EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN TRANSIT – COVID AND BEYOND

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN TRANSIT – COVID AND BEYOND

▶ Managing emergencies in and around public transportation systems is an unparalleled challenge

▶ Emergency managers understand that transit agencies play a valuable role in the emergency management process

▶ For transportation organizations with even robust emergency management programs in place, addressing the needs of a pandemic will require a shift in thinking.

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▶ Most potential threats and vulnerabilities that emergency management focuses on are very different in their nature than a pandemic.

▶ Many of the planning assumptions normally incorporated into plans and efforts will be different.

▶ Pandemics threaten to overwhelm routine capabilities and disrupt essential services and operations both domestically and internationally.

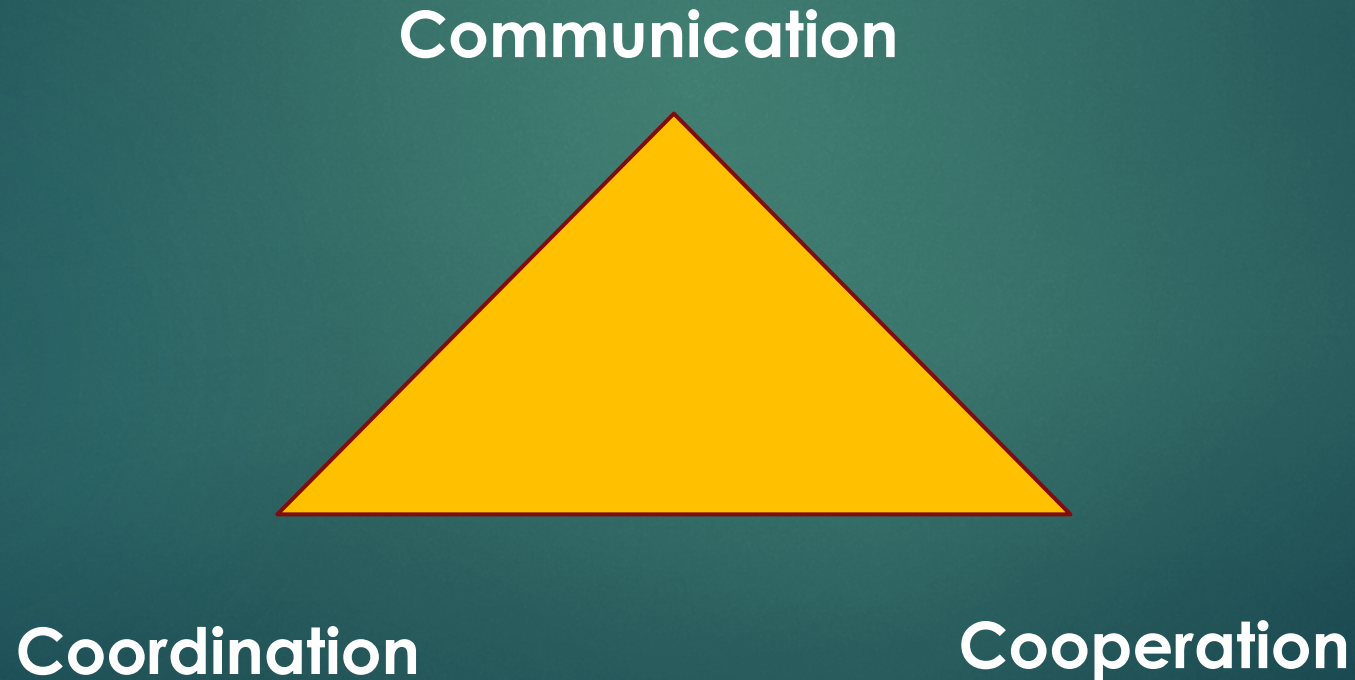# EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN TRANSIT – COVID AND BEYOND

► Emergency management involves coordinating the transit agency resources to respond to address the needs of the incident.

► The actions taken will depend on the severity of the event.

► Establishes a comprehensive, all-hazard approach to organizing agency expertise and resources.

► A plan should lead to the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures or protocols for key personnel.

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- Pre-incident coordination between the transit agency and public safety responders is vital

- All organizations must understand their roles, authority, and responsibilities in responding to emergencies, especially a pandemic

- Timely, accurate, and thorough reporting is essential for effectively assessing and controlling an emergency

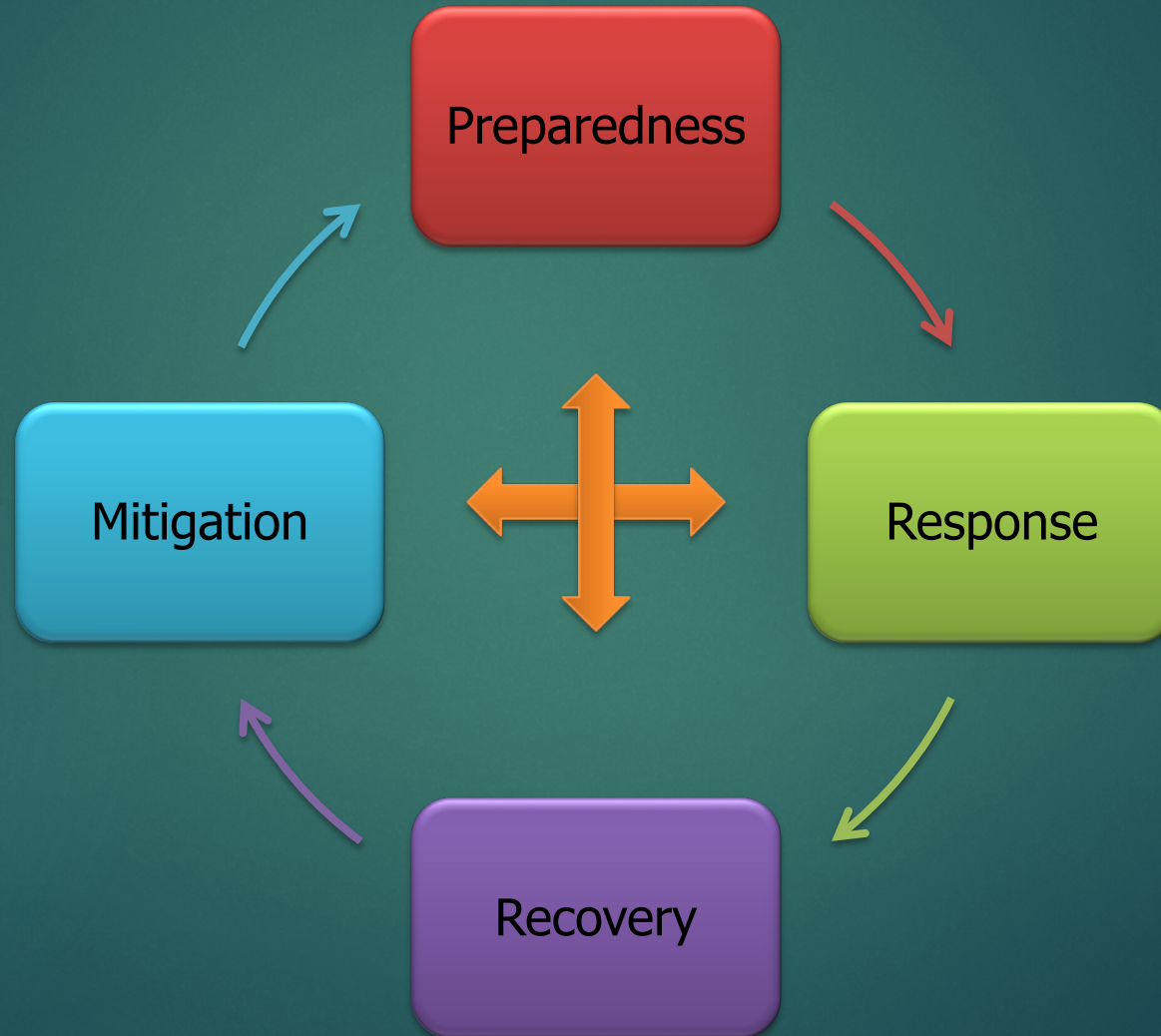# EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN TRANSIT – COVID AND BEYOND

What three things are necessary between all transit personnel, first responders and emergency managers to effectively manage any emergency?

Communication

Coordination

Cooperation

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Emergency Management Process

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Preparedness

► The phase of identifying high risk emergency situations and instituting a response system and team to react accordingly.

► Preparedness encompasses coordination through meetings, preparation through training, and practice through drills and exercises

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In order to prepare for pandemics, transportation organizations must grapple with several complex challenges that prevent business as usual.

▶ Pandemics are global and can last for months or longer.

▶ Stopping the spread of disease will require individuals to change their habits (e.g., washing hands more frequently, not gathering with others, wearing face coverings, etc.) which will likely be tough to enforce amongst the traveling public.

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- The healthcare system will be overloaded.

- Dramatic worker absenteeism will have far-reaching impacts.

- Coordination and cooperation with other agencies, especially public health, will be required.

- Public information will be essential and challenging aspect of communication.

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- A fear of exposure to an infectious disease may significantly curtail ridership and/or increase rider anxiety (this will also affect employees).

- Modification of normal operations for the transportation organization may be necessary to support community needs.

- Legislative and administrative issues (e.g., occupational safety and health, benefits, and employment status) for employees may require special attention.

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Decision Making

▶ Establishing protocols regarding responsibility and authority to make decisions and commit resources will improve organizational effectiveness.

▶ Delegation of authority to the lowest appropriate level is preferred.

▶ In small urban and rural transportation systems, communication and coordination with local emergency management, public health, and other transportation organizations is imperative.

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- Good decisions are made based on good information (situational awareness and analysis) and the development and implementation of objectives, strategies, and tactics that support organization and community goals.

- Disrupting the normal routine—even when policy is in place—requires a great deal of planning to ensure people know what to do, understand what is going on, and have the tools required for the job.

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Communication

▶ The physical ability to convey and exchange information (e.g., voice, data, electronic communications) within an organization and to entities outside of the organization

▶ The actual exchange of information.

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Exchanging comprehensive, timely, and relevant information has benefits for the organization and the overall emergency management system.

Transportation organizations should:

- ▶ Develop strategies to receive emergency management and public health information such as situation reports and health alerts.

- ▶ Be prepared to share emergency management and public health information, as appropriate.

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- Information would be shared with staff for planning and response purposes.

- Shared with customers to explain steps the transportation agency is taking in response to the pandemic.

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▶ Be prepared to communicate information to emergency management and public health agencies.

▶ Information may include: levels of ridership, absenteeism, readiness, personnel and needs for equipment and supplies for response operations, and anticipated changes in service.

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Emergency Operations

▶ Coordination with emergency operations and outside agencies will require some familiarity with both the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS)

▶ Your agency's Emergency Management Plan will be driven by the key concepts and management practices of NIMS and ICS

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The Incident Command System (ICS)

▶ Uses a common organizational structure to integrate facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications.

▶ Enables coordination among response partners from all jurisdictions, and identifies where transit fits into the response.

▶ Can be used for incidents of any type, size, and complexity.