



MEETING NOTES

EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION WORK GROUP

District of Columbia

Bowie

College Park

Frederick County

Gaithersburg

Greenbelt

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Prince William County

DATE: Wednesday, March 26, 2003

TIME: 12:00 Noon

PLACE: COG, First Floor, Meeting Rooms 4/5

CHAIR: Hon. David Snyder, City of Falls Church

ATTENDANCE:

James Austrich, DDOT

Ron Burns, MDOT

Phillip Cummings, HQ USACE

Lisa Farbstein, WMATA

Calvin Hawkins, Prince George's County Office of Emergency Mgmt.

Egua Igbinosun, MDOT/SHA

Julie Jacobson, Federal Reserve Board

Breck Jeffers, FHWA

Natalie Jones, DDOT

LCDR. Mike Kimberly, Naval District of Washington

Brian King, VDOT/TMPD Richmond

Terry Liercke, MWAA – National Airport

Jana Lynott, NVTC

Kelley MacKinnon, Arlington County

Bruce Mangum, Montgomery County DPWT

Eric Marx, PRTC

Doug McCobb, City of Alexandria

Robert Myers, Prince George's County DPW&T

Capt. James Novak, Police Department of NIH

Jack Requa, WMATA

Sharmila Samarasinghe, VDRPT

Hon. David Snyder, City of Falls Church

Alfie Steele, Montgomery County Transit

Kamal Suliman, VDOT/NVSTC

Alesia Taylor-Boyd, Federal Reserve Board

Tom Tran, Daniel Consultants, Inc.

Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax

Steve Welzant, Maryland Emergency Management Agency

Bob Winick, Motion Maps, LLC

Attendance (continued):

COG Staff:

Andrew Austin

Michael Farrell

Ron Kirby

Andrew Meese

Gerald Miller

David Robertson

Lee Ruck

Vince Sakovich

1. Welcome and Distribution of Notes from the March 4, 2003 Meeting

David Snyder welcomed the group and asked the participants to introduce themselves. Copies of the Meeting Notes from March 4, 2003 were distributed and members were asked to contact COG staff concerning any changes.

2. Update on the Regional Incident Communications and Coordination System (RICCS)

Mr. Snyder began the discussion by stating that the intended benefit of the RICCS was to replace a series of three or four calls with one conference call and to get a clear message out to the public. Referring to the “tractor incident” on the Mall in Washington, DC, Mr. Snyder complimented the agencies on their handling of the incident, but noted that the public perception of the incident was not as satisfactory. Mr. Snyder opened the discussion to review the incident through the construct of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP) and the RICCS.

James Austrich stated that amongst the initial response activities, he did not alert the RICCS until the second day. He stated that DC EMA had a bus on site, serving as a command post and added that he had been in touch with VDOT and MDOT representatives on the day of the incident. Mr. Austrich said that in retrospect he felt that he should have notified the RICCS on the first day of the incident. He said that VDOT used variable message signs to alert drivers to street closures, Metropolitan Police Department stationed officers at intersections to guide traffic and the federal Office of Personnel Management notified their staves about building closures.

Kamal Suliman asked if there was any media blockage during the incident. Mr. Austrich said he was not aware of any blockages. He stated that a press release was issued early on during the incident and noted that the National Park Service were the incident commanders at the scene. Mr. Austrich commented that he didn’t recall seeing any media trucks at the site.

Mr. Snyder asked if Public Information Officers (PIOs) were relating the incident as a police matter and neglecting traffic impacts. Mr. Austrich said that all announcements included street closures. A representative from WMATA stated that all news broadcasts recommended that people use Metro to avoid traffic delays. She noted that Metro

experienced very high ridership. Mr. Austrich commented that the message did get out because traffic volumes around the affected areas were significantly lower than normal.

Mr. Snyder said that the RICCS was a new system that needs to be implemented in such incidents. He said that agencies should actively assign staff to notify the RICCS when incidents occur. Alfie Steele noted that operations staff are frequently heavily engaged during the initial incident response and that communications sometimes gets lost in the shuffle. He echoed Mr. Snyder's remarks saying that it needs to become part of the routine.

Vince Sakovich said that training sessions for RICCS users would benefit everyone and establish more protocol. He said that in addition to the initially impacted jurisdiction, a jurisdiction that experienced secondary impacts could also trigger a RICCS conference call. Mr. Snyder asked if EMAs were using RICCS communications. Mr. Sakovich said that two or three conference calls were held on the first day of the tractor incident. Mr. Snyder observed that a lesson could be learned about cross-service notification. Mr. Sakovich responded that the RICCS support staff was in the process of cross-pollinating emergency management and transportation EOCs.

Mr. Suliman commented that he received a superfluous RICCS alert when the War in Iraq began. He added that it was necessary to use discretion when sending messages so that people do not start to ignore them. Mr. Sakovich said that this was an issue that could be addressed in training sessions. Mr. Snyder stated that the criterion for RICCS notification was a response to a local incident. Mr. Meese stated that the public safety community had been given training first and that the transportation community was the next group that would be trained. He added that support staff was still working to determine RICCS protocol and criteria and to create a set of pre-defined messages. Alvin Marques asked if it was possible to shorten the content of messages. Mr. Sakovich replied that it was and that this was also a training issue. He noted that there was an option to send a short message co cell phones and pagers or a longer message to e-mail recipients. Mr. Marques asked if it was possible to integrate MDOT's CHART notification system so that it could communicate with the RICCS. Mr. Sakovich said that this was a possibility.

Eric Marx inquired if there was a web site that could be used to get more detail or history on sent messages. Mr. Sakovich responded that there were three ways of getting information via the RICCS: by participating in an established conference call, by visiting a web site as directed by the RICCS notification, or by participating in an e-Team meeting. Mr. Snyder suggested that a demonstration of the system be presented at the next meeting. Mr. Meese said that COG staff would be contacting agencies to schedule on-site training sessions. Mr. Meese distributed the latest version of the RICCS conceptual diagram and noted that up-to-date versions were available on COG's web site at <http://www.mwcog.org/security/rdocs/>. Mr. Sakovich requested that registered RICCS users log on and change their passwords and fill out their profile information. Mr. Meese noted that some more work might need to be done on populating the other groups that transportation users can send to. Mr. Sakovich added that transportation members can send to RESF #5 (EMAs), while CAOs and the RICCS host staff could send messages to anyone.

3. Update on Emergency Transportation, Evacuation, and Sheltering-in-Place Planning

Mr. Meese distributed copies of the RECP Evacuation Annex. He stated that a large amount of interest had been expressed in expanding the document with greater detail and significant emphasis on sheltering-in-place strategies. Mr. Meese said that new funding had been identified to continue this planning activity. He then distributed a memo that outlined next steps and work that needed to be done. Mr. Meese stated that the Louis Berger Group had completed the initial Annex with subcontractors BMI and SG Associates. He noted that all firms were poised to provide additional engineering work. He said that the funds would also support a new employee to supplement COG staff. Deliverables would be presented to the National Capitol Region Emergency Preparedness Council at their June 5 and September 4 meetings, with a revised annex complete in September of 2003. Mr. Meese identified the stakeholder groups that would be involved in the planning process as the Emergency Transportation Work Group (RESF #1), COG's Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee, and the Evacuation and Protective Actions Planning Joint Technical Working Group (a proposed mélange of the two groups). Mr. Meese said that cooperation would be asked of other RESF groups as needed.

Mr. Meese said that compilation of data and technique development would take place in April and the application of models would begin in May. Opportunities for interaction and feedback would be held through June and July with a finalization of the annex in August and its presentation in September. Mr. Meese noted that there may be additional needs beyond September, but stated that those would be determined over the course of work and new funding would need to be sought to address them.

The participants indicated that they approved of the consultant's previous work and would be interested in having them return to complete the work. Mr. Snyder asked what qualifications would be desirable in a new employee at COG. Mr. Sakovich stated that experience with nuclear plant and/or hurricane evacuation planning would be beneficial. Mr. Meese added that a familiarity with regional jurisdictions and their key personnel would also be helpful. Natalie Jones said that a new staff person should have a minimum level of awareness of previous evacuation planning activities in the region. Mr. Snyder noted that this person should be comfortable working with federal level agencies as well. He added that the EMAs and public information RESF needed to be involved in the process as well. Mr. Meese stated that periodic reports would be provided to these groups, but that the process would not be answerable to them.

Following a discussion on the differences between full-scale and staged evacuations and shelter-in-place strategies, Mr. Meese reported that Ron Kirby of COG had suggested language for public information purposes that would educate citizens to shelter-in-place if they were not in immediate danger. Mr. Meese added that an evacuation can only succeed with demand management strategies and said that sheltering-in-place is the most effective management tool available.

Mr. Sakovich said that the new COG employee would be able to serve as a liaison between the different subject areas.

Jack Requa asked when feedback from the federal government and Board of Trade would be solicited. Mr. Marques noted that a public information campaign should be included.

Mr. Meese stated that these topics were covered in a more detailed version of the draft. Mr. Meese requested any further comments on the memo be sent to him by the following day.

4. Updating the Priority List of Unfunded Needs for Regional Transportation Emergency Response

Mr. Meese distributed a memo titled Unfunded Regional Transportation Emergency Response and Coordination Needs. Mr. Snyder said that a representative from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance spoke at a recent TPB meeting and called for more capacity building projects as a response to the terrorist threats since September 11. Mr. Snyder asked the group to look at and consider updates to a constrained list of ITS projects. He said that COG would be speaking before Congress in April on the region's needs. Mr. Marques asked if more detail was available on the projects included on the memo. Mr. Meese said there was some, but only to a level necessary to lobby for more funds, not enough for implementation.

Mr. Snyder requested feedback on the list and stated that all materials would be marked draft when submitted for consideration. Mr. Meese stated that the list should focus less on detail and more on generalities.