay Area Paratransit Toolkit, Appendix C - Emergency Operations Plan, V-Response.
- **Analysis:** Some paratransit agencies have their own local database of paratransit riders and other people with AFN transportation requirements. This information may not be available to all agencies in the region. A regional database should be considered for optimal visibility to ensure all AFN customers and facilities are quickly identified and serviced.



Objective 2: Discuss interagency communication and coordination in an emergency

Related Core Capabilities: Operational Coordination; Situational Assessment; Public Information and Warning

Strength 1

For the most part, paratransit dispatch communicates to drivers over cellular networks via push-to-talk radio, in-vehicle tablets, and other digital communications. Alternate communication methods include radios, MDTs, and satellite phones. Multiple communications media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Nixel, Nextdoor, and Everbridge are used to communicate with the public.

Strength 2

Some agencies have a Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan in place.

Strength 3

Some agencies work with private-sector companies, such as Uber, Lyft, school bus companies, and ambulance services to augment efforts during an emergency event.

Area for Improvement 2.1

Cellular communications are likely to fail in an emergency, leaving paratransit drivers without communications from dispatch.

- **References:** Bay Area Paratransit Toolkit; Critical Communications Assessment
- **Analysis:** Push data, push-to-talk, text, and instant messaging all rely on cellular communications, which are likely to be compromised following a major incident.



Area for Improvement 2.2

Lessons learned from training, exercises, and real-world events are not always incorporated into existing emergency response and recovery plans.

- **Reference:** NIMS Training Program, September 2011, Introduction and Overview – Integrating lessons learned from actual incidents, training, exercises, and best practices.
- **Analysis:** Lessons documented in After Action Reports are lessons learned only to the extent that they prevent or mitigate future incidents.

Area for Improvement 2.3

Business continuity planning is not widely understood or practiced among paratransit agencies/providers.

- **References:** NIMS Training Program, September 2011. Appendix C, NIMS Coursework; IS-546.A Continuity of Operations (COOP) Awareness; IS-547A Introduction to Continuity of Operations; IS-548 COOP Managers Training.
- **Analysis:** Paratransit's primary mission is the mobility of people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs (AFN). During disasters, paratransit may need to suspend operations, stop accepting trip reservations, or engage in other irregular practices. Operational continuity is not regularly practiced, which has contributed to misunderstandings about the purpose of Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP).



Objective 3: Clarify process for requesting and providing mutual aid

Related Core Capabilities: Operational Coordination; Logistics and Supply Chain Management

Strength 1

A majority of paratransit agencies know who to call for assistance in an emergency event, some have relationships with their respective operational area emergency management agencies

Strength 2

Paratransit agencies are inclined to help other each other during an emergency event, while ensuring they can support their own needs.

Strength 3

Paratransit staff have demonstrated an eagerness to report to work during emergencies, even though there is no formal (legal/DSW) obligation to do so.

Area for Improvement 3.1

There are no interagency agreements between paratransit agencies for resource sharing and mutual aid in emergency situations.

- **Reference:** Bay Area Paratransit Capabilities Assessment, 2019.
- **Analysis:** Paratransit agencies have provided mutual support assistance during recent incidents, but they do not have formal Mutual Aid Agreements in place. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are needed to address paratransit cost-per-mile issues; this would provide a better index for reimbursable mutual aid. Additionally, Bay Area paratransit operators report that their driving staff often commute to work from another jurisdiction. Geographical concerns may prevent drivers from reporting to work following a



major earthquake or other emergency event. A regional interagency agreement could enable drivers to report to work at another, closer location following a major incident.

- **References:** Bay Area Paratransit Toolkit, Appendix C-Emergency Operations Plan; Appendix D-Mutual Aid and Cooperative Agreement Template



Appendix A: Improvement Plan

This Improvement Plan (IP) has been developed specifically for the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) as a result of the 2019 Bay Area Paratransit Tabletop Exercise conducted on August 28, 2019. Note: Capability Elements are Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, or Exercise.

Exercise Objective	Issues/Areas for Improvement	Corrective Actions	Capability Element/s	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Objective 1: Discuss plans and processes for initial emergency response.	1.1 Paratransit agencies need to practice activating and operating their Departmental Operations Centers.	1.1.1 Paratransit agencies should engage in at least one exercise annually, preferably in conjunction with fixed route transit operations.	Training and Exercising	Paratransit and transit agencies	Paratransit accessibility managers + BAPAC Chair	November 2019	Ongoing/ Annually
		1.1.2 Regional partners should continue to include paratransit agencies and their contractors in trainings and exercises with critical transportation components.	Training and Exercising	MTC, + Transit Agencies/ Authorities	Transit Emergency Program Managers	November 2019	Ongoing/ Annually
	1.2 Expectations for emergency response operations are not typically included contract language with paratransit service providers.	1.2.1 Paratransit agencies should review their RFP/RFQ processes to ensure bidders understand their roles and response requirements during an emergency event.	Planning, Organizing	Paratransit agencies	Paratransit Program Manager/ Accessibility Manager	November 2019	Ongoing



Exercise Objective	Issues/Areas for Improvement	Corrective Actions	Capability Element/s	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
	1.3 Players discussed the need for an AFN database that identifies paratransit facilities, paratransit client addresses, and facilities served for emergency planning and response purposes.	1.3.1 Explore strategies to consolidate this data into meaningful emergency planning and response information, leveraging paratransit eligibility database (RED)	Planning, Organizing, Equipping	MTC in coordination with BAPAC	Mallory Nestor-Brush, AC Transit Accessibility Manager	October 2019	June 2020
Objective 2: Discuss interagency communication/coordination in an emergency.	2.1 Cell service is likely to fail in an emergency; paratransit drivers will not be able to communicate with dispatch.	2.1.1 Work with cellular providers to establish priority communications over cellular networks during emergencies.	Equipping	All transit and paratransit agencies	Paratransit Program Manager	Ongoing	June 2020
	2.2 Lessons learned from training, exercises and real-world events are not always incorporated into existing emergency response and recovery plans.	2.2.1 Establish a periodic revision protocol that allows for quicker, more frequent updates.	Planning, Training	All Transit and Paratransit Agencies	Transit Emergency Program Manager	October 2019	Ongoing
	2.3 Continuity planning is not widely understood or practiced within paratransit.	2.3.1 Agencies should take free online FEMA Courses IS-546A, IS-547A, IS-548.	Training	All Transit and Paratransit Agencies	Paratransit Accessibility Manager	November 2019	June 2020



Exercise Objective	Issues/Areas for Improvement	Corrective Actions	Capability Element/s	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
		2.3.2 Agencies should review and revise their COOP	Planning, Organizing, Equipping	All Transit and Paratransit Agencies	Transit emergency program manager	November 2019	June 2020
		2.3.3 Agencies should schedule a COOP exercise.	Exercising	All transit and paratransit agencies	Paratransit Program Manager	Ongoing	June 2020
Objective 3: Clarify process for requesting and providing Mutual Aid.	3.1 There are no interagency agreements between paratransit agencies for resource sharing and mutual aid in emergency situations.	3.1.1 Review and revise existing interagency agreements to ensure they address paratransit concerns.	Planning	MTC + Transit and Paratransit Agencies to include Local Government as necessary	Emergency program managers	November 2019	June 2020
		3.1.2 Establish contingency contracts for fuel, food, rest facilities or other services needed for essential personnel during an emergency.	Planning	MTC + Transit and Paratransit Agencies to include Local Government as necessary	Emergency program managers	November 2019	June 2020



Appendix B: Participant Feedback

The following information was extracted from participant evaluation forms provided to all exercise attendees. An analysis of the scores from all participants shows that participants rated the exercise favorably. Additional comments and important issues are recorded on the following pages.

Exercise Evaluation Scores

ASSESSMENT FACTOR	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE
	1	2	3	4	5
	Presenters offered valuable information on the roles and responsibilities of paratransit during critical incidents.	0%	0%	13%	43%
The discussion helped to identify critical gaps in Bay Area paratransit emergency preparedness.	0%	2%	11%	32%	55%
The exercise helped to clarify what tools may be most useful to paratransit agencies that work to enhance their emergency preparedness.	0%	11%	21%	40%	28%

Participant Feedback

- 1. Describe the action steps that should be taken and by whom in each area of responsibility.**

ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure all transit and paratransit agencies have Emergency Operations	Transit and paratransit agencies are responsible for creating Emergency



ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Plans and Continuity of Operations Plans that consider regional partners and regional concerns, along with written interagency agreements to support mutual aid.</p>	<p>Operations Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans, and securing contractual agreements to support their implementation.</p>
<p>Educate local and regional first responders of paratransit capabilities and limitations, and secure authorization drivers to cross emergency barricades.</p>	<p>Local transit and paratransit agencies should seek opportunities to participate in drills and exercises involving the Emergency Operations Center Transportation Branch (or equivalent).</p>
<p>Educate paratransit riders on emergency preparedness, and what they can and cannot expect from paratransit in a crisis.</p>	<p>Paratransit agencies should discuss emergency preparedness with clients, during eligibility certification/recertification, along with other annual client communications.</p>
<p>Enhance information sharing and interagency coordination on paratransit emergency management issues.</p>	<p>BAPAC, in coordination with the Bay Area UASI, should identify additional seminars, workshops, and exercises for paratransit personnel.</p>
<p>Develop and maintain a regional database for paratransit facilities and clients.</p>	<p>BAPAC should consider strategies to develop a centralized database of paratransit facilities and passengers for use by emergency managers during emergency planning and incident response.</p>



2. List any equipment, training or plans/procedures that should be reviewed, revised or developed.

All agencies should conduct an annual Emergency Operations Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan review and revise these plans with updated information and recommendations gleaned from tabletop exercises and drills.

Incident management training, including ICS-100 and ICS-200, should be made available for lead paratransit drivers, supervisors, and key staff. Additional incident management training should be provided to key staff on an ongoing basis.

Paratransit emergency preparedness roundtables should be regularly conducted.



Appendix C: Exercise Participants

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