



METRO PLANS FOR STORM RESPONSE

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County serves a key role in regional public transportation services. Harris County is the third most populous county in the nation according to the 2020 census and is considered among the fastest growing in terms of overall population. METRO's mission is to provide safe, clean, reliable, accessible, and friendly public transportation services to a diverse population. We proudly provide transit services during regular blue skies but also ensure the continuity of transit operations after disaster. Today, I will briefly discuss topics such as tropical weather preparedness within the authority, loss mitigation, rapid recovery, and how we support coastal communities.

Objectives

To provide attendees an introduction to Houston METRO's plans for emergency weather response. To provide a snapshot of our continuity of operations planning. As well as, a brief description of our community contributions, as a public service, during emergency activation.

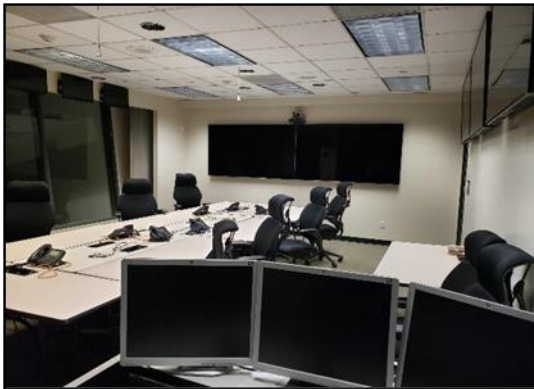
Preparedness

METRO uses both an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure authority preparedness, action, and continuity through and after an all-hazards event. Our plans were created to be scalable and adaptable as timing and circumstances change. Events can range from weather phenomena like freezing, flooding, and hurricanes, to special affairs such as local rodeo, major sports events, and professional conferences. While updating our emergency plans, we get input from METRO departments for accuracy, practicality, and feasibility; however, we adhere to guidelines and recommendations set forth by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), and The American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The documentation also notes which tier level employees must respond during emergencies, and it lays out some of the additional special tasks that may be required of employees to accomplish METRO's regional transportation needs. Before an impending hurricane, and time permitting, essential employees are given the opportunity to go home to prep their families, homes, and take

care of necessary matters. At the appropriate time, our dedicated staff return to their assigned duty location to hunker down and prepare to take action.

METRO is an active regional partner with Memorandums of Understandings (MOU) with key government partners and active participation in local area preparedness committees. Our internal emergency programs include but are not limited to emergency food and water distribution, pre-storm fuel delivery, high-water vehicle Teams, and storm messaging through our marketing and social media teams. Our social media team is an active participant during emergencies and work diligently to disseminate accurate information to inform the public.

METRO is an active and equal partner in the Houston TranStar traffic and emergency management consortium located in Houston. The partnership came together in 1993 and consists of METRO, TXDOT, Harris County and the City of Houston. In fact, our METRO Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located at Houston TranStar and is prepared to activate for catastrophic weather, special events, and unexpected disaster. METRO's EOC is made up of leadership from METRO departments and is trained and well-versed to take appropriate action to meet the emergency. During this time, we support the City of Houston Emergency Center and the Harris County EOC by sending METRO representatives to their EOC's to ensure overall cohesion and the strongest regional response and recovery.



METRO Emergency Operation Center



EOC Fully Staffed

Loss Mitigation

Houston METRO's Planning & Operations teams worked together to fine-tune how we run and stop service to promote rider & employee safety, and to reduce the chances of lost or damaged METRO equipment during an emergency. What does that mean? We previously ran service until just before a storm were to hit the region. The thought process adhered to the notion our ridership may need to get resources and go home, or to a shelter. However, by stopping service earlier and by communicating with the public and partners more often, we've experienced tremendous community support and have seen a substantial reduction in financial loss to our bus fleet. Taxpayers have entrusted METRO to make wise choices regarding our bus, rail, and paratransit fleets and we take their trust seriously. As a secondary but important note, by having fewer flooded

buses strewn about the region, we've reduced our negative headlines in the news. Public perception is important.

METRO has bus, rail, and general support facilities across the region. At each location our facilities maintenance team has an aggressive storm mitigation program involving annual inspections, trainings, and a tropical weather meeting held during hurricane season for managers and supervisors. These facilities are key to METRO getting services back into motion after a major catastrophe, their reliability is paramount to METRO's continuity of operations.

Preparing our facilities for a potential hurricane is only one part of the equation. Given improvements to storm tracking and the allowance of more lead time, we utilize that time to safely move our equipment appropriately per the given circumstances. During Hurricane Harvey, we made national headlines with our creative solution to highwater. Most people didn't realize the plan to park buses on HOV overpasses was planned over twenty years, Harvey was our first opportunity to try it out.



Hurricane Harvey Bus Park



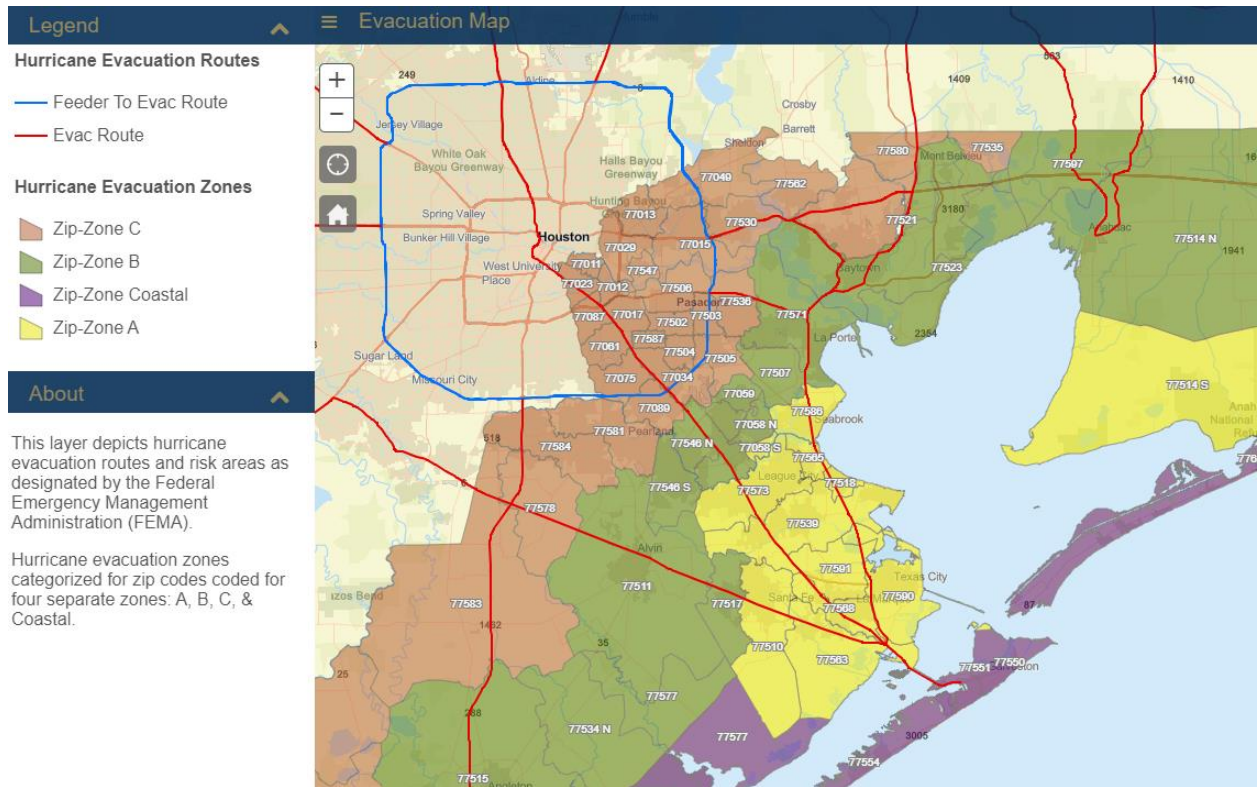
Hurricane Harvey Bus Park #2

Rapid Recovery

The flip side of shutting down transit services early to support loss mitigation, is being prepared to enact a rapid recovery of services after the storm has passed. We've realigned our capabilities to enable METRO to have all essential service functions ready for movement shortly after tropical weather has subsided. That doesn't mean transit service will start immediately following an emergency, but our regional support operations will be actively engaged. Once the storm passes, we have Tier I employees based at all major facilities begin clearing buses for street use, other employees are designated to begin clearing the core bus routes of debris and hazards, our bus operators may be assigned to drive school or transit buses depending on the need, and bus and rail maintenance staff will safeguard work areas to begin maintenance operations. To further support a rapid recovery of services, METRO utilizes a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure mission essential functions keep going after a disaster. Our COOP is updated annually and provides a valuable framework and delegation of authority.

Coastal Protection

METRO has teamed up with the City of Houston and Harris County to support a Major State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (STEARs) Hurricane Evacuation for designated coastal & near coastal zip codes. Additionally, METRO has been given access to the City of Houston’s 311 online case management system to further assist evacuating citizens who call their helpline looking for transportation assistance within our service area. Once the decision to evacuate has been made by elected officials, METRO will activate to support the public and our regional partners.



Hurricane Evacuation Routes W/Zip Codes