



San Francisco Bay Area Regional Transportation Public Information

Interagency Joint Information System - Joint Information Center Procedures



February 2011

APPENDIX D

Regional Transportation Public Information – Interagency JIS / JIC Procedures

1. INTRODUCTION

Coordinating Agency: Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)

Supporting Agencies¹:

- MTC/511
- Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)
- Alameda Contra Costa Transit (AC Transit)
- Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)
- California Highway Patrol (CHP) – Golden Gate Division Caltrans District 4
- Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (County Connection)
- Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD)
- Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA)
- Oakland International Airport
- Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (CalTrain)
- Port of Oakland
- Port of San Francisco
- San Francisco International Airport
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)
- San Jose International Airport
- San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans)
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
- Vallejo Transit
- Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA)

1.1. Purpose

The Interagency Joint Information System (JIS) / Joint Information Center (JIC) Procedures provide guidance on the media relations and community outreach function to expedite the transportation sector's ability to keep citizens advised of the region's transportation system status. The generation of timely, accurate public information coordinated with transportation agencies in the nine-county Bay Area is essential to protect people, property, the environment and the economy if a disaster is imminent or has occurred.

Public information will be coordinated and disseminated using a JIS. The JIS provides a structure for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages. The JIC is the central element of the JIS and provides a physical or virtual location where public information personnel perform critical emergency information functions.

1.2. Mission

¹ In addition to the plan participants listed in Section 1.4 of the RTEMP, the ports and airports have agreed to support the Interagency JIS / JIC Procedures.

The mission of this plan is to provide effective regional transportation public information through coordination with transportation agencies in the nine-county Bay Area to protect people, property, the environment and the economy before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.

2. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

2.1 Joint Information System

MTC is responsible for facilitating the Regional Transportation Public Information Function for the nine-county Bay Area.² This function is accomplished through the use of a JIS. The JIS provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging across multiple transportation agencies during crisis or incident operations.

The JIS provides a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated, timely, accurate and cohesive interagency messages to the media and the public in order to dispel rumors and inaccurate information. MTC will coordinate with Public Information Officers (PIOs) from supporting transportation agencies to support information collection and dissemination to the public, media, and other interested parties. *It is important to note that procedures pertaining to the JIS do not pre-empt or nullify existing transportation agency public information protocols.*

The JIS specifically provides the following:

- Interagency coordination and integration
- Gathering, verification, coordination, and dissemination of consistent messages
- Support for decision makers
- Flexibility, modularity, and adaptability

Specific objectives of the JIS are as follows:

- Quickly assess and convey the nature of the emergency to the public in a form that is accessible, factually accurate, and easily understood.
- Provide critical information to the media and general public concerning the region's transportation system status and ability to restore basic transportation service.
- Provide accurate, authoritative information to the public in order to dispel rumors and false information.

² Established in the Regional Transportation Emergency Management Plan (RTEMP), *Appendix A: Metropolitan Transportation Commission – Trans Response Plan*

2.2 Joint Information Center

The JIC is a central location that facilitates the operation of the JIS. It is a virtual or physical location where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions and crisis communications. Depending on the circumstances, Caltrans District 4 could serve as the physical location for the JIC. The JIS is flexible and adaptable to accommodate multiple JICs of various types. Table 1 provides a description of the different types of JICs that may be used by the transportation sector.

JIC Types	Description
Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Established at a single, on-scene locationProvides media with easy access to incident information
Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supports single or multiple-incident Incident Command System (ICS) structuresPhysically located at MTC or another feasible location to facilitate media relations
Virtual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Established when a physical co-location is not feasibleConnects PIOs through e-mail; text messaging, mobile, landline, and satellite phones; faxes; web-based information systems; etc.

Table 1: Types of JICs Used in the Transportation Sector

JIC functions may be performed by representatives from any or all transportation agencies involved in response and recovery operations. As noted in Section 2.1, agencies that contribute to the JIC do not lose their individual identities or responsibility for their own programs or policies. Due to resource constraints, MTC and the Bay Area transportation agencies will most likely use a virtual JIC for the coordination of regional transportation public information.

2.2.1 Notification and Activation

Notification

In response to an anticipated or actual incident, the MTC PIO will notify transportation agency PIOs, as appropriate, when the JIC is activated. Notification will be communicated by phone, e-mail, or text messaging and will include reporting instructions. MTC will maintain a current list of transportation agency PIOs and relevant 24/7 contact information, which will be shared with the transportation sector. Supporting transportation agency PIOs involved in the JIC will be determined according to the scope of the incident.

Activation

The JIC is activated based on the complexity of the situation and the need to ensure coordination and integration of messages. Situations that may require JIC activation include the following:

- A major incident that significantly impacts the regional transportation infrastructure
- Incidents requiring a multi-agency response (e.g., natural disasters, hazardous substance releases, terrorist incidents)
- Events or incidents with heightened public exposure and/or attraction

The JIC can also be activated at the request of multiple transportation agency PIOs or at the request of CalEMA Coastal Region

The MTC PIO will activate the JIC for any incident in which a need to coordinate regional transportation public information is determined. Should the MTC PIO be unavailable, a chain of command (see below) shall be established to designate a “lead PIO” who will ensure that this task is performed. The JIC may be activated independent of an MTC EOC activation. Consideration should be given to the possibility that some staff may be unreachable or have union contracts that conflict with off-duty assignments during an after hours JIC activation. Affected transportation agencies and/or operational areas (OAs) may activate their own JICs to facilitate local needs.

Suggested “chain of command” to serve as designated “Lead PIO” to activate the regional JIC:

- 1) MTC
- 2) Caltrans Dist 4
- 3) BART
- 4) GGBHTD
- 5) AC Transit

2.2.2 Communication Methods

Primary Means

Routine communications between PIOs during non-emergency operations can be established using the following methods:

- Cell phones
- Landline phones
- Text messaging
- Pagers
- E-mail
- Fax

Alternate Means

Commonly used communications capabilities may be degraded or non-functional after a major incident. The following communications options can be used to assist PIOs in reaching one another and the JIC:

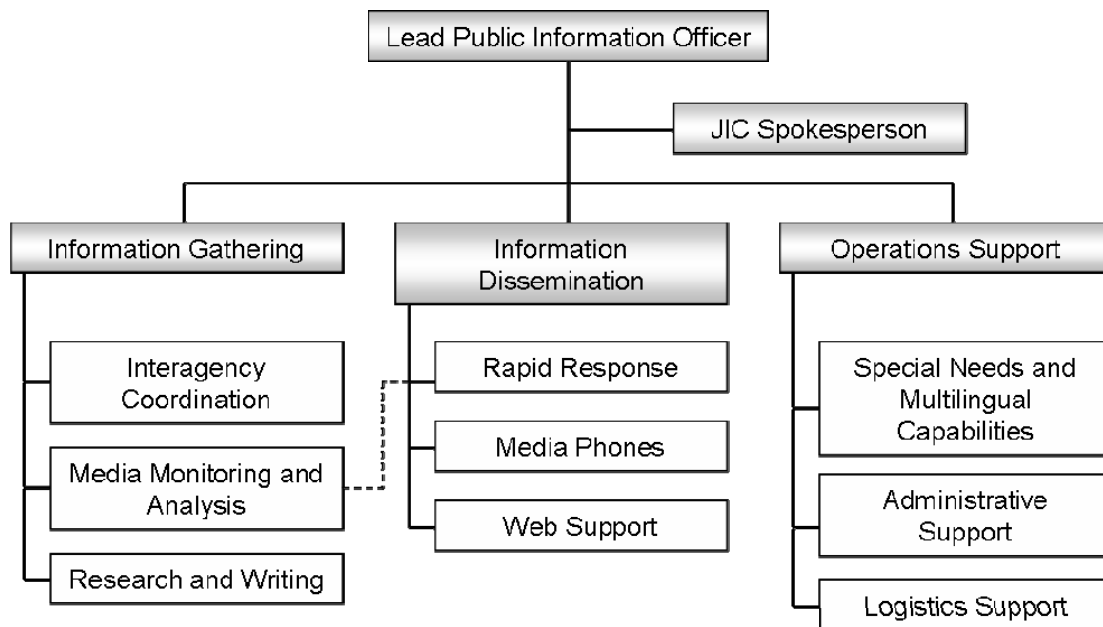
- Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) Cards
 - GETS cards provide a solution to placing emergency calls during major disasters or emergencies when there is severe network congestion. GETS is a Federal program that prioritizes calls over wireline networks.
- Short Message Service (SMS)
 - Also known as text messaging, SMS has proven to be resilient during crisis situations when call volumes inundate voice networks or when service is disrupted. SMS messages have been successfully transmitted even when e-mail and voice calls could not. These messages are not encrypted. Sensitive or confidential data will not be protected.
- BlackBerry Personal Identification Number (PIN) Messaging
 - BlackBerry PIN messaging has also been proven to be resilient during crisis situations when call volumes inundate voice networks or when service is disrupted. Each BlackBerry device is assigned a unique eight-digit number called a PIN. PIN-to-PIN messages are sent directly between BlackBerry devices. As with SMS, these messages are not encrypted. Sensitive or confidential data will not be protected.

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- Handheld Amateur (HAM) Radios
 - HAM radios are often used for emergency communications when conventional methods fail. Many agencies have incorporated the use of HAM radio operators in their Emergency Operations Plans and accommodate HAM radio operators in their respective EOCs.
- Satellite Phones
 - MTC has equipped major transportation agencies with satellite equipment. Stationary satellite phones have been installed in the EOCs of these agencies and the General Managers have been provided with mobile units.

2.2.3 JIC Organization

The JIC organizational structure is flexible and scaleable depending on the unique requirements of a specific response. It is based on functions that generally should be performed to manage communications for a routine emergency or response to a major disaster. Functional roles may be carried out by as few as one person for small-to-medium incidents, while large incidents require multiple staff to ensure efficient JIC operations. Each box in Figure 1 represents a function to be performed; however, certain functions may not be needed for every incident or planned event.

Figure 1: JIC Organization



2.2.4 JIC Functions and Tasks

During an incident that requires the JIC to be activated, JIC functions will be filled according to the needs of the incident. JIC functions and associated tasks are outlined below in Table 2.

Function	Tasks
Lead PIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activate/deactivate the JIC as necessary• Ensure notification of supporting transportation agency PIOs• Establish and implement a system to manage flow of information• Delegate tasks to JIC staff• Oversee the production, coordination, and dissemination of emergency public information• Approve issuance of coordinated news releases
JIC Spokesperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make regular statements to the news media regarding the status of the region's transportation system
Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather incident data• Monitor media reports for accuracy, content, and possible response• Use 511 as a source of information• Maintain current information summaries and/or displays on the incident• Maintain communications, and coordinate with response partners• Develop communication and outreach products (e.g., fact sheets, news releases, public service announcements)
Information Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage media and public inquiries• Disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident• Rapidly respond to correct reporting inaccuracies• Maintain an activity log• Provide information through media relations channels• Provide information through 511
Operations Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that special needs and multilingual considerations are accounted for• Ensure proper setup of the JIC• Provide support for JIC operations concerning the facility and resources• Provide support for setup and conduct of news conferences• Provide food and water for JIC staff in the event of a long-term activation

Table 2: JIC Functions and Tasks

2.2.5 JIC Operations

2.2.5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the MTC or designated PIO, supporting transportation agency PIOs, and JIC staff.

Coordinating Agency: MTC

- Functions as the lead PIO
- Provides direction of and decision making about regional media relations and public information operations at the JIC
- Notifies all transportation agency PIOs about JIC activation
- Establishes a coordination center at MTC to serve as a central point from which all information will be collected and disseminated.
- Utilizes MTC personnel as JIC staff to perform necessary JIC functions based on the needs of the incident (MTC may also ask for assistance from supporting transportation agencies to perform specific JIC functions)
- Provides approval on all coordinated public information released on behalf of the region's transportation sector
- Coordinates JIC activities with the CalEMA PIO and the MTC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Director
- Coordinates, as necessary, with other JICs established within the region

Supporting Transportation Agency PIOs

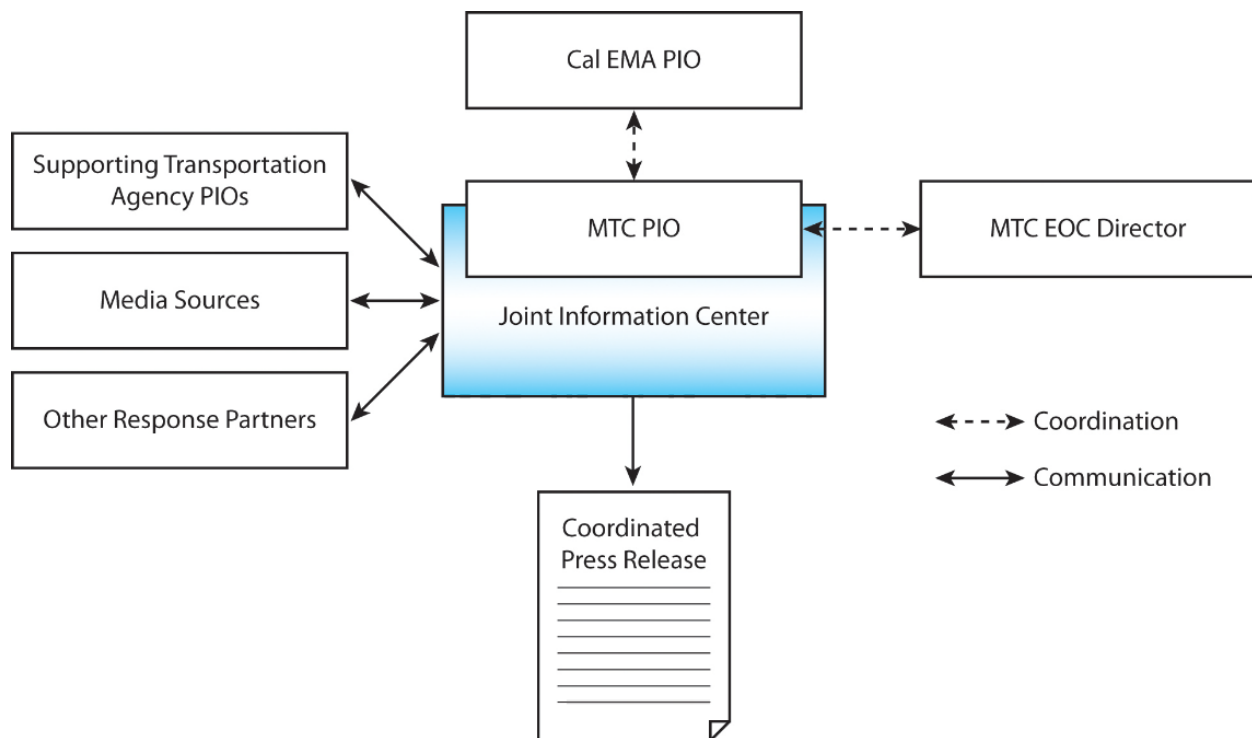
- Frequently provide agency-specific information (e.g., service changes, resource needs, traveler advisories/instructions) to the JIC to be included in a coordinated regional transportation news release
- Verify all information gathered from local sources before forwarding to the JIC
- May perform specific JIC functions as assigned by the lead PIO
- Issue news releases related to agency-specific policies, procedures, programs, and capabilities; and provide copies to the JIC
- Use 511 as a medium to disseminate agency-specific information to the public regarding existing conditions and service modifications
- Provide the JIC with a list of news media contacts that are being used to disseminate agency-specific information

JIC Staff

- Establishes and maintains a two-way exchange of information with supporting transportation agency PIOs and other response partners (e.g., OAs, CalEMA Coastal Region) taking part in disaster response operations
- Monitors news reports and media outlets to track information concerning the incident, ensuring accuracy of reporting, and takes action to correct misinformation and incorrect information concerning disaster response, recovery, and mitigation operations that appear in the news media
- Receives status reports from supporting transportation agency PIOs for inclusion in a coordinated news release

- Collects, reproduces, and distributes the most recent news releases from supporting transportation agencies
- When the MTC EOC is activated, coordinates with transportation agency PIOs to use the Regional Summary for the development of public information material
- Issues coordinated news releases for the incident on behalf of the region's transportation sector
- As necessary, translates media advisories and news releases into foreign languages for dissemination
- Conducts news briefings on a regular basis or as events dictate
- Uses mass distribution channels (e.g., 511, fax, e-mail, broadcast) for the collection and distribution of information
- Monitors websites, blogs, social media outlets, etc. created by citizens and coordinates with citizens as an additional resource; provides current or corrected information as needed
- Considers and plans for a long-term JIC activation, when necessary, by identifying additional resource needs to include assigning staff in shifts corresponding with incident operational periods to enable continuous operations and provisions for food, water, and lodging

Figure 2: JIC Information Flow Diagram



2.2.5.2 Response Actions

Informing the public and additional audiences during an incident is an ongoing cycle that involves four steps. JIC staff is collectively responsible for the steps outlined below:

Step 1: Gather Information

Information is primarily gathered from the following sources:

- Responding transportation agencies
- Other response partners
 - CalEMA Coastal Region
 - Caltrans District 4
 - CHP Golden Gate Division
 - WETA
 - County OAs
- MTC/511
- Media
- Calls from public and elected/appointed officials
- State and Federal agencies, as appropriate
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Private sector partners
- Eyewitnesses

The media is likely to arrive on the scene quickly with investigative and broadcast resources. They could be a valuable source of information regarding initial conditions. Members of the public who witness the incident may also capture and transmit photos and/or videos before reporters arrive. With wireless capabilities, their images can quickly show up on the traditional media outlets or on the internet.

Step 2: Verify Information

JIC staff verifies the accuracy of the information collected from all sources by consulting with respective EOC and technical specialists, ensuring that information is consistent, accurate, and accessible to all affected by the incident. JIC staff also works with other PIOs to compare notes and verify the accuracy of information—staff specifically consults the lead PIO and PIOs who are liaisons to the various supporting agencies or response/recovery partners.

JIC staff must take all necessary steps to control the spread of rumors. Managing misinformation through media monitoring and regional conference calls will lessen the impact of rumors and ultimately control their spread.

Step 3: Internal Coordination of Information

Coordination includes, but is not limited to:

- Coordinating between supporting transportation agency PIOs
- Coordinating between MTC EOC participants

Messaging

All messages will be developed focusing on the primary response mission, which is to provide for the safety of the public, emergency responders and transportation employees as

well as to protect property, the economy and the environment. Initial messaging information should include, but is not limited to:

- actions the public should take to protect themselves;
- the severity and impact of the incident, including areas affected;
- actions the responding transportation agencies are taking;
- a summary of the incident; and
- overall steps to be taken by the transportation sector and by citizens to return to normal or basic transportation service after the incident

Effective emergency messaging establishes community awareness about current or foreseen threats to public safety and elicits the desired response or action. JIC staff should prioritize the release of information that is most important to save lives. The three essential components of emergency public information can be represented by the acronym AIR which stands for:

- **A**lert
- **I**nform
- **R**eassure

Information Sharing

In addition to the public and media, information needs to be shared with the Coastal Region Emergency Operations Center (REOC); response community; other relevant agencies; elected and appointed officials; community leaders; other JICs established within the region; and other PIOs. Sharing information regarding response and recovery actions and objectives is critical to building situational awareness.

Step 4: External Dissemination of Information

Using a variety of dissemination methods, information should be made available to the following groups:

- The general public
- Transportation agency management and employees
- Transit passengers
- Disaster victims
- Affected jurisdictions
- Elected officials
- Community leaders
- The private sector
- The media
- Hospitals
- Other government agencies
- NGOs (e.g., American Red Cross)
- Other impacted groups

2.2.6 Deactivation

The MTC PIO, in coordination with supporting transportation agency PIOs, will determine when to deactivate the JIC. This decision will typically be made when the recovery and mitigation operations are underway or complete and/or there is no longer a need for regional coordination of public information releases. Deactivation may occur in a gradual step-down fashion as the coordination needs of the incident diminish. The MTC PIO will assign the following deactivation tasks to JIC staff:

- Prepare a comprehensive deactivation news release that includes contact information for future notification sources.
- Provide deactivation information to all involved response agencies.