

5. EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Emergency transportation, at the regional level, primarily addresses transport needs for large-scale evacuation associated with natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, and wildfire. Ongoing climate change will increase the frequency and severity of wildfires, while non-infill development patterns are increasing the number of households requiring evacuation in the wildland-urban interface. HCAOG's role in emergency preparedness is to help prepare a resilient transportation system that is flexible enough to handle great surges of travel before, during, or after a major emergency. HCAOG will support and collaborate on proactive emergency planning and projects.

Following Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures that flooded New Orleans, the majority of people who died were over the age of 60, and many had disabilities or were unable to leave owing to lack of transportation.

— National Council on Disability, 2009

EXISTING EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

National, state, and local agencies are part of a total emergency management hierarchy established in the United States to assist all people during times of crisis. At the national level, the lead agency is the Federal Emergency Management Agency, under the Department of Homeland Security. At the state level, the lead agency is the California Office of Emergency Services. At the local level, every county and many cities have a local Office of Emergency Services (OES). The local OES must plan for emergencies within its Operational Area (OA). Each California county is its own OA.

The Humboldt County OES is under the Sheriff's Department; the Sheriff is the Director of Emergency Services for the County. The OES coordinates on-going preparedness in cooperation with local jurisdictions and agencies, including law enforcement, emergency responders, and transportation service providers. The Humboldt OES prepares the "*Emergency Operations Plan*" for the Humboldt OA. The plan includes:

- "Flood Contingency Plan" (December 2012)
- "Local Assistance Center Plan" (adopted March 2011)
- "Joint Information Center Plan" (adopted July 2014)
- "Dam Failure Contingency Plan" (adopted June 2016)
- "Volcano Ash Contingency Plan" (adopted July 2014)

Being prepared and ready to respond to emergencies requires proactive multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency planning. Entities that have responsibilities, expertise, and assets in emergency management include, but are not limited to:

- Governmental jurisdictions (County, Cities, Tribes, State, Federal)
- Transit/paratransit operators, HCAOG, Caltrans, California Highway Patrol, Humboldt County Sheriff-Office of Emergency Services
- Local fire and police departments, emergency/medical first responders, Cal Fire.

- Representatives and stakeholders for people with disabilities, seniors, people with special mobility needs, and transit-dependent populations.
- Institutions with large facilities or campuses (which may serve as emergency shelters, staging areas, etc., e.g. fairgrounds, college campuses, community centers).

EMERGENCY AND RESILIENCE PLANNING

In this section we briefly outline three standard components (or phases) of emergency planning:

- Emergency Preparedness Planning
- Emergency Response
- Disaster Recovery

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

Proactively preparing for emergencies will lessen a disaster's impact on the community. Proactive planning actions include assessing potential threats and vulnerabilities, establishing (or reinforcing) authorities and responsibilities for emergency actions, acquiring and maintaining emergency resources, training emergency personnel, and developing and testing emergency procedures. Below we discuss these preparedness strategies:

- Alerts & Warning Messages
- Asset Inventories
- Evacuation Planning
- Registries

Alerts & Warning Messages

Warning messages will alert people to an impending risk and can tell people how to take protective action. A fast and reliable warning system is vital in emergencies, especially for conveying transportation information during mass evacuations. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies can help broadcast warnings and keep evacuees and emergency personnel informed. Examples of such ITS applications are road weather and information systems, changeable message signs, satellite positioning technology (e.g., GPS for in-vehicle route guidance), and emergency vehicle preemption (which enables first responders to preempt or extend traffic signals and navigate congested intersections).

Caltrans, with support by the FHWA, is developing "Upstate California Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Master Plan" for the 16 counties in the North State Super Region, which encompasses Caltrans Districts 1 (Humboldt), 2, and 3. HCAOG is on the steering committee for this plan. The ITS Plan will direct how ITS technology and equipment can be used to help provide more efficient, safe, and convenient travel in the region. Examples of ITS technological applications include traveler information websites, satellite positioning technology, emergency vehicle preemption, and variable message signs.

Asset Inventories

For emergency planning, agencies should be aware of regional transportation assets that can be used. Transportation assets for emergency response and evacuation. Those assets include: roadways and trails, bridges, harbors, airports, public transit, paratransit, and even parking lots. In addition to infrastructure, transportation assets include agencies, trained personnel, vehicle fleets, and communication equipment. The region should keep current inventories of primary and contingency transportation assets, including emergency response fleets, transit and paratransit vehicles, governmental fleets (e.g. cities, county, tribes, harbor, airport, etc.), and transit centers. Other resources are street maps (printed and GIS), and fuel and power sources (e.g. fueling and charging stations).

In 2015-2016, HCAOG's former Service Coordination Committee¹, comprised largely of public transit operators, coordinated with the Humboldt County OES to build on the framework between transit operators and emergency planners for emergency evacuation planning. Emergency contact lists and fleet inventory lists, including passenger capacity, have been compiled with information from public transit agencies and local schools throughout Humboldt. Contact lists include emergency contact information, radio channels and frequencies. The fleet inventory lists fleet information including fueling station locations, and passenger capacity information including ambulatory and/or wheelchair capacity. This emergency evacuation planning information will facilitate efficient and expedient evacuations in the event of an emergency. Agency information will be updated regularly with RTP cycles.

FEMA lists five stages of disaster response:

1. alert and notification;
2. warning;
3. protecting the citizens and property;
4. providing for the public welfare; and
5. restoration.

— National Council on Disability, 2009

Evacuation Planning

Evacuation planning is HCAOG's opportunity and responsibility to create transportation solutions for evacuating people from a hazardous area. In collaborating with multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts, HCAOG can help identify transportation resources for evacuation routes and methods of evacuation. HCAOG can also analyze the potential transportation demand in the event of a major evacuation, particularly specialized transportation needs for those more at risk, including transportation-disadvantaged groups.

Transportation planners and emergency responders will want to know who (and how many) will be at risk if we must evacuate the area. People at risk include those who lack independent, reliable means of transportation. People without their own transportation are even more vulnerable if they also lack money and/or have a disability that limits their mobility. Peoples' mobility can be hindered by cognitive disorders, intellectual disabilities, reduced stamina or being easily fatigued, needing use of a mobility device (e.g., wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker) or medical device (e.g. oxygen tank), and people with limited or no sight or hearing.

People also have different behaviors during a disaster. For instance, there are numerous decisions individuals need to make, such as whether or not to evacuate, which route to take, which mode of transportation to use, and when to leave. Understanding how people make these decisions can help inform resilience planning. Another consideration of resilience planning is mutual aid (people helping each other) and transportation

¹HCAOG merged the committee with the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council in 2020-21.

network companies (Uber, Lyft, etc.) to assist in meeting the transportation needs of community members during a disaster.

Best Practices for Evacuation Planning:

1. Coordinate support and logistics with federal, state, local, and regional transportation resources and emergency responders.
2. Educate people on evacuation procedures, personal responsibility, and public transportation options for evacuating. Encourage all individuals, employers, and agencies to have evacuation plans.²
3. Identify the range and number of people who may need transportation in disaster situations. Map those populations in relation to transportation assets, evacuation routes, and reception centers or shelters. (See “Registries” below.)
4. Plan for a complex array of evacuation and transportation needs, including evacuating people with medical or mobility equipment and service animals. Plan and train for point-to-point evacuation procedures for a wide variety of settings: school, work, home, stores, recreational venues, highways, bridges, etc.
5. Have transportation guidelines for evacuation response. Partner with first responder agency personnel to develop technical guides. Partner with health services and social service agencies for disabled, seniors, and other populations with special mobility needs.
6. Have MOUs with transportation agencies and paratransit agencies for disaster evacuation.
7. Directly involve people with disabilities and disability organizations, including local paratransit agencies, in evacuation planning and training exercises.

Registries

Maintaining a self-identified registry system is one way to estimate and plan for transportation demand in the case of a major emergency. Registries identify those most at risk of losing mobility/transportation options during an emergency. Registries should be up-to-date, readily available to first responders, and linked to those involved in transportation and evacuation support.

Emergency responders and other agencies may have concerns about how practical and effective registries are. These concerns should be discussed, and a consensus sought on whether registries are workable or not, locally and regionally.

² “Employers are subject to meeting ADA provisions and must address the needs of people with disabilities in evacuation plans (Loy and Batiste, 2004). ... Such provisions may be limited to designating a temporary location of refuge while waiting for rescue or could include buddy systems for helping people out of buildings.” (NCD 2009)

Recommendations for Building a Resilient Transportation System

Identify Vulnerabilities

Identify where and how a system's components could fail or become inefficient. Examples of potential problems are:

- A transportation link breaks, such as a blocked roadway, bridge, or sidewalk.
- A disaster causes extreme traffic congestion on a particular roadway(s).
- A disaster requires emergency transport of a large number of people, many who cannot drive, have difficulty walking, or have medical problems that limit their mobility.

Identify Ways to Increase Resilience and Security

Examples of strategies that can increase resilience are:

- Increase transportation system diversity. Maintain opportunities for people to walk, cycle, rideshare, carshare and travel by transit.
- Increase network redundancy and connectivity (e.g., the number of roads and transit routes in an area).
- Increase facility design and construction standards to withstand extreme conditions.
- Improve the ability to communicate with transportation system users, including people with special needs, even under unusual conditions.
- Establish ways to prioritize transportation system resources (road space, fuel, vehicle capacity) so it is available first to higher-value transportation activities.

Source: Victoria Transport Policy Institute, British Columbia, Canada

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Transportation and Evacuation

Transit and paratransit fleets can serve as emergency vehicles for evacuating people, as can aircraft. Local paratransit and transit resources are some of the best assets to tap into for evacuating people with mobility disabilities because the regular drivers and dispatchers are already familiar with individuals who most need transportation assistance, and often know their needs and locations. Evacuating people with disabilities includes evacuating caregivers, guardians, service animals, and necessary mobility and medical equipment (e.g., wheelchairs). Paratransit and transit agency dispatchers can also relay updates about emergency road conditions, and can help get out warnings and alerts to regular riders.

Evacuation response should account for alternative modes of travel. Households without a car may choose walking or bicycling as their mode of transport to evacuate. Providing and maintaining an integrated multi-modal transportation network is therefore critical to support evacuations.

Emergency preparedness plans and formal agreements should cover how transit and paratransit resources can be utilized and coordinated with other emergency response efforts. For example, plans should specify when transit vehicles, used for emergency purposes, will have access to fire or flood zones if roads are closed to non-emergency vehicles. Mutual aid agreements (or MOUs) should describe if emergency services personnel will escort transit vehicles through danger areas, or if, for instance, transit drivers must be certified for emergency evacuation transport.

Search and Rescue

Transportation resources can aid in search and rescue efforts after a major disaster. Transit and paratransit vehicles can help transport the seriously injured to local medical facilities, and airplanes and helicopters can provide emergency medical evacuation to hospitals further away. Buses, vans, and aircraft can also transport search-and-rescue teams into the affected areas, and airports provides takeoff and landing areas for search-and-rescue flights. Fleet vehicles can assist in animal (pet) search and rescue as well.

During the recovery phase, if proper transportation infrastructure does not come back quickly, it can cause many ongoing issues... After housing, the second most important service severely impacted in the storm's aftermath is public transportation.

— National Council on Disability, 2008

DISASTER RECOVERY

Few communities develop disaster recovery plans before a disaster strikes (the City of Los Angeles is a notable exception) (NCD, 2009). The recovery phase includes work to restore public services and safety, clean up damaged areas, and get people back to their homes, schools, and workplaces as quickly as possible.

One of the first tasks for recovery is to assess damage to major infrastructure. Agencies in each affected jurisdiction must examine the impact on the transportation system and other public facilities. The post-disaster inventory of transportation assets will allow responders to prioritize needs, assign resources, and appeal for outside aid.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

GOAL: Humboldt County has a transportation system that will successfully serve its population in the event of a major disaster, hazard, or emergency, thereby mitigating the potential medical, financial, and emotional traumas to the community.

OBJECTIVES: To strive for this goal, HCAOG shall support policies that help achieve the RTP's main objectives/planning priorities (in alphabetical order):³



The tree symbol indicates objectives that are Safe & Sustainable Transportation objectives (see Chapter 2 for all SST objectives and targets.)

³ The objectives are described in more detail in Chapter 2, Renewing Our Communities.

MAIN OBJECTIVES:	EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION SUB-OBJECTIVES (◆) AND POLICIES	
Active Transportation Mode Share/ Complete Streets	◆ Pursue Complete Streets to give people more transportation options in emergency evacuations.	
Economic Vitality	◆ Increase emergency transportation preparedness to help minimize the direct costs and indirect economic losses caused by major disasters, hazards, or emergencies.	
Efficient & Viable Transportation System	◆ Improve asset and vulnerability analyses of the regional transportation system, including infrastructure, equipment, and trained personnel. ◆ Attain regionally coordinated, multi-modal planning for emergency preparedness, evacuation, search and rescue, and recovery. Policy Emergency-1 HCAOG will support and collaborate in reviewing and updating emergency plans to address transportation resources available in all phases of disasters: prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.	
Environmental Stewardship & Climate Protection	◆ Reduce on-road transportation-related fossil fuel consumption in Humboldt County.	
Equitable & Sustainable Use of Resources	◆ Increase the equitable distribution of county residents who live in homes/ apartments/dorms where they can safely, comfortably, and conveniently travel to shelter areas and emergency services by a variety of modes.	
Safety & Health	◆ Improve the emergency preparedness and resilience of transportation facilities. ◆ Keep transportation systems, agencies, and personnel ready and equipped to seamlessly execute emergency response transportation operations. Policy Emergency-4 HCAOG supports region-wide, multi-agency planning, training, and equipment acquisition for emergency preparedness and resiliency. HCAOG and the public transit operators should work with the County Office of Emergency Services to develop a collaborative, effective role in disaster preparedness and response. Policy Emergency-5 HCAOG will help disseminate emergency preparedness information and educational materials on emergency transportation and emergency evacuation.	

ACTION PLAN: PROPOSED PROJECTS

To work towards achieving our objectives for emergency transportation, HCAOG staff and committees will continue to establish and maintain contacts for collaborating and participating with other stakeholders. HCAOG does not intend to “recreate the wheel” where emergency plans already exist. We intend to work from emergency plans and strategies already established, and help develop, augment, or improve transportation-related procedures.

Table *Emergency-1* **Regional Emergency Transportation Proposed Projects**

Agency	Interagency Emergency Transportation Planning Project	Funding Source	ST or LT*
HCAOG, SSTAC	<u>Planning Framework</u> — Foremost through the SSTAC, explore opportunities to create a formal framework between transit operators and emergency planners. The framework may identify, establish, and standardize information-sharing between transit agencies and emergency operations centers (EOCs). Projects could also address improving communications and leadership between the agencies and training within transit agencies.	RPA, LTF, grants	ST
HCAOG, SSTAC	<u>Transportation Guidelines for Evacuation Response</u> (for public transit operators) — As needed, participate in developing regional guidelines for how local public transit operators' will function in emergency evacuation situations. Coordinate with first responder agency personnel to develop public transit operator technical guidelines for use in emergency evacuations. Coordinate with first-responder agency personnel and health services and social service agencies for disabled seniors, and other populations with special mobility needs.	RPA, LTF, grants	ST
HCAOG, SSTAC	<u>Registry</u> —Explore if a registry of populations with mobility limitations would be worthwhile as a resource for local transit and public health/social service providers. If so, identify the geographic range and number of people who may need transportation in disaster situations. Map the populations in relation to transportation assets, evacuation routes, and reception centers or shelters.	RPA, LTF, grants	ST

*Short-term (ST) is one to 10 years, long-term (LT) is 10+ to 20 years

FUNDING

Most transit operators are not currently in a position to fund emergency planning exercises and programs from their operating budgets. Money for emergency planning, exercise planning, and training often must come from grants and other governmental sources. Potential federal and state resources include training classes (offered by the California OES, U.S. DOT, U.S. FTA) on incident management systems and terrorism awareness. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the California Office of Homeland Security administer several grant programs also.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The table below, lists performance indicators for an emergency transportation system. The table groups indicators by “goals,” which correspond to the RTP’s six main objectives/planning priorities.

Table *Emergency-2* **Performance Indicators for Emergency Transportation Operations**

GOALS	INDICATORS	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES
Balanced Mode Shares	Has access increased for transit, paratransit, micro-transit, walking and/or biking for emergency evacuation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major, essential emergency destinations lacking safe access by transit/paratransit/micro-transit and/or walking and biking. 	Local transit operators’ data.
Efficient & Viable Transportation System	Has HCAOG participated in more emergency planning and/or collaborated on more emergency plans? Are inventories current for emergency transportation assets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans developed/updated with HCAOG input. Rate at which plans and inventories are updated. 	Emergency plans, agreements (MOU, MOA), protocols, and asset inventories.
Environmental Stewardship	Do emergency plans include or coordinate with efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency plans lacking actionable measures to prepare for and respond to anticipated impacts related to climate change. 	Emergency plans, agreements, protocols, and asset inventories. Climate change plans.
Equitable & Sustainable Use of Resources	Have members of the most vulnerable populations (disabled, elderly, people without private means of transport) participated in emergency planning efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people from vulnerable populations who actively participated in emergency drills and/or other emergency planning efforts. 	Emergency plans, agreements (MOU, MOA), protocols, and asset inventories.
Safety & Public Health	Are emergency evacuation resources adequate? Are redundancies in place in case primary communication systems or response resources are disrupted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of safety improvement projects implemented. Public-assisted emergency evacuations per 1,000 residents. Average rate of response and/or miles of transport for publicly assisted emergency evacuees. Number of emergency evacuations unfulfilled or denied. 	Reports on emergency tests/drills. Post-emergency data.

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