

RARET/ETPN Tabletop 2025 Follow-Up Document

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Event Overview: The Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET), hosts an annual tabletop event in western Washington. This year the event took place at three in-person locations simultaneously with the capacity for participants to also join virtually. These venues were Snohomish County Emergency Management in Everett, Hopelink's Headquarters in Redmond, and the Pierce County Emergency Operations Center in Tacoma. RARET aims to address coordination problems around life-sustaining transportation during emergency events with a focus on people with access and functional needs. This hybrid tabletop event allows partners from around the Central Puget Sound and beyond to tackle scenario-based transportation challenges in a no-fault collaborative environment. The aim is to identify gaps and build relationships which can help create a more resilient emergency transportation response effort.

Scenario Overview: In this 2025 event, the scenario had a wildfire focus where RARET prepared a unique scenario for each venue. Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties would each see a regional wildfire threatening a rural community in their county during Red Flag Warning conditions. Extreme heat, high winds, and regional poor air quality would be compounding hazards to the fires. Each county would face three main transportation challenges: evacuating non-drivers in need, providing ongoing transportation support for those same individuals once they are in temporary shelters, and addressing secondary impacts from regional facilities whose operations are disrupted by client exposure to extreme heat and poor air quality.

Scenario Documents:

[Snohomish](#)
[King](#)
[Pierce](#)

Transportation Challenges: Participants were presented with three main transportation challenges in the context of this wildfire event:

- 1: Wildfire evacuation
- 2: Post-evacuation temporary shelter support
- 3: Facility transportation support with wildfire smoke and extreme heat

Each challenge had its own features and provided individual examples of riders. They are presented as happening simultaneously to promote a discussion about trip prioritization. Following the group discussion, participants were presented with scenarios designed to stimulate cross-county transportation discussions.

Lessons Learned

Having joined group discussions and reviewed discussion summaries from each venue, RARET distilled some key lessons from this exercise.

Prior Relationship Building

- Takeaway 1 (Organization Level): In the context of wildfire evacuation, but applicable to most emergency events, non-first responder transportation providers are often willing to provide response support within their capabilities. The primary barrier to that assistance is their lack of a pre-established relationship with emergency management where both sides understand what the other requires.
- Takeaway 2 (Personal Level): The speed with which emergencies occur means that resources may not be mobilized and coordinated in time to effectively serve those with access and functional needs. Personal preparation and local relationship building with neighbors are the best solutions.

Regions each have their unique procedures, resources, and local agencies responsible for coordinating responses to wildfire events. For transportation providers to quickly render aid, they need to be part of these frameworks. Building relationships between local, often smaller, transportation providers and their local emergency management is just as critical as regional transit agencies being connected with county agencies. This is particularly true in regions not covered by the primary county transit agency's service area.. It is important for local authorities to know how they can and cannot use their transportation resources, since those are often best suited to quickly assist clients. Regional tools like the Snohomish County Public Safety Hub could serve as a one-stop shop for emergency resources, but adding transportation information would require clear collaboration between providers and county officials to ensure accuracy.

In addition to agencies and transportation providers working together, local municipalities and community groups should encourage personal connections for those with access needs. Even with ideal collaboration it is not certain that resources could be mobilized quickly enough to serve those who need transportation services ASAP. The fastest solutions will almost always be ones in closest proximity, and in rural areas those closest are often trusted family, friends, and neighbors. Setting up community assembly points that are easy to locate, and encouraging people to plan how to get there, can help keep individuals safe.

Simplify Solutions

- Takeaway 1: If possible, identify solutions that do not require moving a client. Transportation solutions for riders require multi-agency coordination, successful communication, typically a trained driver, and a cooperative physical environment to be effective. Sometimes the best solution is to find an alternative to transporting someone.
- Takeaway 2: Simplify the trip when appropriate. The desired destination may not be the easiest one to reach for the client's needs. Work with the client and regional partners to make the transportation solution as simple as possible to increase efficiency of scarce transportation resources.
- Caveat: Rather than assuming, ask clients with access and functional needs what works best for them. Communicate with clients to understand their unique circumstances, work with accessibility subject matter experts to help train staff, and coordinate with community groups to build institutional knowledge about planning for people with access needs.

Discussion during the cross-county problem solving section of the exercise highlighted the importance of knowing when a transportation solution is appropriate and when a certain destination is optimal. The nature of this exercise was that transportation resources and first responders were limited in their capacity, so using them efficiently was imperative. Accordingly, some participants raised questions about situations where hypothetical riders might be more effectively served by delivering solutions to them rather than moving them. For example, if an AC unit was broken and the client wanted to stay home, perhaps it would be simpler to locate and drop off a replacement unit. Depending on what resources are available, this could potentially free up the limited pool of trained drivers to attend to other needs.

If a transportation solution is needed, it should be made as simple as possible. Emergency conditions, like wildfire-related road closures, can change usual routes or destinations. For example, communities near mountain passes may be unable to travel west due to debris, making their normal destinations inaccessible. A practical alternative is to identify an equivalent destination in another direction, such as a medical facility offering the same service.

Information Gathering and Sharing

- Takeaway 1: Gathering information about client transportation needs is critical to allocating scarce resources. Understanding the correct mobility solution for someone's needs ensures these resources are not misallocated. Having a clear chain of communication delivered through proper channels is critical.
- Takeaway 2: Understanding the types of mobility information transportation providers require in advance saves valuable communication time.

As in previous exercises, gathering information to solve transportation challenges requires prior knowledge to do so effectively. Understanding the client's needs is the first step. For example, if you know that a

transportation provider has a maximum wheelchair width their cabulances can accommodate, knowing that limit in advance ensures your first request for transportation assistance comes with all the information that provider needs.

Transportation providers have various eligibility requirements and physical limitations. When emergency management coordinates these services, connecting with mobility managers helps establish familiarity and streamline communication. In the Central Puget Sound, RARET is building an Emergency Transportation Provider Network (ETPN) of providers who clearly define their flexibility during emergencies and are willing to share non-public information with emergency management. In this exercise, RARET also provided participants with the ETPN Intake Form, which emergency managers can use to collect essential rider information, saving time and enabling faster collaboration.

Non-First Responders Evacuation Participation

- Takeaway: Some transportation providers are both willing and capable of supporting evacuation efforts. However, effective use of this partnership requires knowing how to work together, acting quickly to gather trip details, and understanding how to keep non-first responders safe.

Some transportation providers are both capable and willing to assist with evacuations when requested. In the exercise, these were typically operators of fixed-route, deviated-route, and paratransit services; providers better suited to support clients after evacuation included NEMT and volunteer driver programs.

To provide evacuation aid effectively, pre-established relationships and clear trip information are essential. Pre-arranged procedures, combined with an understanding of each provider's capabilities and responsibilities, allow action within a critical window of time. Accurate information ensures the right resources are dispatched to meet client needs.

Safety for non-first responders is crucial. Local emergency management must coordinate with transportation providers and first responders to ensure safe access to clients. Establishing assembly points where riders can be safely picked up offers a practical solution, with first responders or even neighbors assisting clients to these points when needed.

RARET's Event Takeaway

RARET came away from the event with positive takeaways and clear action items to address existing gaps. It was encouraging to see transportation providers enthusiastic about participating in evacuation efforts and flexible in their support of emergency response. This enthusiasm provides a stable foundation for closing those gaps.

The current model of cooperation between county-level emergency management and the largest regional transit agencies offers a strong guide for how smaller local transportation organizations can work with city and

town emergency management offices. RARET, along with Mobility Management more broadly, can serve as a bridge between these groups, and future stand-alone events should focus on strengthening these connections.

RARET's Emergency Transportation Provider Network project has the potential to address these gaps, but it needs to translate that potential into action. Reflecting on the exercise, RARET sees a clear path to boosting regional readiness: partners identified areas for improvement and demonstrated how to use their expertise and resources to address current and future needs.

Event Attendance:

Event Attendance (Total): 78 (68 external, 10 Hopelink staff)

Event Attendance (In-Person): 64 (inc. 10 Staff)

Event Attendance (Virtual): 14

Snohomish County Attendance (In-Person): 20 (inc. 3 Staff)

Staci Sahoo (Staff, Hopelink), Heather Clark (Staff, Hopelink), Rebeca Perez Martinez (Staff, Hopelink), Aaron Morrow (advocate), Chris Bekkouri (Bethany Silverlake), Kaihla Newton (Bothell Healthcare), Melissa Johnson (Snow Goose Transit), Amy Lucas (SnoCo DEM), David Fine (SnoCo DEM), Drew Schwitters (SnoCo DEM), Jayme Haselow (SnoCo DEM), Juli Rose (Homage), Janae Giles (Public Health Seattle King County), Jenny Hayslip (Everett Transit), Leila Bettys (SnoCo Human Services), Tyler Verda (SnoCo Human Services), Dan Mangialardi (Bothell Healthcare), Brock Howell (Snotrac), Scott Honaker (SnoCo DEM) Jarrod Dibble (SnoCo DEM)

Snohomish County Attendance (Virtual): 3

Jesse Gilpatrick (CFI), James Sauls (Everett Transit), Mel Pedrosa (SnoCo Health Department)

King County Attendance (In-Person): 22 (inc. 4 staff)

Dean Sydnor (Staff, Hopelink), Sara Sisco (Staff, Hopelink), Lyn McCarthy (Staff, Hopelink), Meg Cronister (Staff Hopelink), Mackenzie Kneeland (Community Van, Hopelink), Natalie Sharp (Community Van, Hopelink) Leo

Dickens (Providence), Michael Saftich (Sound Generations), Jim House (CIEP), Stephen Valenzuela (King County Metro Access), Nathan Emory (KC OEM), Lisa Kraft (CIEP), Grace Jia (King County Metro), Ed Holmes (Snoqualmie Valley Transportation), Tavo Rocha (King County Metro), Victor Londono (Hopelink NEMT), Ray Kais (ReWA), Angelinah Kitheka (Volunteer Services, CCS), Jordan Hoover (King County Metro), Prem Subedi (King County Transit Advisory Commission), Darryl Sierra (Hopelink NEMT)

King County Attendance (Virtual): 9

Ryan Primero (Marianwood Health and Rehabilitation), Stephanie Miller (AZSILC), Chrisiana Williams (MV Transportation), Jeff Abrams (advocate), Robert Curtis (Covenant Living at the Shores), Rachel Gerdis (The Shores SNF), Christopher Austin (MV Transportation), Kevin Schreiner (MV Transportation), Teresa Doe (MV Transportation)

Pierce County Attendance (In-Person): 22 (inc. 3 staff)

Laura Loe (Staff, Hopelink), Grace Georgitsis (Staff, Hopelink), Erin Funk (Staff, Hopelink), Todd Holloway (CFI), Sue Pniewski (WA EMD), Jason Freet (Medstar), Daeveene May (PCCTC, Beyond the Borders), Jessica Hogan (PC DEM), Chris Jose (PSESD), Kim Peterson (PC Human Services), Ausha Potts (Pierce Transit), Rod Chandler (Pierce Transit), Peter Jung (PAVE), Srey Kray (Pierce County), Erika Bartlett (TPCHD), Cindy Haverkamp (TPCHD), Wanda McRae (TACOD), Karissa Smith (PC DEM), Liz Clement (WA DOH), Wyatt Godfrey (PC DEM), Katie Arthur (PC DEM), Tony Hester (CFI)

Pierce County Attendance (Virtual): 2

Joshua Castillo (PC DEM), June Kailes (Disability Policy Consulting)

RARET Contact:

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For more information on ETPN, contact Dean, visit our website at <https://www.kcmobility.org/etpn>, or sign up for our distribution list [here](#).

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