



Ready, SETGO

SPECIAL EVENT TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY PLAYBOOK

A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE OF BEST
PRACTICES FOR TRANSIT AGENCIES OF ALL SIZES

SEPTEMBER 2025



Metro

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FORWARD

For transit agencies of any size, major events can be powerful catalysts for positive change. They offer a unique opportunity to test, adapt, and implement enhancements to more effectively manage crowds, optimize service, and elevate the customer experience. Transit is an economic engine. As transit agencies across the country strive to meet the changing demands of our riders and communities, our ability to effectively manage transportation during large-scale events has never been more critical. For many riders, special event service is their introduction to transit, and their experience getting to and from a concert or event can influence their perceptions of our service for years to come. Special events—whether sporting, cultural, or civic—all bring unique challenges, but regardless of the event, the customer expectation remains the same: people want a seamless, safe, and efficient ride to and from their event experience.

With this in mind, we are proud to present the Special Event Transportation – Guidance and Opportunities (SET GO) Playbook: a comprehensive resource for transit agencies of all sizes with clear guidelines, strategies, and best practices for managing the complexities of transit service for special events.

At its core, the SET GO Playbook emphasizes the importance of collaboration, proactive planning, and real-time communication. It outlines how to coordinate across multiple departments—from operations and customer service to security and community outreach—to ensure a unified and effective response. Moreover, it highlights the crucial need for flexibility and adaptability, so agencies can adjust to the unique demands of each event while maintaining a seamless transit experience for everyone. And it emphasizes the importance of opportunities to provide ‘surprise and delight,’ to make the transit journey a key part of the overall special event experience. By adopting and tailoring the principles outlined in this Playbook, we can ensure that every special event we serve showcases our dedication to providing excellent transit service, to build rider confidence and keep coming back again and again.

This Playbook is not a set of rules, but a living document that evolves with each event as we learn, reflect, and refine our approach to improve transit. Drawing on the expertise and lessons learned from agencies across the country; the SET GO Playbook is designed to provide transit agencies with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed in the unique and fast paced special event service environment. By leveraging our collective experience of providing transit for special events, we can make lasting improvements to both infrastructure and operations that can benefit riders long after the events are over.

Acknowledgments

The SET GO Playbook would not have been possible without the contributions of many dedicated professionals who generously shared their insights and experiences. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the individuals from transit agencies across the country who agreed to be interviewed and provide invaluable feedback for this project. Their expertise, learned through years of hands-on experience managing special events, has been instrumental in shaping the content of this guide. In particular, I'd like to thank:

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- Ali Oliver, *UTA*
- Patrick Preusser, *UTA*
- Aston Greene, *VTA*

Your willingness to share your challenges, successes, and lessons learned will undoubtedly help countless others in our industry navigate the complexities of special event management. It is through this collective knowledge that we can all grow, innovate, and improve how we serve our communities.

I'm grateful to the project team for their hard work and collaboration in bringing the Playbook to fruition:

- Conan Cheung, *LA Metro*
- Dawn Jackson-Perkins, *LA Metro*
- Nareh Nazary, *LA Metro*
- Reed Alvarado, *WSP*
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- Michal Helman, *WSP*
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Thank you for your contributions and your continued commitment to advancing the future of public transportation.

With Gratitude,
Stephanie Wiggins

01

INTRODUCTION



The United States of America (USA) has a long history of rising to the occasion when it comes to coordinating and hosting a wide range of special events that span across a range of type and proportion. From large-scale concerts to political conventions and international-scale sporting events like the Formula One Grand Prix, procedures to plan and manage special events have evolved throughout the years with changing event characteristics. A key component of event success has been the role of transit agencies to move the masses and ensure that an event can occur without paralyzing the everyday happenings in a given market.

This Playbook is a repository of transportation event planning and management best practices to-date, as well as an identification of practice improvements required to successfully deliver future events, including upcoming international-scale sporting events on the near horizon (e.g., the FIFA World Cup 2026™, 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles, and 2034 Winter Games in Salt Lake City). As host cities across the USA prepare for these events, they will contend with questions such as:

- + Which event planning and management techniques from the past still apply to today's event circumstances? What changes in the special events landscape since 2002 will necessitate new strategies and approaches?
- + How can transit agencies best leverage their systems to facilitate mobility for millions of spectators, workers, athletes, tourists, officials, and other travelers associated with these events?
- + How can transit agencies share best practices with their peers across the USA?

To help America's transit agencies answer these questions and prepare for upcoming mega events in the Fall of 2022, LA Metro established the Special Event Transportation Guidance & Opportunities (SetGo) Program, a series of LA Metro-led executive leadership workshops and special event coordination activities.

SETGO

The SetGo Program has hosted seven workshops to date around the country, hearing from agencies on best practices regarding special event transportation for events, including the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2023 Taylor Swift Eras Tour, Las Vegas Formula One Grand Prix, and more. Work includes event logistic coordination, executive coordination, and intra-agency relationship development. The program is developing a series of task forces with LA Metro related to agency coordination on FIFA World Cup 2026™ and LA 2028 Olympic workforce and fleet development. To be able to engage with the most agencies in a single location, LA Metro has worked with **The American Public Transportation Association (APTA)** to coordinate their workshops.

SetGo Workshops

- + October 19, 2022, APTA Connect EXPO (Hyatt Regency, Seattle, WA)
- + March 11, 2023, APTA Legislative (Grand Hyatt, Washington D.C.)
- + April 23, 2023, APTA Mobility (Minneapolis Hilton, Minneapolis, MN)
- + October 8, 2023, APTA Connect EXPO (Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, FL)
- + April 27, 2024, APTA Mobility (Portland Convention Center, Portland, OR)
- + September 29, 2024, APTA TRANSform (Anaheim Marriott, Anaheim, CA)
- + April 6, 2025, APTA Mobility (JW Marriott, Austin, TX)



Figure 1. SetGo workshops to date

SPECIAL EVENT PLAYBOOK: HOW IT BEGAN

Shortly after the Workshops began, General Manager and CEO India Birdsong Terry of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority recommended that given the best practices shared during the workshops, LA Metro should publish a playbook. As a result, LA Metro has produced this Special Event Industry Playbook outlining the recommended approach for successfully integrating of public transit into large-scale events. The Playbook begins with an overview of still-relevant content from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s Managing Travel for Planned Special Events, published in 2003. Next, The Playbook discusses emerging challenges and opportunities that shape today's event planning landscape. Finally, The Playbook summarizes the collective knowledge collected from transit experts, both domestic and international, providing a set of recommendations to guide large-scale event planning and management in the modern age.

Table 1. Types of special events

Event Type	Recurring in single location (Y/N/Sometimes)	Multi-Day (Y/N/Sometimes)	Multi-venue	Typical size (Specifics may change event size)	Potential NSSE*-Level Event
Ceremonies (e.g., Academy Awards)	Sometimes	No	No	★	No
FIFA World Cup	No	Yes	Yes	★★★★★	Yes
Multi-Head of State Meetings (e.g., G20, APEC)	No	Sometimes	Yes	★★★	Yes
Music Festivals	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes	★★★★★	No
Olympic & Paralympic Games	No	Yes	Yes	★★★★★	Yes
Political Conventions (e.g., RNC/DNC)	No	Yes	Yes	★★★★★	Yes
Regular Stadium Events (e.g., sports teams)	Yes	No	No	★	No
Street Events - Linear (e.g., Formula 1, Marathons)	Sometimes	Sometimes	N/A	★★★★★	No
Street Events - Neighborhood (e.g., New Year's Eve)	Sometimes	Sometimes	N/A	★★	No
Super Bowl	No	No	No	★★★★★	Yes
Unique Stadium Events (e.g., mega star concerts, championships)	No	Sometimes	No	★★★	Sometimes

★ Small Event ★★ Medium Event ★★★ Large Event ★★★★ Mega Event ★★★★★ Global Event

*NSSE: National Special Security Event

Event Operation Characteristics

Event Time and Duration

- + Specific start time
- + Predictable ending time
- + Continuous operation
- + Multiple start times

Area Type

- + Urban
- + Suburban
- + Rural

Event Market Area

- + Local
- + Regional
- + Statewide
- + National

Event Location

- + Single venue
- + Multiple venues
- + Fixed venue
- + Temporary venue
- + Park
- + Streets

Event Time of Occurrence

- + Night/day
- + Weekday/weekend
- + Single day
- + Multiple days
- + Multiple weeks
- + Tourist season

Expected Attendance

- + Audience (Regional, National, or International)
- + Primary Language(s)

Event Type

- + Sports/concert
- + Fair/festival
- + Parade/race
- + Convention

Audience Accommodation

- + Free/cost
- + Ticket/ticketless
- + General admission
- + Reserved seating

Phasing Event Readiness Activities

Successful planning for mid-size to large-scale events hinges on a strategic, phased approach that starts early and extends well beyond the event itself. While timelines will naturally vary depending on the event's scope and complexity, early groundwork is critical.

By creating a detailed workback plan that integrates robust operational planning, timely procurement and testing of resources, and proactive stakeholder coordination, transit agencies can position themselves for smooth, safe, and inclusive service delivery. A phased readiness model not only builds momentum but also allows teams to stay agile, align across departments, and address challenges long before the first rider steps onboard.

Operational readiness is only part of the equation when it comes to delivering a successful event. Equally important is the quality of the experience provided to attendees, participants, and partners. That's why traditional planning phases must be complemented by a holistic view of the customer journey (see Journey Mapping on page 7).

This means thoughtfully designing and managing every touchpoint from initial awareness and registration to on-site navigation and engagement, through to post-event follow-up and feedback. Supporting this full journey requires intentional coordination across communications, logistics, accessibility, and service delivery. When these elements are aligned, the result is a seamless, inclusive, and memorable experience that reflects the event's broader goals.

1. Planning

Program Development encompasses the plans that are developed to scale up operations for a large-scale event. Plans developed and reviewed during this phase may include supplemental service plans, staffing and training plans, incident action plans, public information plans, continuity of operations plans, and emergency operations plans.

Event operations systems involves implementing systemic changes and procuring resources for the large-scale event. It is important to allot sufficient time for procurement to allow for testing of new equipment and training for all contracted staff.

2. Delivery

Implementation activities represent a transition phase between event operations planning and day-of-event activities. This phase includes testing systems at full capacity and conducting training, drills, and exercises with all relevant stakeholders. All temporary infrastructure should be installed towards the end of the implementation activities period.

Day-of-event activities refer to the deployment of all scaled up operations plans. While event service is in place, operations command centers, Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), Joint Information Centers (JICs), and other control room settings are activated to allow for constant coordination.

3. After-Action

After-action activities cover the evaluation of local and regional transportation operations based on stakeholder debriefings and an analysis of data collected during the day-of-event. Evaluation involves both the transit agency team and larger event planning team working together to identify successes and lessons learned, and the stakeholder groups may transfer their determinations to the oversight team for consideration and action under the program planning phase.

Need for Readiness Exercises

While true for all planning efforts, it is particularly true for special-event planning that the best plans may fail if they are not reviewed and tested prior to their implementation. The event operations planning process, by its very nature, is based on assumptions and expectations. Those event planning team members who helped draw-up the plan may have a thorough knowledge of their agencies' experience and capabilities, but there are probably many event management team members and volunteer personnel who had little or no role in developing the plan yet have the responsibility of implementing it and managing mobility on the day-of-event. Review and testing can allow participants to see how they handle various scenarios and how varying elements can affect the plan.



Figure 5. Journey mapping timeline Credit: LA Metro Customer Experience Team

JOURNEY MAPPING

A successful and holistic event travel experience relies on the seamless integration of multiple strategic and operational elements, each playing a vital role in supporting the journey from start to finish. This section is a case study of LA Metro’s Journey Mapping process, highlighting the elements that contribute to a successful customer experience. LA Metro encourages readers to examine the following components:

Enhanced Transit Service, Fleet Enhancements, and Temporary Park and Ride Facilities ensure accessible and efficient transportation options for large crowds. **Speed and Reliability** are key to maintaining a smooth flow of travel, while **Marketing and Communications**, along with **Customer Information, Signage, and Wayfinding**, keep riders informed and confident in their movements. **Accessibility and Universal Mobility** ensure that every traveler, regardless of ability, can participate fully in the experience. **Safety and Security** measures, along with clearly defined **SOPs and Technology**, create a controlled and dependable environment. **Infrastructure** improvements and **Weather Resiliency** efforts, such as heat mitigation, contribute to physical comfort and operational continuity. Behind the scenes, **Finance and Budget** planning, supported by an **All-Hands Support Team**, enable the execution of these efforts at scale. **Station Events and Activations** add an extra layer of engagement and hospitality, transforming transit into a meaningful part of the event itself. Collectively, these components define a journey mapping approach that is efficient, inclusive, and memorable.



Figure 4. Dodger Stadium Express Credit: LA Metro

Elements of a Holistic Spectator Experience

- + Enhanced Transit Service
- + Fleet Enhancements
- + Speed and Reliability
- + Temporary Park and Ride Facilities
- + Infrastructure
- + Weather Resiliency (Heat Mitigation)
- + Accessibility and Universal Mobility
- + Customer Information, Signage, and Wayfinding
- + Station Events and Activations
- + Ambassadors
- + Surprise and Delight
- + Marketing and Communications
- + Safety and Security
- + All-Hands Support Team
- + SOP's and Technology
- + Fare Payment, Integrated Ticketing
- + Finance and Budget



Figure 6. Taylor Swift concert station activation Credit: LA Metro

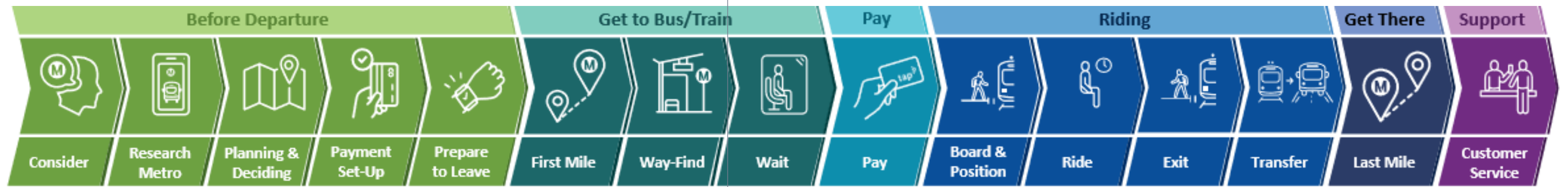


Figure 7. Bus service boarding Credit: LA Metro

Enhanced Transit Service

To deploy expanded bus service in collaboration with municipal operators, utilizing purpose-built park-and-ride facilities to ensure efficient ingress and egress for large crowds during major events. This approach supports seamless mobility during high-demand periods while establishing a scalable framework for future high-capacity shuttle networks designed for mega-events.



Figure 8. HR4000 heavy rail train Credit: LA Metro

Fleet Enhancements

To augment and retrofit bus and rail fleets across transit agencies with high-capacity vehicles, onboard amenities, and low-emission technologies. This provides comfortable, reliable service that supports long-term mega-event operations and leaves a lasting legacy of enhanced mobility.



Figure 9. Flower Street bus lane Credit: LA Metro

Speed and Reliability

Minimize delays and reinforce confidence in transit as the premier way to experience mega-events in your service area.

Temporary Park and Ride Facilities

Maximize parking capacity and forge a replicable model for event-driven parking solutions at the mega-event scale.

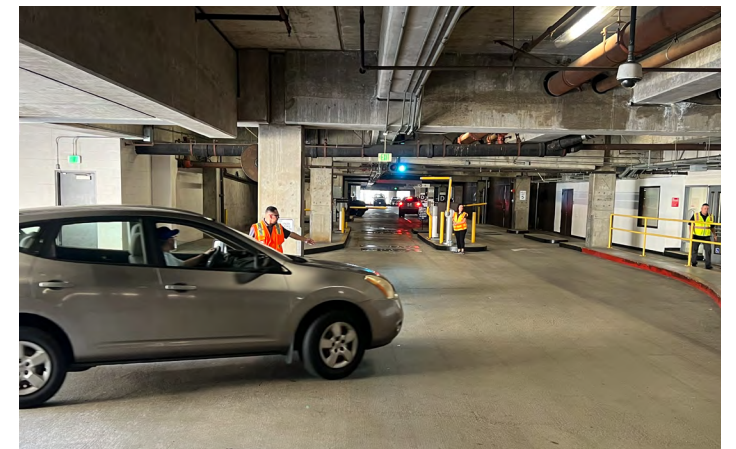


Figure 10. Parking facility Credit: LA Metro

Infrastructure

Accelerate targeted station upgrades, improvements, and general platform and station overhauls. This creates the physical capacity and resilience needed to meet the demands of major events like the World Cup, Olympic and Paralympic Games, or mega star concert, while embedding lasting assets into the broader transit network.



Figure 11. LAX/Metro Transit Center Credit: LA Metro

Weather Resiliency (Heat Mitigation)

Ensure passenger comfort and safety in extreme temperatures and establish best practices for climate-resilient transit operations. Examples of this include: Cooling buses, water stations, heating areas, etc.



Figure 12. Memorial Park Station water refill station pilot Credit: LA Metro

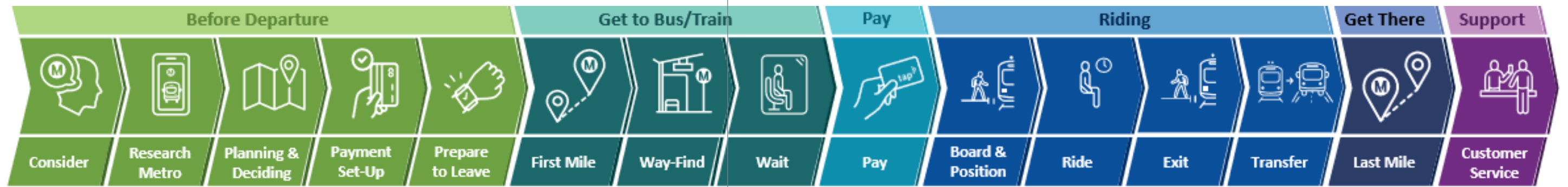


Figure 13. Bus wheelchair ramp Credit: LA Metro

Accessibility and Universal Mobility

Every fan, regardless of ability, enjoys a dignified and barrier-free journey. LA Metro is working to ensure that the ADA is the “floor” or minimum experience, not the “ceiling” or maximum experience.



Figure 14. 2025 Rose Parade ambassadors Credit: LA Metro

Surprise and Delight

Surprise and delight at LA Metro means curating memorable “Wow” moments across every transit journey touchpoint. From branded activations at critical stations, to live entertainment at key transfer points, and unique onboard experiences, the agency aims to elevate the rider satisfaction and reinforce the agency’s reputation for hospitality and innovation.



Figure 15. Little Tokyo/Arts District station activation Credit: LA Metro

Station Events and Activations

Transform key mobility hubs while maintaining seamless passenger flows, to provide a legacy for station experience.

Ambassadors

During large-scale events in Los Angeles, LA Metro Ambassadors are deployed in teams of two onboard trains and buses, at stations, and in other key safety hotspots. Ambassadors support riders with navigating the transit system, connect them to resources, support employees, and report incidents of cleanliness and safety to transit security, law enforcement, and key departments.



Figure 16. Station ambassadors Credit: LA Metro

The program has been a crucial component and is a vital part of Metro’s reimagined, multilayered public safety plan. The methodology for deploying Ambassadors is as follows:

- + **High visibility** – establishing a regular ambassador presence on high ridership lines and routes.
- + **Opportunities for customer experience improvements** – addressing locations with high incidents of customer complaints/concerns, service disruptions, special events, and ADA accessibility concerns (including rail or bus stations with elevators/escalators).
- + **Public safety** – Increase uniform presence to make riders feel safer and address medical incidents throughout the system for resolution.

Customer Information, Signage, and Wayfinding

LA Metro connects riders to major events—and brings the events to our riders—wherever they are. Metro delivers a cohesive wayfinding experience that integrates traditional navigational and directional signage with advanced digital platforms, mobile technologies, and strategically coordinated fan activations across the system and surrounding communities. All elements are designed to ensure clarity, consistency, and ease of use for local riders and international visitors alike.

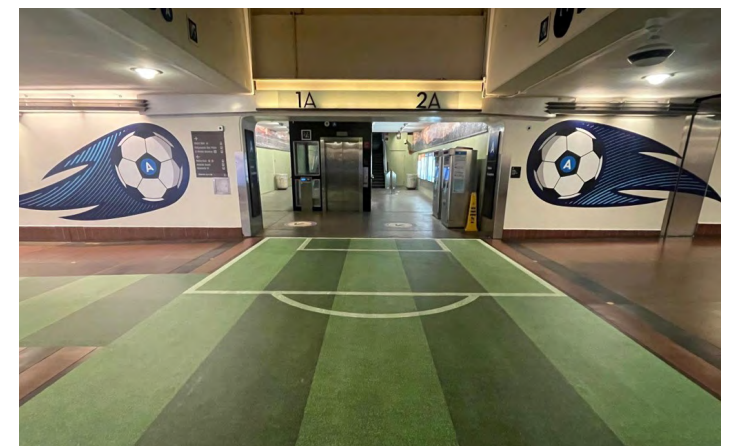


Figure 17. Union Station Club World Cup wayfinding decals Credit: LA Metro

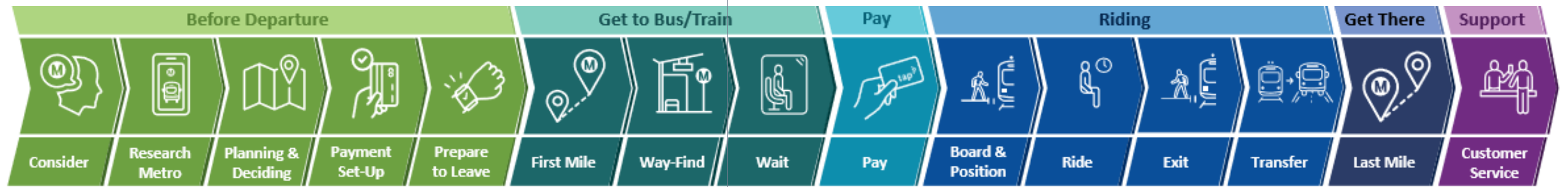


Figure 18. LA pride concert 2024 Credit: LA Metro

Marketing and Communications

Deliver clear, compelling messaging that drives awareness of service enhancements, inspires confidence in our transit options, and amplifies the excitement of special event mobility opportunities across diverse audiences and channels.



Figure 19. LA Metro Police Credit: LA Metro

Safety and Security

Deliver a secure transit environment that prioritizes passenger well-being and peace of mind.



Figure 20. All-hands support team at the Dodgers Express Credit: LA Metro

All Hands Support Team

Through your agencies volunteer and event support staff programs, proactively guide, support and engage passengers, embodying our commitment to world-class customer care.

SOP's and Technology

Orchestrate a unified command structure that maximizes resource sharing, standardizes operating procedures with municipal partners, and ensures real-time coordination for flawless bus and/or rail integration during every match.



Figure 21. Emergency Security Operations Center (ESOC) Credit: LA Metro

Fare Payment, Integrated Ticketing

Integrated ticketing directly supports LA Metro's goals of increasing transit awareness and ridership during major Los Angeles events by making public transportation more convenient and visible. By embedding Metro access into event experiences, such as Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC) matches at BMO Stadium, it promotes car-free travel and prepares the region for Olympic-scale demand. These partnerships allow LA Metro to gather critical rider data, influence long-term travel behavior, and advance sustainability by reducing congestion and emissions.



Figure 22. LAX/Metro Transit Center fare gates Credit: LA Metro

Finance and Budget

Advocate for local organizers, state, and federal officials to recognize the positive economic impact of public transportation in order to secure financial resources to fund operational costs and leave a sustainable financial legacy for future mega-event transit.



Figure 23. Metro Budget Portal Credit: LA Metro

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

The overall ‘look’ of spectator signage both within and outside of the event venue must be consistent to ensure a cohesive spectator experience. Wayfinding signage needs to clearly identify the transit line and destination of each queue. Spectator education of upcoming queuing should begin well before the queue begins. This requires coordination with the event organizers and venue to identify locations to integrate wayfinding instructions upon exit of stadium and outside of transit facilities.

The following guidance details best practices for large-scale event wayfinding signage:

- + Signage should be consistent with event organizer and venue naming conventions but not refer to individual teams or performers.
- + Signage should be mainly in English and use internationally recognized pictograms to refer to event-specific locations.
- + Temporary signage should be attached to existing support infrastructure where possible.
- + The agency should prepare a mixture of static, moveable, and dynamic signage to use where most appropriate.
- + In high volume crowding situations, signage should be in a large-scale font and suspended at an appropriate height for wayfinding purposes.
- + Signage should be simple and direct. Any design that is too elaborate will cause more confusion than clarity.

Regarding accessibility in relation to wayfinding signage, communications should be designed to support ADA riders. Customer personas could be utilized to develop and stress test representative journeys or experiences. The nature, length, complexity, and context of communications should be considered when developing wayfinding and other customer support materials. Importance will be placed on communications about access to ADA services. Staff that can provide ADA assistance should also be strategically deployed during the event. These staff should be easily identifiable to passengers that require assistance.



Figure 24. London 2012 wayfinding signage



Figure 25. Paris 2024 wayfinding signage



Figure 26. Paris 2024 ADA assistance staff member



Figure 27. Paris 2024 wayfinding signage




PLAYBOOK TOPICS

Throughout this Playbook readers will see best practices separated by five primary subjects: Purpose & Need, Service Plan, Safety & Emergency Management, Customer Experience, and Agency-wide Success Strategies. These topics fall into three phases of special event planning development: Planning, Delivery, and After-Action. No topic is contained to a single phase, however many tend to have their largest focus and need in a single phase. The following list of topics are discussed in detail below:

- + Mission & Vision
- + Internal Coordination
- + External Coordination
- + Transportation Demand Forecast
- + Special Event Service Plan
- + Construction/Concurrent Efforts
- + Speed and Reliability
- + First/Last Mile
- + Event Process Monitoring and Improvements
- + Safety & Security
- + Emergency Operations Center Planning
- + After-Action Process
- + Accessibility and Universal Mobility
- + Customer Information, Signage, and Wayfinding
- + Fare Payment
- + Crowd Management
- + Surprise & Delight
- + Weather Resiliency
- + Budget
- + Training
- + Technology
- + Contingency Planning

Playbook Phasing

Each section of the Playbook contains guidance for all three phases of event planning development. The following table details the distinction between the three phases:

 Planning	 Delivery	 After-Action
During the planning phase, the transit agency coordinates with host committees on objectives of service, seeks resources and support, and plans for all aspects of the customer experience.	During the delivery phase, the transit agency implements event plans. This includes staffing and training, testing systems at full capacity, and installing signage and temporary infrastructure.	During the after-action period, transit agencies evaluate event performance and document best practices and lessons learned to incorporate into future event planning efforts.

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METHODOLOGY

The insights and recommendations provided in the subsequent sections of this Playbook were compiled using a strategically implemented approach that paired interviews with industry experts and leveraged published resources to provide a comprehensive look at the current understanding of large-scale event planning.

Participants of April 28, 2024's SetGo Thought Leadership Workshop in Portland, OR were invited to recommend industry peers with experience in special event coordination to participate in the Industry Playbook Task Force. The Task Force consisted of 30 transit agency professionals with expertise in operations, planning and scheduling, safety and security, communications, marketing, and fare collection.

Task Force members self-selected to participate in semi-structured in-depth qualitative virtual interviews with the SetGo project team. All the interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams and were recorded and transcribed for analysis and integration into the Playbook.

A comprehensive list of questions was developed before the onset of interviews, however, a tailored subset from the master list was asked during each interview to align with the specialty focus area of each interviewee.

After each interview, the interviews were transcribed and input into a spreadsheet divided by topic category. Following each interview, the transcriptions and key takeaways were then sent to the corresponding interviewees for review of accuracy and to provide an additional opportunity to provide supplemental input.

On September 29, 2024, SetGo Thought Leadership Workshop in Anaheim, CA, attendees were again asked for further interviewees. In total, LA Metro interviewed 32 transit professionals from 12 agencies to contribute to this document.

The checklist and recommendations presented in the subsequent chapters were developed through an analysis of the insights that were provided during these interviews and bolstered by the information and resources garnered from the SetGo workshop series to date, the FHWA 2003 "Managing Travel for Planned Special Events" Handbook, the NCHRP Synthesis 309: Transportation Planning and Management for Special Events, and the UTA After Action Report 2002 Olympics.

Agency Interviews

CTA	LA Metro	RTC	SacRT
Foothill Transit	MARTA	SDMTS	UTA
MBTA	OCTA	SFMTA	Sound Transit

Task Force Meeting Dates

All Task Force meetings were held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

- 7/12/2024** Kick Off Meeting
- 8/1/2024** Playbook Task Force Meeting
- 9/12/2024** Playbook Task Force Meeting
- 10/17/2024** Planning Review
- 11/14/2024** Delivery Chapter Review
- 12/12/2024** Marketing and Public Engagement Chapter Review
- 3/25/2025** Final Draft Review

Literature Review

Managing Travel for Planned Special Events (FHWA, 2003)

In 2003, the FHWA prepared a handbook to *assist responsible agencies in managing the ever-increasing number of planned special events impacting transportation system operations in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas*¹. Since it was written, many best practices have evolved in response to considerations regarding sustainability, technology, and other issues. That said, many fundamental event planning, and management best practices have retained relevance, including:

- + Classification of events
- + Phasing event activities
- + Need for comprehensive engagement throughout the planning process
- + Need for readiness exercises
- + Need to provide real-time information

Classification of Events

The first step toward accurately predicting event-generated travel demand and potential transportation system capacity constraints involves understanding the event characteristics and how these characteristics affect transportation operations. In turn, practitioners can classify the planned special event in order to draw comparisons between the subject event and similar historical events to shape travel forecasts and gauge transportation impacts.

- + Multi-site events, like the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Super Bowl and World Cup, with large crowds from many places
- + Routine single-site events, like an NBA, NFL, MLB event, concert or other gathering
- + Unique single-site events like a K-Pop or a Taylor Swift concert, which exceed the normal attendance for a venue
- + A linear event, like a marathon or parade, where crowds will largely be static while the event moves and creates traffic events along the route
- + Political conventions or multi-national meetings with heads of state, with heightened security considerations
- + Neighborhood street events like festivals or celebrations

NCHRP Special Events Synthesis

The NCHRP Synthesis 309: Transportation Planning and Management for Special Events focuses on how various agencies plan, coordinate services and manage transportation systems for both frequent and infrequent events. It covers strategies for handling the unique challenges posed by special events, such as increased traffic, security concerns, and the need for efficient public transportation. The Playbook pulls on significant takeaways from the NCHRP Synthesis 309 that focus on best practices for Post-Event Analysis and Documentation.

UTA After Action Report 2002 Olympics

The UTA After Action Report for the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games highlights the extensive planning and coordination efforts that went into managing transportation for the event. The Playbooks incorporated key insights from the report's budget breakdown, with elements such as what to include when budgeting for large-scale events.

¹ <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwaop04010/handbook.pdf>

02



PURPOSE & NEED



Understanding a transit agency's purpose and need for providing major or special event service is essential for delivering coordinated, equitable, and effective transportation during large-scale events.

To meet the scale and complexity of these events, transit agencies must begin their major event service planning with foundational steps: clearly defining how the effort aligns with their **mission and vision**, **advocating** for transit inclusion, establishing strong **internal coordination** across departments, building collaborative **external partnerships**, and conducting robust **transportation demand forecasting**. These steps are critical for delivering safe, reliable, and efficient service that reflects the agency's long-term goals while meeting the immediate needs of millions of riders.

As with all agency investments, a successful special event service is a product of strong, proactive leadership with a clear and actionable plan that aligns event service with their broader strategic objectives. Major events are opportunities to showcase the region's transit capabilities on a global stage, leaving lasting impressions on visitors and first-time riders as well as legacy benefits for everyday riders.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action



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MISSION & VISION

Before any detailed planning can begin, transit agency leadership must assess how providing service for a special event aligns with the agency's mission, long-term vision, and strategic goals. While for smaller events, this may not be a primary consideration, for national and global events, this is a crucial step in the event process. This alignment serves as the foundation for all future decisions. Leadership must evaluate whether supporting the event advances the agency's values and determine if the service can be delivered in a way that is both **meaningful for the event** and **responsible to everyday riders**. This is the moment to ask pivotal questions:

❑ Can we meet the scale and service expectations of the event without compromising our regular operations?

❑ Does this opportunity reinforce our role as a mobility provider, or stretch us beyond our capacity and mission?

These early decisions shape not only the operational approach but also the narrative that the agency communicates to the public and stakeholders. Grounding event planning in an intentional mission and vision ensures that the agency leads with purpose and makes resource-conscious decisions that maintain credibility with the communities it serves, for both those attending the event and those relying on daily service.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Define how the event service supports the agency's mission (e.g., sustainability, equity, access). Ensure alignment in goals from the outset.

Consistently communicate and demonstrate core values (e.g., providing accessible, clean, and frequent service).

Evaluate how well the service upheld the agency's mission and identify areas for strategic refinement. (See After-Action Process section)

Purpose & Need



PURPOSE & NEED: MISSION & VISION

PLANNING



Planning is the foundational phase that sets the stage well before the event and delivery takes place. During this time, transit agencies must assess whether they can support the event in a way that aligns with their mission, maintains service to existing riders, and leverages the opportunity to enhance long-term goals. Key considerations include evaluating operational capacity, identifying resource needs, engaging leadership for strategic direction, and initiating coordination with internal teams and external partners. Decisions made in this phase will shape every element of execution and determine whether the agency is positioned to deliver meaningful, effective service when the event arrives.

- + Confirm agency-wide alignment on the purpose of participating in the event by referencing the agency's strategic plan, mission statement, and long-term goals.
- + Clearly define how the event service supports or enhances agency priorities, such as advancing key initiatives or showcasing sustainable mobility solutions.
- + Review State and Federal regulatory requirements regarding charter service to determine applicability
- + While ongoing assessments will produce further information regarding transit demand and operational capacity, from the onset, decision makers must decide if there are the resources to deliver successful service for this event.

Questions:

- ❑ Have we reviewed the agency's mission, vision, and strategic plan to ensure alignment?
- ❑ How does this event service support agency priorities?
- ❑ Does the event offer opportunities to pilot new services, technologies, or fare policies?
- ❑ Are there operational, reputational, or financial risks associated with participating in this event?
- ❑ Has executive leadership agreed on the agency's level of involvement and intent?
- ❑ Is there a need to conduct cross-departmental briefing(s) to review event expectations and resource needs?
- ❑ Is there a directive, resolution, or position from the agency board or executive leadership regarding this event?
- ❑ How will we define success for this event in a way that reflects our agency's mission?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



The delivery phase is where planning becomes action. Transit agencies begin implementing service strategies, deploying resources, and responding to real-time conditions. This is the moment to uphold the agency's mission through visible, reliable, and responsive service that meets the needs of both event attendees and regular riders. The primary components of this section are referenced in the Internal Communication section.

- + Monitor event progress and ensure that even as quick adjustments are made in response to changing circumstances, the service continues to reflect the agency's original mission and values.
- + Particularly for multi-day event service, monitor customer sentiment to see if the goals of the event service are being realized; if not, explore minor adjustments to align service with goals.

Questions:

- Are we monitoring service performance and customer feedback in real time to ensure the event service continues to reflect our agency's mission and goals?
- When adjustments are made due to changing conditions, are we protecting safety access and equity for core and underserved riders?
- Are frontline staff equipped and empowered to deliver service that aligns with our values, even under pressure?
- Is our public communication reinforcing trust and accessibility, especially for new or infrequent riders attending the event?
- Are we documenting key decisions and their rationale to support transparency, consistency, and post-event learning?

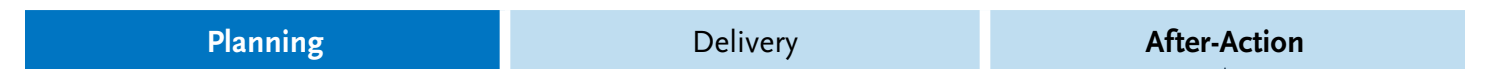


The after-action phase is a key opportunity to reflect on whether the agency's mission and values were upheld throughout the planning and delivery of the event. The technical components of implementing after action analysis is primarily covered in after-action process, however, here we focus on ensuring the lessons learned are tied back to the agency's long-term goals, strategic direction, and public commitments. Evaluation should go beyond logistics to assess whether the event service strengthened the agency's identity, reputation, and role in the community.

- + Evaluate whether the event service visibly reinforced the agency's mission, values, and public commitments
- + Identify where compromises may have strayed from the agency's vision and determine if they were necessary or avoidable
- + Identify the event-related actions during the Planning and Delivery phases that will be integrated into regular service that results in making transit better for everyone.

Questions:

- Did the delivery of event service visibly align with our agency's mission and vision from the public's perspective?
- Were there moments where mission-aligned goals (e.g., equity, sustainability, accessibility) were compromised, and why?
- What feedback did staff, riders, and partners provide?
- Are there adjustments we should make to our strategic planning or event participation criteria based on what we learned?
- How can the successes or gaps identified during this event inform our future approach to reinforcing mission-driven service?
- For any strategies that were piloted during the event, should they be integrated into regular service?





Major events present exciting opportunities for transit agencies to showcase their services on a large scale and be a part of the event experience for national and international visitors. In order to proactively anticipate impacts to the transit system and understand the transportation demand associated with the event, it is important to advocate for transit to be included in every step of the planning process.

The preparation time for large-scale events varies significantly depending on the scale, complexity, and governing body of the event. In recent years, organizing bodies including FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have shifted the timing of host city awards – sometimes issuing decisions just a few years out, and other times more than a decade in advance. The most critical takeaway of this for transit is the need for early engagement. Agency leadership must be proactive in engaging with the bid and upon award in early planning phases to advocate for appropriate resources, realistic timelines, and transit-focused planning that supports long-term agency goals.

02

Purpose & Need



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Engage with event organizers, venues, and local jurisdictions early in the planning process to ensure transit is represented in all event planning discussions.	Ensure that the transit agency is represented in any external Command Centers activated during the event.	Evaluate transit's role in the event and assess any opportunities for advocacy that can be taken ahead of future events.
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PURPOSE & NEED: ADVOCACY

PLANNING



During the planning phase, advocacy with event organizers, venues, local jurisdictions, law enforcement, and any other agencies involved in the event planning process is crucial. Special event service is highly dependent on a number of variables outside of the transit agency's control such as security perimeters, road closures, and event-related infrastructure. It is critical to proactively request this information from external partners to understand whether bus reroutes, station closures, and other adjustments to normal service are needed. It is also important to maintain coordination with event organizers to understand the number of people that are expected to attend the event. Calculating transportation demand early in the planning process is critical to providing effective special event service that accommodates all event attendees.

- + If the agency is in a city bidding for a large event, engage with the bid committee to ensure that transit is accurately highlighted and resourced.
- + Early in the planning process, establish a relationship with event organizing committees, venues, and local jurisdictions early on in the planning process to ensure that transit is included in all planning discussions.
- + Advocate for early information sharing to allow sufficient lead time for developing service plans that account for impacts to the system and accommodate for the increased transit demand.
- + Ensure that the individual participating in external planning meetings is someone who has decision making power, has an understanding of all internal departments' needs, and can easily communicate information throughout the agency.
- + Advocate for the transit agency to be included in any cross-agency exercises or drills that the lead security agency is conducting.
- + Advocate for frontline staff stationed at the venue and around the city to receive transit-related training.
- + Advocate for the venue to send out transit related information to event attendees.

Questions:

- If the city is bidding for a large-scale event, has the transit agency reached out to the bid committee?
- Are transit options accurately reflected in the large-scale event bid?
- Upon bid award, has the agency proactively engaged with the host committee?
- Does the agency have a pre-existing relationship with the event venue?
- Is the venue willing to send out transit information to event attendees?
- Who is the lead security agency for the event? Is the transit agency included in any drills or exercise that are being conducted?
- Are security perimeter locations being clearly communicated to the transit agency?
- Are any road closures needed during the event that would impact transit routes?
- What other organizations are deploying ambassadors or other customer service staff during the event? Are these staff being provided with transit related information?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery phase, it is critical for transit to be an active participant in external control center settings. This includes City or County led EOCs and Joint Information Centers (JIC) and venue command centers. It is critical to advocate for transit to be included in each of these control centers in order to stay informed about all potential security hazards, situational factors, and event schedule adjustments that may require real-time transit service adjustments. It is critical that the staff members representing transit in these external command centers are empowered to make quick decisions and have the proper communications tools to rapidly relay information back to internal command centers.

- + Coordinate with local jurisdictions, police departments, event organizers, and venues to understand all external command centers that will be activated during the event.
- + Ensure the individuals assigned to participate in external command centers are empowered to advocate for the transit agency and make real-time decisions.
- + Ensure that all decisions made in external command centers are rapidly communicated back to the agency's internal command center.
- + Ensure that all decisions made in external command centers take into account potential impacts to the transit system.
- + If there are last minute transit service impacts due to situational factors, advocate for transit to receive the resources necessary to remedy the issue (e.g. police officers, street closures).

Questions:

- Is the transit agency aware of all external command centers that will be activated during the event?
- If the City or County is activating an EOC or JIC, is the transit agency sending a representative?
- Does the agency representative assigned to the external JIC have access to agency communication tools (e.g. social media accounts, rider alert systems)?
- If the event venue is activating a command center, is the transit agency sending a representative?
- Is the agency representative assigned to external command centers empowered to advocate for the agency?
- Is the agency representative assigned to external command centers empowered to make quick decisions and communicate all relevant information back to the agency's internal command center?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



The after-action phase is the time to assess the effectiveness of the transit agency's advocacy. During this period, the agency should assess whether appropriate resources were given to transit during and ahead of the event, whether information was shared with the agency early enough, and whether timelines were sufficient for effectively adjusting service. The agency should also assess the effectiveness of real-time information sharing during the event. If the agency participated in external command centers, evaluate whether the agency representative was an active participant of the command center and whether decisions made reflected the transit agency's priorities. If any resources were allocated to transit during the event, assess whether they were sufficient or is the agency needed to advocate for more resources during future events.

Document the individuals in the event host committee, venue, local jurisdiction, and security partners that were strong advocates for transit during the planning and delivery phases of the event.

- + Evaluate which external partners were strong transit advocates during the event planning phase and which partners were hesitant to include transit in planning discussions.
- + Evaluate whether transit was included early enough in the planning process.
- + Document the names of all individuals that were strong advocates for transit within their organization.
- + Evaluate whether information was provided to the transit agency early enough to allow for accurate lead times for transit service adjustments and supplemental service.
- + Evaluate whether decisions made in external command centers reflected the transit agency's priorities.
- + Evaluate whether transit was allocated sufficient resources from external partners both during the planning phase and during the event if applicable.
- + Assess whether the transit representative in external command centers were given decision-making authority or if they could have played a more active role.

Questions:

- Were certain organizations better advocates for transit than others?
- Was transit included early enough in the planning process?
- Did the host committee and venue provide the transit agency with information early enough to effectively make all needed service adjustments?
- Did the host committee and venue provide the transit agency with expected attendance early enough to provide sufficient supplemental service?
- Did the host committee and venue provide event attendees with transit information ahead of the event?
- Did decisions made in external command centers reflect the transit agency's priorities?
- Was the transit representative in external command centers given decision making authority?
- Were there any external command centers that transit was not included in?
- Was transit allocated all the necessary resources from external partners?
- Did the transit agency identify any individuals that were advocates for transit within their organization?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



INTERNAL COORDINATION

Strong internal coordination is essential to translating an agency's mission and strategic intent into operational reality during a special event. Once leadership has confirmed alignment with the agency's mission and goals, internal departments must come together to plan and deliver special event service. Early coordination ensures that roles are clearly defined, responsibilities are assigned, and communication channels are established both internally and for engagement with external partners.

Internal coordination is also key to building a comprehensive and realistic event budget, as departments must collaboratively identify needs, understand available resources, and flag potential gaps, particularly for larger multi-day events. Establishing a cross-functional internal working group early in the planning process helps prevent duplication of effort, ensures accountability, and provides a centralized forum for tracking progress, surfacing challenges, and aligning on key decisions throughout all phases of the event.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Establish clear roles, communication protocols, and timelines among departments.	Execute seamless interdepartmental operations. Daily meetings to ensure real-time collaboration and decision-making. (See Event Process Monitoring and Improvements section)	Evaluate how well the service upheld the agency's mission and identify areas for strategic refinement. (See After-Action Process section)

Purpose & Need



PURPOSE & NEED: INTERNAL COORDINATION

PLANNING



This period of internal coordination is focused on building a strong working group framework that ensures all departments are aligned, informed, and working collaboratively toward event readiness. This phase requires early consultations with leadership, consistent cross-departmental engagement, and clear communication structures. By setting these foundational elements in place, agencies can prevent silos, streamline decision-making, and prepare for the operational complexity of special events. The considerations below outline key actions to establish roles, convene internal stakeholders, and build a coordinated work plan that supports both strategic goals and day-to-day execution.

- + Determine the department and role responsible for leading internal coordination. This could be led by a stand-alone Special Event department/role or through a designated agency lead assigned from the Operations, Safety and Security, or Customer Experience department.
- + Identify the internal stakeholders that need to be involved in the planning process and establish a standing meeting with representatives from each relevant department. Departments to consider involving in internal meetings include:
 - Marketing
 - Government Relations
 - Planning
 - Security
 - Finance
 - Customer Experience
 - Operations
 - Emergency Management



GAMECHANGER

Sound Transit runs a Passenger Persona program in which staff members walk through critical stations and assume the role of different types of special event riders. This program is a key component to proactively understand the needs of all passengers to ensure Sound Transit is designing services and products with their needs in mind.

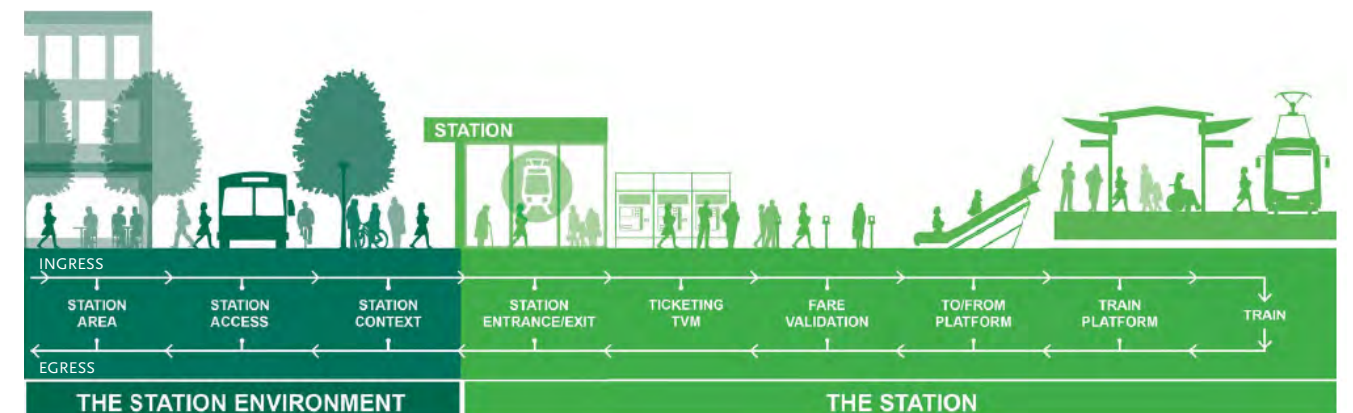


Figure 28. Station journey maps Credit: Sound Transit



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Questions:

- ❑ Has a lead department or individual been clearly identified to manage internal coordination for the event?
- ❑ Are all relevant departments represented in the internal working group, and are their roles and responsibilities clearly defined?
- ❑ Have we established a regular meeting cadence that allows for effective information sharing and progress tracking across departments?
- ❑ Are we using or adapting a proven workback plan or template from a past event to guide roles, responsibilities, and timelines?
- ❑ Are cross-departmental site visits scheduled to assess operational readiness and address station-specific needs?
- ❑ Is there a shared understanding among departments of the strategic goals for the event and how internal coordination contributes to achieving them?
- ❑ Are we able to incorporate on-site persona charrettes (see gamechanger moment below) to help participants understand the customer experience?
- ❑ Are we tracking key planning milestones to ensure readiness while avoiding duplication of efforts or communication gaps?
- ❑ Are we planning for table top exercises to include, but not be limited to, crowd control for surges?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Once the event enters the day-of or multi-day delivery period, internal coordination becomes fundamental to driving operational success. With real-time service adjustments and shifting conditions, agencies must maintain tight communication and rapid decision-making structures. This is the time when planning transforms into delivery, and success hinges on internal teams working as a unified operation. Agencies should establish a cadence of daily check-in meetings, which are often held both before and after service windows to share updates, identify emerging issues, and coordinate immediate actions. These touchpoints ensure that all departments remain aligned, responsive, and proactive throughout the duration of the event.

- + Hold daily pre-event and post-event internal meetings to review operations, address issues, and communicate updates across departments
- + Ensure a central point of contact or internal command structure is in place for rapid decision-making
- + Use clear protocols for escalating service disruptions, safety concerns, and maintenance needs
- + Update documentation in real time to track changes to service plans, staffing assignments, or resource reallocation
- + Maintain active coordination with operational staff, control centers, and station staff to monitor real-time conditions and adjust service as needed

Questions:

- ❑ Are pre-event and post-event check-in meetings occurring regularly, and are all key departments participating?
- ❑ Is there a clearly defined internal point of contact or command structure in place for rapid decision-making?
- ❑ Are real-time service updates and changes being communicated quickly and consistently across departments?
- ❑ Are internal communication channels (e.g., email, radio, shared dashboards) functioning effectively to support coordination and situational awareness?
- ❑ Are staff across departments aligned on the day's priorities, known challenges, and contingency plans?
- ❑ Are coordination efforts helping to minimize disruptions to regular service while meeting event demands?
- ❑ Is there a process for capturing issues or lessons in real time to inform future adjustments and post-event analysis?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



EXTERNAL COORDINATION

Coordinating with a diverse range of stakeholders is a fundamental component in planning for large-scale events. While transit agencies are just one of many key partners, their ability to effectively align efforts with other stakeholders is essential to overcoming logistical challenges, mitigating risks, and delivering a positive experience for event attendees. Developing relationships and establishing clear expectations for coordination with relevant parties early in the planning process is vital to ensuring successful outcomes.

Effective stakeholder coordination goes beyond routine collaboration; it requires active engagement, transparent communication, and a shared decision-making process among all involved parties, including local governments, public safety agencies, venue operators, and community organizations. By fostering these connections early, transit agencies can position themselves as integral contributors to the event's overall strategy while also advocating for transit-specific needs.

Through strong partnerships and early relationship-building, transit agencies can contribute meaningfully to a coordinated, unified approach that supports the success of the event while balancing the needs of all stakeholders. Participation in cross-functional working groups, the development of contingency plans, and maintaining responsive communication channels are all key to ensuring that every stakeholder remains aligned throughout the planning and implementation phases.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Engage early with event organizers, regional partners, public safety, and emergency services; align expectations and resources.	Maintain active channels with external partners for issue resolution and operational updates.	Conduct joint reviews with partners to capture shared lessons.

Purpose & Need



PURPOSE & NEED: EXTERNAL COORDINATION PLANNING



Transit agencies play a vital role in the broader ecosystem of large-scale event planning. Their ability to actively collaborate with key partners, such as local governments, venue operators, law enforcement, emergency services, and mobility providers, is essential to developing a coordinated, responsive event strategy.

Establishing relationships early, setting up clear lines of communication, and identifying dedicated points of contact help ensure that transit priorities are integrated into overall event planning and decision-making. Strong coordination not only improves service delivery but also supports a safer, more seamless experience for the public. By participating in multi-agency working groups, aligning on safety and service goals, and integrating operational planning with external partners, transit agencies can strengthen their role and ensure smoother delivery of service throughout the event.

- + Engage external stakeholders early to build trust, clarify roles, and align priorities
- + Schedule recurring or ad hoc planning meetings with venue operators, city agencies, and other partners, especially for recurring or high-impact venues
- + Designate agency representatives with decision-making authority to participate in multi-agency planning efforts and emergency operations centers
- + Determine the appropriate number of agency points of contact based on event complexity and the range of expertise needed
- + Include mobility partners such as bike share, ride share, and parking operators in early conversations to address first/last mile planning
- + Coordinate with local jurisdictions for street closures, signage placement, and shared enforcement strategies
- + Ensure communications, customer experience, and safety teams coordinate directly with external counterparts for joint messaging, branding, and on-site logistics
- + Explore mutual aid agreements or resource-sharing partnerships with regional transit agencies or operators

GAMECHANGER

TransMAC is a mutual assistance agreement between 24 Southern California transit agencies. Through TransMAC, participating agencies facilitate knowledge sharing, establish regional emergency preparedness and response coordination, and provide and receive resources when needed and available.

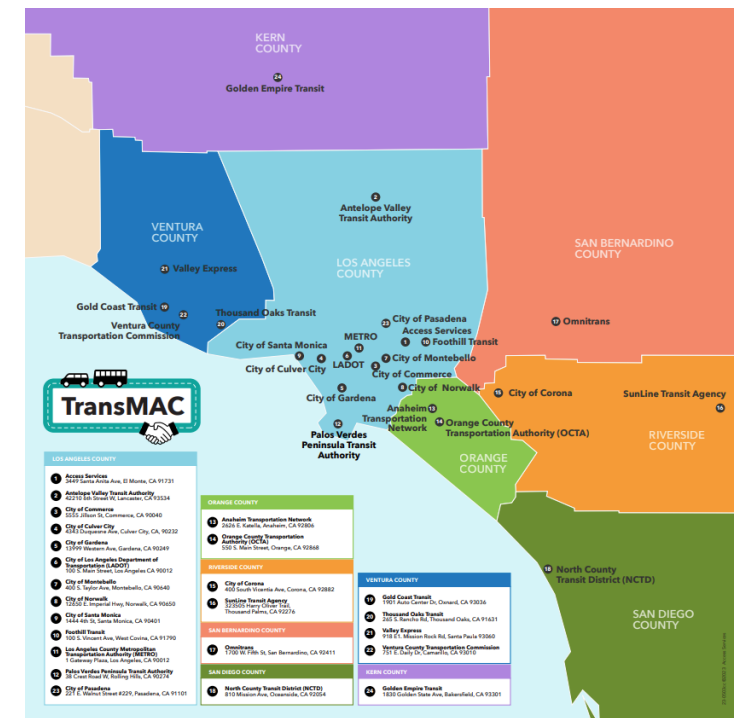


Figure 29. TransMAC agency participation map



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency identifying and engaging all key external stakeholders relevant to the event early in the planning process?
- ❑ Is the agency represented at the appropriate planning and coordination tables, such as venue planning meetings, emergency operations centers, and joint information centers?
- ❑ Is the agency assigning representatives with the appropriate level of authority and expertise to participate in multi-agency coordination efforts?
- ❑ Is the agency establishing communication protocols and regular meeting schedules with recurring venues or city departments?
- ❑ Is the agency coordinating with external partners (particularly the venue) on branding, messaging, and wayfinding to ensure a consistent customer experience?
- ❑ Is the agency working with local jurisdictions to align on street closures, construction impacts, and access needs around transit hubs and venues?
- ❑ Is the agency connected to mutual aid networks or neighboring transit agencies for resource-sharing or operational support if needed?
- ❑ Is the agency assigning responsibility for coordination to an individual lead with ride share, bike share, and other mobility service providers, and is there a backup in place?
- ❑ Have roles and responsibilities been clearly defined between agencies? Is there a plan for coordinating service and operations with partner transit agencies?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Effective special event delivery requires close coordination with key external stakeholders.

During the event day(s), transit agencies must maintain active communication with event organizers, public safety officials, venue operators, transit partners, and local jurisdictions to address evolving crowd conditions, respond to service disruptions and safety incidents, and ensure that messaging to the public remains consistent and timely. This level of active coordination is best conducted through a command center setting. The agency's ability to stay connected and collaborative with its partners can have a direct impact on reaction time and the quality of service.

- + Maintain open, real-time communication with key external partners throughout the event day(s).
- + Ensure the agency is represented in relevant external command center settings such as Emergency Operations Centers (EOC), Joint Information Centers (JIC), and field command posts.
- + Coordinate with local law enforcement and security teams to monitor and address emerging safety concerns and crowd control needs near stations and venues.
- + Collaborate with venue operators to monitor crowd flows and adjust transit service accordingly.
- + Align real-time public information alerts with partner organizations to ensure consistency in messaging.
- + Engage with mobility partners (e.g., ride share, bike share) to manage first/last mile challenges in real time.
- + Keep lines of communication open with regional transit partners to manage transfers, shared resources, and service impacts.

Questions:

- ❑ How is the agency ensuring active communication with key partners, such as venue operators, law enforcement, and local jurisdictions during the event?
- ❑ Is the agency represented in external command centers (e.g. Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Joint Information Center (JIC)), and is the agency representative empowered to make timely decisions?
- ❑ Is the agency coordinating with law enforcement and venue staff to monitor and respond to crowd surges or public safety concerns near transit stations and access points?
- ❑ Is the agency communicating effectively with partner agencies to ensure that service changes and updates are relayed consistently to the public?
- ❑ Is the agency collaborating with ride share, bike share, and other mobility services to manage traffic flow at pickup/drop-off zones near stations?
- ❑ Is the agency actively monitoring the performance of regional connections and coordinating with other transit operators to resolve service disruptions or delays?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



TRANSPORTATION DEMAND FORECASTING

Understanding and anticipating transportation demand is a foundational element of special event planning. Accurate forecasting helps agencies determine the scale, frequency, and type of service needed to move large crowds efficiently while minimizing disruption to regular riders.

The process of robust forecasting informs decision-making across every phase of the event lifecycle. During planning, it supports effective service design and resource allocation. In the delivery phase, it enables real-time crowd management and operational adjustments. Post-event, it provides essential input for evaluating performance and fine tuning transportation demand forecasting for future events.

By grounding operational strategies in data-driven forecasts, agencies can better anticipate rider needs, minimize disruptions, and deliver a more seamless and responsive service that demonstrates the value of transit as a reliable part of the event experience.

02



Purpose & Need



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Analyze projected ridership using event-specific data (e.g., ticket sales, hotel bookings, historic trends).	Monitor actual ridership and adjust service levels in real-time based on crowd conditions and system performance.	Compare forecasts to actuals; refine models and assumptions to improve future accuracy - feed results into After Action Process.
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PURPOSE & NEED: TRANSPORTATION DEMAND FORECASTING PLANNING



During the planning phase, transportation demand forecasting provides the critical insights needed to define the scale and scope of service for a special event. This process helps agencies estimate ridership volumes, identify peak travel periods, and understand which modes of transportation attendees are most likely to use to access the event. Early forecasting informs key decisions such as fleet sizing, staffing levels, service frequency, and coordination with partner agencies. Agencies that incorporate a data-driven approach early are better positioned to deliver service that meets demand and maintains reliability for both event attendees and everyday riders.

- + While data from previous events can be a useful tool for predicting transportation demand, it is important to consider event-specific characteristics as well. Even if two events take place at the same venue, it cannot be assumed that transportation demand will be the same.
- + If event details (i.e., concert headliners, participating sports teams) are not known at the time of transportation demand planning, venue capacity can be used for initial calculations and adjusted when more information is gleaned.
- + Collect and analyze relevant data early, including ticket sales, event schedules, venue capacity, and historical ridership trends.
- + Use scenario modeling to plan for best-case, expected, and worst-case demand conditions.
- + Incorporate event-specific considerations such as time of day, overlapping events, weather patterns, and concurrent construction into the transportation demand forecast.
- + Ensure forecasting includes first/last mile considerations and access to mobility services such as park-and-ride, bike share, or ride share.
- + Build forecasting into the work plan timeline so it informs budgeting, scheduling, and stakeholder coordination.



GAMECHANGER

When the San Diego Padres play the Los Angeles Dodgers, San Diego MTS increases the frequency of service on the Blue Line of their Trolley (light rail) system that extends to the Mexican border. This service adjustment happens for Dodgers games in particular to accommodate the Dodgers' large fan base in Mexico.



Figure 30. San Diego MTS Trolley service Credit: San Diego MTS



Planning

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After-Action



PLANNING CONTINUED

Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency using a variety of data sources—such as ticketing data, hotel occupancy, and past event trends—to estimate likely ridership patterns?
- ❑ Has the agency coordinated with external partners to validate demand assumptions and gather relevant data (e.g., event organizers, hotels, tourism boards)?
- ❑ Is the event a single-venue or multi-venue, and how does each venue’s accessibility, location, and schedule affect transportation needs?
- ❑ Where are attendees traveling from, locally, regionally, or internationally, and how does that influence modal access points such as airports or regional rail?
- ❑ What percentage of attendees are expected to use transit, and how are factors like parking availability, event demographics, and local familiarity with transit influencing that estimate?
- ❑ Has the agency modeled different demand scenarios (e.g., low, mid, high attendance) to test operational flexibility?
- ❑ Is the forecast being used to inform operational planning, including fleet deployment, staffing levels, and service frequency?
- ❑ Is the forecasting process integrated early enough to meaningfully influence the planning timeline, budget, and coordination strategy?
- ❑ Is the agency assessing how projected event demand may impact regular service and riders, and are mitigation strategies being considered?
- ❑ Has the agency considered the full travel experience, including first and last mile connections, in its demand analysis? (See first/last mile section)



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



DELIVERY

During the delivery phase, demand forecasting moves from planning into active use. Transit agencies must apply forecasting insights to guide real-time operations, while closely monitoring ridership patterns and system conditions to adapt as needed.

Although much of the service design is established during planning, real-world factors, such as weather changes, event delays, and crowd behavior, can shift conditions quickly. Agencies that combine pre-event forecasting with real-time data collection and field observations are better positioned to manage crowd surges, adjust service levels on the fly, and maintain a balance between special event demands and regular transit operations. This adaptive approach supports both operational resilience and a smoother experience for all riders.

- + Monitor actual ridership data in real time and compare it to forecasted expectations.
- + Establish communication channels between field staff, operations control, and planning teams to support dynamic service adjustments.
- + Adjust vehicle deployment, frequency, or routing as needed to respond to crowd volumes and shift changes.
- + Track peak demand windows closely to inform crowd management efforts, station staffing, and transit frequency.
- + Coordinate with partner agencies to ensure service adjustments align across modes and jurisdictions.
- + Use customer feedback, staff observations, and on-the-ground reporting to supplement ridership data and detect issues early.
- + Document deviations from forecasts and their operational impact to support future learning.

Planning

Delivery

After-Action



DELIVERY CONTINUED

Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency comparing real-time ridership data against forecasted demand to identify gaps or trends?
- ❑ Is there a process in place to adjust service levels dynamically based on observed crowd conditions?
- ❑ Are operations teams receiving timely updates from planning or control staff to inform decision-making on the ground?
- ❑ Is the agency able to quickly deploy additional vehicles, operators, or support staff in response to unexpected surges?
- ❑ Are partner agencies and modes aligned in how they respond to fluctuating demand across the system?
- ❑ Is customer feedback being collected and used to identify unanticipated demand challenges during the event?
- ❑ Is the agency tracking any major deviations from forecasted patterns to inform the after-action process?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



AFTER-ACTION



Comparing projected ridership with actual outcomes is a valuable step in improving future event planning. Analyzing these discrepancies helps agencies strengthen forecasting models, enhance internal coordination, and fine-tune resource deployment strategies.

This post-event reflection should go beyond forecast accuracy to include an assessment of how well the agency responded to real-time conditions. Evaluating how forecasting supported rider experience and overall system performance provides critical insight for building more responsive, data-informed plans for future events.

- + Compare projected ridership against actual data to identify variances and their causes
- + Evaluate how forecasting influenced planning and operational decisions, including service levels, staffing, and communications
- + Identify where assumptions held true and where unexpected patterns emerged
- + Capture qualitative insights from field staff and partners to supplement data analysis
- + Update forecasting models, data sources, and assumptions based on event outcomes
- + Document lessons learned to strengthen forecasting inputs and decision-making for future events

Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency reviewing and documenting differences between forecasted and actual ridership data?
- ❑ Did the forecasting process provide sufficient guidance for service planning and resource allocation?
- ❑ Were there unexpected ridership patterns, and if so, what factors contributed to them?
- ❑ Is the agency capturing input from operations staff, field teams, and partners to understand how demand played out on the ground?
- ❑ How will forecasting assumptions, tools, or data sources be updated based on lessons learned?
- ❑ Is the agency applying findings to improve forecasting accuracy and agility for future events?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery

03



SERVICE PLAN



Delivering a successful special event transit experience requires a well-structured and adaptable service plan that aligns with the scale, complexity, and unique context of each event. This chapter outlines the cornerstone elements that shape how transit agencies prepare, operate, and evaluate special event service. From initial service design to real-time operations and post-event review, the service plan must balance the needs of event attendees, along with the expectations of regular riders, all while remaining responsive to shifting conditions and external factors.

Each section in this chapter addresses a core component of the service: Special Event Service Plan, Construction and Concurrent Efforts, Speed and Reliability, First/Last Mile Access, and Event Monitoring and Improvement, across the three key phases: Planning, Delivery, and After-Action. Planning focuses on defining service needs, identifying risks, and coordinating with partners. Delivery centers on executing and adjusting service in real time. After-Action emphasizes reviewing outcomes, collecting lessons learned, and refining future strategies.

Together, these components provide a framework to help agencies anticipate demand, support seamless travel, and adapt with confidence throughout the lifecycle of any special event. The table below summarizes the focus areas of each component across the event phases.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action



Page

Special Event Service Plan

Construction/Concurrent Effort

Speed and Reliability

First/Last Mile

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■ Workstream Continues



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SPECIAL EVENT SERVICE PLAN

The Service Plan is the operational blueprint that guides how transit agencies will move people to, from, and around a special event. It connects demand forecasting insights with service design, staffing, and coordination strategies to create a scalable, flexible, and rider-centered transit experience. A strong service plan ensures that transit can meet projected ridership volumes, maintain reliability, and minimize impacts for regular riders. While each plan must be customized to reflect the size, location, and nature of the event, certain elements are universal: matching service levels to expected demand, coordinating across departments and modes, and preparing for real-time adjustments.

This section helps agencies define their service strategy in the planning phase, operate with confidence during the delivery phase, and assess service performance in the after-action phase. It also emphasizes the importance of embedding the agency's broader mission into every layer of service design and execution.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Define the service scope, frequency, routing, and staffing strategy based on demand forecasts, event schedule, and venue access needs.

Operate event-specific services as planned while adjusting in real time for crowd surges, disruptions, or operational issues.

Evaluate whether service levels met demand, identify operational challenges, and gather rider feedback to inform future plans.

PLANNING



The planning phase of the special event service plan focuses on designing a service model that meets projected demand while maintaining a high-quality experience for both event attendees and regular riders. Using inputs from transportation demand forecasting, agencies must define service frequency, routing, vehicle requirements, staffing needs, and operational contingencies. This stage also involves coordination with internal departments such as operations, scheduling, and maintenance, as well as external stakeholders to ensure the proposed service is both feasible and aligned with broader event logistics. A strong service plan accounts for flexibility, balances resource allocation, and incorporates strategies to scale service up or down based on real-time needs. Planning ahead with a clear and well-structured service strategy sets the stage for successful delivery and responsive adjustments throughout the event.

- + Base service levels on a clear understanding of projected ridership, venue location(s), and event timing.
- + Consider how concurrent events, construction activity, state of good repair projects, or other external factors could affect transit access, routing, and operations.
- + Coordinate early with internal operations and maintenance teams and contracted staffing vendors if applicable to identify capacity constraints and address gaps.
- + Design service with flexibility to scale up or down as conditions change during the event.
- + Align with internal and external partners to ensure all aspects of the service delivery plan are feasible (e.g., vehicle availability, operator shifts, field supervision).
- + Maintain balance between event-specific service and obligations to regular riders.
- + Integrate crowd management into service planning, accounting for queuing, boarding, and accessibility needs. When planning service frequency, ensure that vehicles run frequently enough to prevent excessive crowding at bus stops, rail stations, and on platforms.
- + Forecast labor needs based on expected service levels and event schedule, including peak arrival and departure windows.
- + Announce vacation blackout periods early and coordinate overtime, shift extensions, and union approvals where applicable.
- + If applicable, engage contracted staff or vendors early to allow sufficient time for onboarding and training.
- + Schedule extra board shifts to ensure there are contingency staff if needed.
- + Include vehicle readiness, maintenance coverage, and field tech tools (e.g., radios, signage, fare readers) in equipment planning.
- + Ensure forecasting includes first/last mile considerations and access to mobility services such as park-and-ride, bike share, or ride share.
- + Build forecasting into the work plan timeline so it informs budgeting, scheduling, and stakeholder coordination.
- + Ensure the service plan includes contingency plans for each function. Effective contingency planning strategies include:
 - Recruiting extra board operators for the event to account for potential callouts.
 - Deploying vehicle and facility maintenance staff on-site to proactively address potential outages.
 - Identifying buses that could be used as a bus bridge in the case of a rail outage (if applicable).
 - Staging contingency vehicles near key transit hubs pre-event and near the event venue post-event.



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

03



Service Plan

Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency developing a service plan that matches projected demand by time of day, mode, and corridor?
- ❑ Are service needs and staffing plans coordinated across internal departments including operations, scheduling, and maintenance?
- ❑ Does the service plan allow for flexibility to respond to changing crowd levels or delays?
- ❑ Is there a plan to minimize disruptions to regular service and clearly communicate changes to daily riders?
- ❑ Has the agency identified backup routes, additional vehicles, and standby operators in case of service strain or disruption?
- ❑ Are the service plan and operations strategy integrated with the crowd management and safety plan?
- ❑ Has crowd management been considered in the service plan (e.g., loading efficiency, station capacity, vehicle frequency)?
- ❑ Is the agency coordinating with internal departments and contractors to confirm operator, ambassador, and safety personnel availability?
- ❑ Has the agency communicated shift needs, blackout dates, and overtime expectations to labor unions and staff?
- ❑ Are staffing levels sufficient to support early arrivals, peak departures, and last-minute crowd surges?
- ❑ Has the agency identified and staged backup vehicles and operators in case of service strain or incident?
- ❑ Do staffing plans for ambassadors and other customer facing staff account for peak periods based on event schedule and high-impact stations based on event location?
- ❑ Are all vehicle and equipment needs accounted for, including fleet availability, maintenance coverage, and communication channels?
- ❑ Has a contingency plan been developed that allows the agency to adjust service for changes in attendance, traffic conditions, and event schedule?

GAMECHANGER

During Comic-Con, San Diego MTS runs an entire new trolley line, known as the Special Event Line. This new light rail line allows MTS to accommodate for the increased demand and provide reliable service during Comic-Con. In 2024, MTS carried over 110,000 passengers on the Special Event Line over four days.



Figure 31. Comic Con special event line Credit: San Diego MTS



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the Delivery phase, the service plan is activated and all staff, vehicles, and equipment are deployed. Success during delivery depends on the ability to execute scheduled service while remaining agile in response to real-time conditions such as crowd surges, traffic disruptions, and operational delays. Successful service delivery requires contingency staff and vehicles to prepare for potential disruptions, outages, or maintenance issues. Effective communication, coordination, and rapid decision-making are essential to ensure that the planned service continues to meet demand as conditions evolve throughout the event.

- + Execute the planned service with flexibility by monitoring conditions and adjusting vehicle frequency, routing, or deployment in real time as needed.
- + Deploy field supervisors to high-impact locations to manage crowd control, monitor operations, and make on-the-ground decisions quickly.
- + Use extra board operators and standby vehicles to provide rapid coverage for unexpected delays, surges in demand, or operator callouts.
- + Stagger operator and ambassador shifts to ensure adequate coverage during high-demand periods, including venue arrivals and post-event departures.
- + Actively maintain communication channels across departments and with partners to facilitate information sharing and real-time decision making. Ensure there is a clear channel of communication between the rail and/or bus operations center and frontline staff to implement quick service changes if needed.
- + Ensure customer-facing staff are visible and well-informed to provide wayfinding, fare payment, and overall customer service support, especially in highly trafficked environments.
- + Supplement customer-facing staff in the field with transit employees that are not front-line employees.
- + Monitor key facilities equipment including ticket vending machines, fare readers, passenger information monitors, and elevators/escalators to ensure any outages are addressed.
- + Communicate any event-related service reroutes to regular riders to minimize impact.
- + Track incidents and deviations from the service plan to support mid-event course corrections and post-event analysis.
- + Use radios and other communication tools to facilitate real-time operational changes with on-scene agency staff and transportation contractors if applicable.

Questions:

- Are there enough customer facing staff deployed at high-impact stations during peak periods?
- Are maintenance and custodial staff on standby to respond to any potential issues during the event?
- Are there additional operational staff and transit vehicles that can be deployed if needed?
- Are there staff on the ground with the authority to make quick decisions (e.g. the ability to hold a train)?
- Are there systems in place to monitor crowds and adjust service as needed?
- Are there clear communication channels for coordination with other internal departments and partners? Are there clear communication channels for coordination between rail/bus operations centers and frontline staff?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



This section includes best practices for evaluating whether the service levels met demand, how effectively adjustments were made in real time, and what impact the event had on regular riders. The goal of the service planning after-action process is to identify lessons learned and use them to refine future service plans, improve coordination, and strengthen decision-making for similar events.

- + Compare planned service levels to actual ridership and performance data to evaluate whether demand was met effectively.
- + Gather feedback from operations staff, field supervisors, and other customer-facing personnel to identify successes and challenges.
- + Assess the impact of the event service on all riders, including regular transit riders.
- + Document service adjustments, incidents, and resource usage to support future planning and budgeting.
- + Update service planning templates and protocols based on lessons learned to improve readiness for future events.

Questions:

- Did the service plan adequately meet the demand observed during the event? Where were there gaps or overages?
- Were there any unplanned adjustments made during the event, and what triggered those changes?
- How effective were field supervisors, operators, and other frontline staff at managing service disruptions or surges?
- What feedback did frontline staff, operators, and customer service personnel provide about the event service?
- Were regular transit riders positively/negatively impacted by the special event service, and how were impacts communicated and/or mitigated?
- Was the staffing strategy (including shift timing, ambassador coverage, and supervisor presence) sufficient and well-executed?
- Were all critical assets and equipment (vehicles, radios, elevators/escalators, fare systems, etc.) available and functioning throughout the event?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



CONSTRUCTION/CONCURRENT EFFORT

Disruptions are a natural part of hosting special events, particularly in urban environments where ongoing construction, concurrent events, and other city activities often overlap with special event timelines. Proactively managing these overlapping efforts is essential to delivering reliable service and a seamless rider experience.

To successfully mitigate the impacts of construction and concurrent efforts, transit agencies must coordinate early and often with state and municipal partners, private developers, event organizers, and internal capital improvement teams to map out potential conflicts. This includes identifying construction zones, street closures, utility work, and infrastructure upgrades that could impact access, routing, and service availability during the event. Clear, timely coordination allows agencies to adjust service plans, communicate transparently with riders, and minimize disruptions before they happen.

It is critical to take proactive steps to mitigate last-minute disruptions. Identifying critical maintenance windows, understanding permit processes, and monitoring security perimeters can ensure transit service plans account for all potential impacts.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Identify any construction projects, detours, or capital work that may affect event service, and coordinate timelines and mitigation strategies.	Monitor known construction impacts and ensure mitigation efforts (e.g., signage, detour routing) are functioning as planned.	Assess how construction or concurrent efforts impacted service delivery or customer experience.

SERVICE PLAN: CONSTRUCTION/CONCURRENT EFFORT PLANNING



Construction and other overlapping activities are often unavoidable in the lead-up to major events. Without early planning, they can disrupt access to transit and impact routing. It is critical to engage key stakeholders as early as possible to understand all construction projects, detours, and capital work that may affect service in order to coordinate timelines and develop mitigation strategies.

Agencies should begin by mapping all known infrastructure work, maintenance, city projects, and other large events that might affect transit in the area. This requires close coordination across internal teams, local municipalities, private developers, and event organizers. These conversations help establish blackout periods, inform rerouting plans, and guide mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of disruption. By taking a proactive approach in the planning phase, agencies can stay ahead of potential conflicts and ensure that transit service remains safe, timely, and uninterrupted when it matters most.

- + Coordinate with internal construction teams and external partners (public works departments, private developers, etc.) to understand all capital work, road closures, concurrent events, and construction activity that may impact transit service.
- + Identify any required road closures early and begin the permit process with the appropriate municipal departments.
- + Coordinate with procurement teams to anticipate schedule impacts to accommodate special event service and/or understand terms and conditions regarding temporary suspension of work.
- + Coordinate with safety and security teams to understand security-related infrastructure or screening zones that may impact service or transit access points.
- + Verify if federal agencies such as the Secret Service are involved in the event and confirm if construction must be halted within secure perimeters.
- + Relay confirmed security perimeter boundaries to operations and planning teams to allow for route adjustments or station closures if needed.
- + Develop a comprehensive look-ahead calendar capturing all planned construction, maintenance, and public events within at least 30 days of the event.
- + Determine which maintenance activities can be delayed or rescheduled without affecting system reliability during the event.
- + Coordinate with internal and external construction teams to devise a construction blackout schedule that accommodates special-event service.
- + Communicate known construction limitations and access changes to businesses and the public well in advance of the event.



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

03



Service Plan



Questions:

- ❑ Has the agency developed a comprehensive calendar of all construction and concurrent activities that may impact service during the event period?
- ❑ Has a construction blackout period been established, and are all internal and external construction partners aligned on its timing?
- ❑ Are security-related infrastructure restrictions, including venue perimeters or vehicle screening zones, clearly identified and shared with operations and service planning staff?
- ❑ Have all necessary street closure permits been submitted, and is there coordination with public works, event organizers, and local jurisdictions?
- ❑ Has the agency assessed whether any bus or rail stations may require temporary closures or rerouting due to nearby construction or security activity?
- ❑ Are concurrent events in the region being tracked for their potential impact on crowding, traffic, and service reliability?
- ❑ Has the agency communicated potential impacts to local businesses and riders in advance of the event?

GAMECHANGER

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada's Special Events and Detours group has built relationships with construction companies in Las Vegas in order to proactively anticipate potential barriers that may impact special event service.



Figure 32. Formula One Grand Prix construction Credit: RTC Southern Nevada



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery period, active monitoring of construction zones, street closures, and concurrent activities is paramount to ensuring smooth operations. Even with strong planning, unexpected events may arise and impact service. Agencies must stay in close communication with local jurisdictions, public safety officials, and partner transit agencies to address issues quickly and maintain safe, reliable service. Field personnel should be deployed throughout the system to respond to disruptions, adjust routes as needed, and communicate any last-minute changes to operators and the public.

- + Monitor traffic, potential protests, and security perimeters in real time to detect unanticipated impacts to transit service.
- + Maintain open communication channels with municipal partners and contractors to confirm compliance with blackout agreements and closure timelines.
- + Coordinate closely with field supervisors to implement service adjustments as needed due to construction-related access issues or road closures.
- + Communicate any new or updated impacts immediately to the public through service alerts and frontline staff.
- + Observe and document any construction-related service issues to support post-event evaluation and accountability.

Questions:

- ❑ Are there active coordination channels in place to monitor ongoing construction or utility work near event routes and venues?
- ❑ Are construction teams adhering to agreed-upon blackout periods and access requirements? Do you have a point of contact to deal with issues that arise?
- ❑ Is there a clear and timely process for communicating last-minute detours or closures to frontline staff and the public?
- ❑ Are transit services operating smoothly within or around any active security zones or construction corridors?
- ❑ Are concurrent non-event activities creating unanticipated strain on transit access or service reliability?
- ❑ Are concurrent events in the region being tracked for their potential impact on crowding, traffic, and service reliability?
- ❑ Has the agency communicated potential impacts to local businesses and riders in advance of the event?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



SPEED AND RELIABILITY

Maintaining fast, reliable transit service during special events calls for targeted strategies that prioritize transit flow, even when the road network is under pressure. While construction and other external factors can't always be controlled, transit agencies can work proactively with transportation departments and traffic management teams to protect and enhance transit performance during special events.

Maintaining speed and reliability may involve implementing temporary measures such as bus-only lanes, signal timing adjustments, and curbside management tools that can help protect transit performance in high-traffic conditions. These strategies should be integrated into the broader event transportation plan and tested in advance. Strong communication with traffic control teams and on-the-ground field supervision are key to adapting these strategies in real time to support service reliability when it matters most.

For large-scale multi-day events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games or the World Cup, it may be necessary to implement a Games Route Network (GRN). A GRN is a network of roads and lanes dedicated to official event vehicles that link venues and other key sites in the host city. If the transit agency is providing dedicated service for event attendees or other event-related stakeholder group, implementing a GRN is a helpful strategy for maintaining speed and reliability.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Develop strategies to ensure fast, consistent travel times, including bus lanes, signal priority, and route design tailored for the event.	Monitor travel times and address service interruptions or slowdowns in coordination with traffic management teams.	Analyze performance data and rider feedback to determine if speed and reliability targets were met and refine tactics for future use.

PLANNING



During special events, high levels of ridership and increased street congestion can challenge the transit system's ability to stay on time and maintain headways. During the planning phase, the agency should develop strategies that protect travel time and ensure consistent service. This requires early coordination with departments of transportation, traffic management teams, and local jurisdictions to explore tools that prioritize transit on roadways. These tools may include dedicated bus lanes, signal prioritization, stop consolidation, curb management, and special event traffic plans that separate transit from general traffic flows. To be effective, these strategies must be integrated into the broader event service plan and include input from operations staff and partner agencies. Understanding the event footprint, crowd flow patterns, and timing will help identify where and when transit is most vulnerable to delay and where targeted interventions can deliver the greatest benefit.

- + Identify potential congestion hotspots near event venues and along key transit corridors.
- + Coordinate with local Departments of Transportation (DOTs) to request temporary bus lanes, signal priority, or traffic control officers to support bus movement.
- + Assess opportunities for temporary stop relocation, consolidation, or limited-stop service to reduce dwell times.
- + Integrate speed and reliability strategies into the overall service plan and traffic management plan.
- + Involve operations and service planning staff to validate feasibility of speed and reliability strategies.
- + Include requests for transit prioritization when planning detours around anticipated street closures.
- + Use past event data to anticipate choke points and allocate field supervision accordingly.

Questions:

- Has the agency identified areas where traffic congestion may significantly impact transit speed and reliability?
- Is there coordination with the local DOT or traffic management partners to establish temporary transit priority measures?
- Are there plans for signal priority, temporary dedicated lanes, or real-time traffic management tools to support transit performance?
- Are potential changes to bus stop locations or spacing being considered to improve efficiency during the event?
- Has data from similar past events been reviewed to anticipate where service slowdowns may occur?
- Are the strategies being planned realistic for the street environment and resource availability?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

03



Service Plan



Maintaining consistent service during the event, particularly multi-day events, requires constant attention to how transit vehicles are moving through the network. Even with careful planning, real-time conditions like traffic congestion, crowd surges, and unplanned street activity can cause delays. The delivery phase is focused on actively managing these conditions by monitoring traffic conditions, adjusting signal timing, and maintaining open communication with traffic control teams.

Transit agencies must remain agile, using performance data, staff observations, and rider feedback to make timely decisions. This may include holding vehicles at key transfer points, temporarily adjusting routes, or modifying service frequency to preserve headways and reduce passenger wait times. Clear communication with operations staff, partner agencies, and traffic management teams is essential to ensure transit continues to move reliably and efficiently throughout the event.

- + Monitor on-time performance and headways in real time to identify problem areas.
- + Adjust service frequency based on observed travel times and passenger volume.
- + Maintain close contact with traffic management partners to adjust signal timing, enforce bus-only lanes, and deploy field traffic personnel as needed.
- + Position field supervisors at key locations to manage dwell times, monitor traffic flow, and respond to disruptions.
- + Ensure rapid feedback loops between control centers and operators to support on-the-fly service adjustments.
- + Use real-time crowd flow data to anticipate congestion and trigger service interventions when needed.
- + Communicate clearly with frontline staff about operational priorities and procedures for navigating high-traffic conditions.

Questions:

- Is the operations team actively monitoring service delays and taking action to preserve reliability in real time?
- Are field supervisors deployed at key locations to manage vehicle flow and support operators?
- What communications tools are being used to communicate with field supervisors? Can it withstand an overwhelmed cellular network?
- Are transit vehicles experiencing traffic-related slowdowns, and are there tools in place to adjust signals or reroute traffic?
- Are there reliable communication channels between operations control centers, traffic partners, and frontline staff?
- Are service interventions being documented to inform post-event evaluation and future improvements?
- Is the agency using live data to identify gaps in service frequency or overcrowded vehicles that need additional support?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



After the event, it is important to assess how well speed and reliability strategies performed under real-world conditions. This includes reviewing service data, gathering operator and supervisor feedback, and evaluating whether transit-priority measures were effective. Lessons learned should be used to refine future coordination with traffic partners and improve operational strategies.

- + Analyze on-time performance and headway data to identify areas of delay.
- + Review the effectiveness of transit-priority measures such as signal timing and bus lanes.
- + Document feedback from operators and field staff on traffic conditions and points of contention.

Questions:

- Did implemented strategies reduce delays and preserve reliability during peak event periods?
- Were any adjustments needed during the event? If so, what triggered them?
- How can coordination with DOT and traffic management teams be improved for future events?



GAMECHANGER

UDOT designed a Transit Signal Priority (TSP) system that gives UTA buses priority at intersections and allows longer green lights for late buses. TSP technology reduces UTA's travel time and improves service reliability. This technology is currently deployed at seven locations in Utah.



Figure 33. UTA bus Credit: UTA



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



FIRST/LAST MILE

A successful special event transit plan must go beyond core service to address how attendees complete their journeys to and from the venue. First and last mile coordination plays a critical role in shaping the overall customer experience, ensuring safe, accessible, and seamless movement between transit stations, venues, and surrounding neighborhoods. This requires early and ongoing coordination with venue operators, local municipalities, and mobility providers to manage everything from pedestrian flow and signage to bike share stations, ride share zones, parking areas, and temporary loading zones.

Considerations such as permitting, curb management, and designated pickup and drop-off areas should be clearly defined and communicated in advance. A strong first and last mile strategy helps reduce congestion at key access points, supports multimodal connections, and ensures that the transit system remains an attractive and reliable option for event attendees.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Coordinate with local jurisdictions and mobility providers (e.g., bike share, ride share, parking) to ensure access to transit and between transit and the event venue(s).

Monitor access points, crowding, and pedestrian flow around stations, shuttle stops, or mobility hubs and adjust staff support and signage as needed.

Review the effectiveness of first/last mile strategies and partnerships to improve wayfinding, safety, and access in future events.

SERVICE PLAN: FIRST/LAST MILE

PLANNING



The planning phase for first/last mile strategies is integral to ensuring a smooth and connected experience for event attendees. Transit alone cannot provide a complete solution without coordinated access between stations and venues. Planning should include close collaboration with local jurisdictions, venue operators, and mobility providers such as ride share, bike share, and shuttle services to identify and manage key access points.

Considerations such as pedestrian routing, signage, temporary infrastructure, permitting, curb usage, and traffic management must be addressed well in advance. Planning for these connections not only enhances the customer experience but also reduces congestion, supports safety, and ensures that the broader transportation system can accommodate increased demand.

- + Identify key pedestrian routes, mobility hubs, and venue access points.
- + Conduct site visits to identify locations that will need wayfinding signage.
- + Coordinate with local agencies and venue operators on curb management and loading zones.
- + Take account of existing station parking resources and determine whether there is a need for additional park-and-ride facilities.
- + Work with ride share and taxi services to establish designated pickup and drop-off zones.
- + Coordinate with wayfinding apps (e.g. Google Maps, Waze) to ensure pedestrian routes are updated during the event.
- + Coordinate with bike share and micromobility providers to confirm equipment availability and station locations.
- + Coordinate with shuttle service providers to confirm drop-off and pick-up locations.
- + Designate bike parking facilities near transit stations and coordinate with event organizers to designate bike parking locations at the venue.
- + Confirm permitting and approvals for any temporary changes to the public right-of-way with the local Jurisdiction.
- + Engage customer experience and operations teams to understand accessibility, signage, and staffing needs.
- + Plan for crowd control and wayfinding around major transit stations, shuttle stops, and venue entrances.



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

Service Plan



Questions:

- ❑ Has the agency identified all key access points and surrounding travel paths between transit and event venues?
- ❑ Are pedestrian routes safe, accessible, and clearly marked in the service plan?
- ❑ Has the agency coordinated with local jurisdictions on permitting needs and curb space allocation?
- ❑ Are ride share, taxi, and micromobility services integrated into the event's first/last mile strategy?
- ❑ Is there a plan for autonomous vehicles deployed in the service area?
- ❑ Will there be dedicated zones for ride-share pickup and drop-off near transit stations and venues?
- ❑ Is there sufficient parking availability for all riders who will utilize park-and-ride lots?
- ❑ Are there communication plans in place to inform customers about first/last mile options?
- ❑ Has the agency planned for customer support staffing or wayfinding assistance in key access areas?
- ❑ How far is the suggested walking route? Is the suggested walking route updated on popular wayfinding apps such as Google Maps and Waze?
- ❑ Are any physical or accessibility barriers near stations or venues being addressed in advance?

GAMECHANGER

Foothill Transit provides a last mile round-trip shuttle service that picks up fans and event employees from a lot near LA Metro's Memorial Park Station in Pasadena to the Rose Bowl. Foothill Transit operates shuttles in compliance with the FTA's Charter Service Regulations (49 CFR Part 604).



Figure 34. Rose Bowl shuttle Credit: Foothill Transit



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

During the event, active management of first and last mile connections is essential to ensure safe, orderly, and efficient movement between transit facilities and event venues. This includes monitoring pedestrian routes, managing curbside activity, and coordinating with partners such as local police, traffic control, ride share operators, and venue staff. Conditions may shift quickly due to crowd surges, traffic congestion, or unexpected road closures, so agencies must remain responsive and adaptive.

Field staff, signage, and real-time communication are key tools for supporting a smooth customer experience. Quick coordination across teams and partner agencies helps to resolve bottlenecks, redirect traffic, and maintain safety at access points, ensuring that customers can complete their trips confidently and comfortably.

- + Monitor crowd flow at transit stations, shuttle stops, and venue entrances to identify and resolve pressure points.
- + Implement wayfinding signage to direct passengers towards shuttle queues, transit access points, and ride-share pick-up zones after the event.
- + Coordinate with venue staff and traffic control to manage curb zones and enforce ride share loading and drop-off area protocols.
- + Ensure pedestrian routes are clearly defined through signage, accessible, well-lit, and staffed as needed.
- + Deploy ambassadors or field staff at key transfer points to assist customers and provide wayfinding support.
- + Stay in close contact with mobility partners to manage fluctuations in demand for ride share, bike share, or shuttle services.
- + Document any changes or challenges to inform mid-event adjustments and post-event evaluation.

Questions:

- ❑ Are pedestrian flows being actively managed at high-volume access points?
- ❑ Are first and last mile pedestrian routes functioning as planned, and are they clearly marked and staffed?
- ❑ Are curb management and ride share zones operating safely and efficiently?
- ❑ Is the agency receiving and responding to field reports of congestion, accessibility issues, and crowding?
- ❑ Are ambassadors and other wayfinding staff effectively guiding customers to and from transit access points?
- ❑ Is there active coordination with mobility vendors (ride share providers, micromobility operators, etc.) to address real-time issues?
- ❑ Is the experience for the customer consistent with the agency's expectations for safe and seamless access?
- ❑ Are autonomous vehicles deployed in the service area? Are staff trained on pick-up and drop-off protocol and who to contact if assistance is needed?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



EVENT PROCESS MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENTS

A well-coordinated special event requires not only robust planning and delivery but also a structured approach to monitoring performance and capturing lessons for continuous improvement. Building a process for real-time monitoring and post-event evaluation enables agencies to stay responsive during service delivery and to evolve based on experience.

From the outset, it is important to define how data will be collected, how decisions will be documented, and which metrics will be used to evaluate performance. During the event, this structure supports rapid problem-solving and issue resolution. After the event, it allows agencies to translate feedback and quantitative data into meaningful insights that improve future planning, execution, and accountability.

03



Service Plan



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Establish a structure for collecting operational data, tracking decisions, and identifying key metrics during the event.	Actively monitor service performance, issue tracking, and response actions to support rapid problem solving and quality control.	Compile data and feedback into a structured review, capturing lessons learned and developing recommendations for process improvements.
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PLANNING



Agencies should lay the foundation for how event data, decisions, and performance metrics will be captured and used. While much of this is addressed in the [Special Event Service Plan](#) section, this phase includes identifying what information will be monitored, who is responsible for collecting it, and how it will be reviewed during and after the event. Setting up a consistent framework early ensures that service performance, challenges, and successes can be evaluated in a structured and timely manner.

Key planning considerations include defining roles, choosing tools or platforms for tracking, and establishing protocols for data collection and communication across teams. This preparation supports effective delivery and a meaningful after-action review.

- + Have each department identify key metrics to monitor during the event. Metrics may include but are not limited to:
 - Ridership
 - Passenger loads
 - On-time performance
 - Number of service disruptions
 - Incident response time
 - Fare revenue
 - Operating costs
 - Customer feedback
- + Determine roles and responsibilities for data collection and issue tracking.
- + Select tools and platforms for real-time reporting and documentation.
- + Align data tracking with service goals and anticipated challenges.

Questions:

- Has the agency defined what success looks like and which metrics will be used to measure it?
- Are roles clearly assigned for tracking ridership, incident response time, headways, event-related costs, fare revenue, and other key metrics?
- What approaches will be used to record data and share updates during the event?
- Are plans in place to collect both quantitative and qualitative feedback?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery phase, the focus shifts to active monitoring to ensure service remains reliable, safe, and aligned with expectations. See [internal coordination](#) for day-of meeting guidance. Additionally, real-time check-ins, data tracking, and cross-team coordination are essential for spotting issues early and making responsive adjustments. The goal of this process is to keep transit running smoothly and maintain records of all key performance metrics.

This phase emphasizes the importance of staying alert, identifying incidents, documenting decisions, and rapidly communicating across functions. For multi-day events, field reports, supervisor insights, service data, and rider feedback should be looped into daily briefings to ensure continuous improvement. These actions help maintain service quality while building a reliable record to inform after-action assessments.

- + Conduct regular event team check-ins and data reviews to identify and address issues early.
- + Use centralized systems to track service performance, disruptions, and decisions made in the field.
- + Ensure cross-functional staff (e.g., operations, safety, customer experience) are communicating in real time.
- + Document field observations, response times, and key actions taken.
- + Adjust service or staffing as needed based on performance data and field reports.
- + Monitor whether customer-facing tools (fare payment systems, wayfinding signage, etc.) are functioning as planned.
- + Maintain visibility on mission-critical metrics like crowding, wait times, and accessibility.

Questions:

- Are daily service review check-ins occurring with relevant internal teams?
- Is data from field teams, operations centers, and supervisors being tracked and used to inform service and security adjustments?
- Are emerging problems being documented and addressed quickly?
- Do real-time metrics show that service is meeting performance expectations?
- Are communications channels between teams allowing for quick coordination and decision-making?
- Are field decisions being logged in a way that supports after-action analysis?
- Is the monitoring process supporting quick and informed course corrections?



After the event, the focus shifts to turning performance data, field observations, and financial records into actionable insights. This phase is where agencies review the data that was collected and evaluate what worked, what didn't, and why. The objective of this process is to identify strengths and weaknesses in the event service and document lessons to refine future planning efforts.

- + Review qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate overall service performance and identify key pain points.
- + Analyze issue logs and decision records to assess response effectiveness.
- + Capture qualitative insights from internal debriefs and frontline staff feedback.
- + Identify repeat issues or gaps in data collection that can be improved for future events.

Questions:

- Did the monitoring structure support rapid response and effective decision-making?
- Were key operational issues and resolutions well documented?
- What patterns emerged across field reports and metrics?
- How can tracking tools or processes be improved for future events?



04



SAFETY & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Safety and security planning for special events is a foundational element of overall event readiness and should be approached with the same level of rigor as service planning and operations. The scope and structure of safety planning will differ significantly depending on the agency's size, jurisdiction, and available resources. Larger transit agencies may have in-house police departments, established emergency operations protocols, and dedicated security infrastructure, allowing them to lead and execute comprehensive public safety strategies. In contrast, smaller agencies often rely on partnerships with city or county law enforcement and emergency management agencies to provide safety and security services.

Regardless of the model, early and ongoing coordination is essential. Agencies must work closely with public safety partners to define roles and responsibilities, identify potential risks, and develop protocols for threat mitigation, crowd management, and emergency response. Scenario planning, including tabletop and field exercises can help teams prepare for a range of potential situations. During the event, strategic deployment of safety and security personnel and a responsive emergency operations structure are needed to ensure the agency can quickly adapt to unexpected risks. After the event, debriefs and incident reviews are needed to inform future safety and security improvements. An intentional, flexible, and collaborative approach to safety and security planning allows agencies to provide safe and reliable service during special events.



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Safety and Security

Emergency Operations Center

Crowd Management

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SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security planning is foundational to the success of any major or special event. During special events, transit agencies must be prepared to manage a wide range of risk such as crowd surges, public safety issues, protests, and other security threats. Managing these risks requires early and sustained collaboration with internal safety teams, transit police (if applicable), venue operators, local law enforcement, fire departments, and emergency management personnel. The scale and nature of involvement will vary: some larger agencies maintain their own police departments and Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), while smaller agencies rely more heavily on partnerships with municipal or regional entities.

Regardless of structure, the top priority is to ensure a safe, secure transit environment for all riders, staff, and surrounding communities. Special events often bring heightened levels of security, making it essential to have clearly defined roles, rapid response procedures, and consistent communication across teams. This section focuses on how transit agencies can prepare for, execute, and evaluate safety and security strategies across all phases of the event lifecycle.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Conduct security and emergency management trainings, drills, and exercises. Coordinate staffing with safety and security partners.	Deploy safety and security personnel, monitor crowd flow, and coordinate with partners to respond to real-time threats.	Review incident response, staffing levels, and communication protocols. Identify improvements needed for future events security.

PLANNING



Safety and security planning is one of the most critical steps in preparing for a special event. This effort begins evaluating potential risks that may impact the system. Transit agencies must coordinate closely with law enforcement, emergency management agencies, fire departments, and venue security teams to conduct cross-functional training exercises and establish staffing plans. Depending on the agency structure and nature of the event, planning may be led internally through a dedicated security team or externally through local, regional, or national agencies.

Establishing early alignment around security zones, crowd control protocols, staffing requirements, and response procedures helps prevent confusion and enables quick decision-making during the event. In higher-security events, such as those involving dignitaries or international audiences, agencies may also need to engage with federal entities such as the Secret Service or Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Ultimately, the goal of safety and security planning is to provide safe, comfortable experience for all riders and staff.

- + Identify and engage appropriate security partners including local police, venue security, and emergency management agencies.
- + Confirm if any federal agencies (Secret Service, DHS, etc.) will be involved in the event to understand the scope of planning needed.
- + Confirm event screening protocols and venue security perimeters in coordination with law enforcement and the venue. If security measures impact transit routes or station access, engage the operations team as soon as possible to ensure changes are accounted for in the service plan.
- + Develop a crowd control plan that includes personnel deployment, secure areas, emergency egress, and crowd surge mitigation.
- + Conduct general security awareness and de-escalation trainings for all frontline staff.
- + Conduct drills, tabletop, and full-scale exercises with relevant partners to confirm all stakeholders have experience with potential security scenarios and understand communication and response procedures.
- + Coordinate with safety and security partners to align staffing models and confirm roles for all agencies involved.
- + Establish real-time communication channels and escalation protocols between transit, law enforcement, and emergency responders.



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

04

Safety & Emergency Management





Questions:

- ❑ Is the agency working with local, regional, and/or federal partners to define security protocols, access restrictions?
- ❑ Has the agency conducted a Threat and Vulnerability Assessment (TVA) or Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) to identify and evaluate potential risks?
- ❑ Have all involved agencies confirmed their staffing availability, roles, and points of contact for the event?
- ❑ Has a plan been developed for crowd management staffing and procedures?
- ❑ Will there be a security perimeter, and if so, how will that affect transit access and routing?
- ❑ Are venue screening locations, security perimeters, and access points clearly defined and communicated to all staff?
- ❑ Has a table-top or full-scale exercise been scheduled to test security protocols?
- ❑ Have internal frontline staff received training on threat detection, de-escalation, and general security awareness?
- ❑ Is there an internal protocol for identifying, escalating, and responding to threats or disruptions?
- ❑ Have transit police or contracted security staff received appropriate event-specific training or briefings?
- ❑ Have communication channels been identified for real-time inter-agency coordination?



GAMECHANGER

MBTA installed security fencing along its right-of-way at key stations near event venues to prevent people who park in the residential neighborhood nearby from walking across the train tracks. This has helped MBTA ensure safety and prevent service interruptions during special events.



Figure 35. Security fencing Credit: MBTA



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery phase of a special event, safety and security efforts transition from planning to active implementation. This includes the deployment of law enforcement, transit police, security staff, fare enforcement officers, and crowd management personnel. Agencies must be prepared to respond quickly to dynamic conditions such as unexpected crowd surges, emergencies, or threats.

Clear roles, unified command structures, and real-time communication are essential for effective coordination between transit teams and external security partners. Agencies should ensure that all front-line personnel understand how to report and escalate security issues. Larger agencies may manage security through internal police departments or EOCs, while smaller agencies will rely heavily on coordination with city or regional partners. Regardless of size, each agency must ensure its security protocols are flexible and capable of adapting to changing conditions.

- + Deploy security staff to manage crowds at highly trafficked stations. Staff should be prepared to monitor platforms and hold passengers if the platform becomes overwhelmed.
- + Deploy fare enforcement officers to ensure compliance with the agency's fare policy.
- + Ensure staff never allow the platform to become more crowded than the inbound vehicle's capacity.
- + Ensure real-time communication between operations, security teams, partner law enforcement and all internal and external safety and security stakeholders, including cybersecurity staff.
- + Monitor and manage pedestrian flow at access points, queuing areas, and near security screening zones.
- + Activate threat escalation protocols and ensure response times are tracked and documented.
- + Provide daily security briefings and check-ins with deployed personnel before and during the event.
- + Coordinate any last-minute changes in access zones or security protocols with all affected partners.
- + Maintain flexibility to scale security support up or down based on crowd conditions and incident activity.

Questions:

- ❑ Are security staff and contractors positioned at key locations with a clear understanding of their responsibilities?
- ❑ Is the agency receiving timely updates from law enforcement and other emergency partners?
- ❑ Are incident identification and escalation procedures functioning effectively?
- ❑ Are security concerns being logged and communicated clearly for both real-time response and post-event analysis?
- ❑ Are transit operations being adjusting appropriately in response to any crowd control needs or security incidents?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC) PLANNING

An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) serves as the central hub for decision-making, deploying resources, and sharing information with the public during special events. Whether permanent or temporary, the EOC enables transit agencies and partners to proactively manage threats, ensure smooth operations, and minimize disruptions. The structure and scale of an EOC will vary depending on agency size and event complexity, but its core function remains the same — to ensure a proactive, coordinated response to all potential threats. Comprehensive planning and well-trained staff are key to ensuring a successful EOC operation.

04

Safety & Emergency Management



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Identify an EOC location and procure necessary supplies. Train EOC staff and confirm protocols for coordination, data sharing, and decision-making.	Activate the EOC to support real-time coordination, incident identification and response, and public information.	Evaluate the EOC's ability to manage threats and minimize disruptions. Capture lessons learned to inform future EOCs.

PLANNING



The EOC plays a critical role in centralizing coordination and real-time response during large-scale events. Agencies should begin by determining whether they will activate their own EOC or participate in a City or County led EOC instead. While some larger agencies have dedicated EOC facilities, many agencies stand up temporary EOCs for large events or other emergency situations. Agencies without an established EOC facility must identify a suitable location, equip it with necessary tools (communications, displays, data feeds, etc.), and assign trained staff. Regardless of setup, the EOC should facilitate direct collaboration with partner agencies and internal departments to proactively manage threats and get information out to the public.

During the planning phase, the agency should also develop defined protocols for activating the EOC. This ensures the EOC can be fully functional and capable of making informed decisions during high-pressure moments. Strong communication strategies, comprehensive staff training, open coordination channels with frontline staff, and access to key data sources are essential to the success of an EOC.

- + Designate a virtual or physical EOC space with redundant systems for power, communication, and essential utilities. Ensure that there are robust security measures in place to protect personnel, sensitive information, and critical infrastructure.
- + Establish roles and responsibilities for the EOC. The roles that will need to be filled internally include:
 - EOC Director
 - Public Information Officer
 - Safety Officer
 - Operations Section Coordinator
 - Planning Section Coordinator
 - Logistics Section Coordinator
 - Finance Section Coordinator
- + Ensure all selected staff review EOC plans and participate in relevant training courses such as FEMA's IS-2200: Basic EOC functions.
- + Establish roles, reporting chains, and decision-making protocols within the EOC.
- + Coordinate with external partners including partner transit agencies, emergency management departments, venue representatives, law enforcement, fire departments, and relevant jurisdictions to align protocols and responsibilities.
- + Conduct joint exercises or tabletop drills to prepare EOC participants for real-time collaboration.
- + Determine the hours of operation and shift coverage needed to maintain 24/7 or event-specific support.



Planning

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**Questions:**

- ❑ Does the agency have a permanent EOC or does a temporary facility need to be established?
- ❑ If the agency is not hosting an EOC, are representatives being sent to external (e.g. City or County-led) EOCs?
- ❑ Does the selected location have redundant power, communication, and utilities systems?
- ❑ Are the proper security systems in place to protect sensitive information and EOC personnel?
- ❑ Who are the designated agency representatives for the EOC, and have they received the necessary training?
- ❑ Have clear protocols been established for inter-agency data sharing and decision-making?
- ❑ Have joint training exercises been conducted with participating stakeholders?
- ❑ Is the agency's EOC integrated into the broader public safety or city-led incident management structure?

GAMECHANGER

LA Metro's new Emergency Security Operations Center (ESOC) serves as a central hub for managing major incidents, special events, and emergencies across the transit system. The ESOC works in conjunction with Metro's existing EOC and supports enhanced coordination with external partners.



Figure 36. Emergency Security Operations Center (ESOC) Credit: LA Metro



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery phase, the EOC should be fully operational and staffed with trained personnel who can track incidents, deploy resources, and ensure real-time communication with frontline staff, operations control centers, and the public. An activated EOC allows for real-time adjustments to service, rapid emergency response, and unified messaging from all stakeholders. Based on the security risks associated with the event, the agency needs to decide what level of EOC activation is appropriate.

Agencies must ensure that vehicle tracking data, CCTV footage, and communications channels with frontline staff are maintained throughout the event. Rapid updates from the field should feed into the EOC to support quick and effective decisions. The EOC should also be in constant communication with other command posts including operations control centers and JIC if applicable.

- + Based on the nature of the event, decide what level of activation is needed.
 - Level I refers to full scale EOC activation. Level I EOCs are activated in response to an incident that causes full or nearly full disruption of City services and operations. This level of activation is typically only used for National Special Security Events (NSSEs).
 - Level II refers to a partial activation/enhanced steady state. In a level II EOC, team members are convened to monitor a potentially threatening situation and prepare to respond to a threat if needed. Many special event EOCs are activated at level II.
 - Level III refers to the monitoring and assessment state. In a level III EOC, the threat or event simply warrants observation and minimal coordination is needed.
- + Maintain ongoing situational awareness through direct communication with field staff, data collection and tracking, and CCTV monitoring.
- + Communicate with partners to coordinate service changes, security responses, and public information needs in real-time.
- + Ensure EOC staff are empowered to make real-time decisions or escalate them quickly.
- + Use consistent formats for logging actions and decisions for future review.

Questions:

- ❑ Is the EOC fully staffed and operating with up-to-date information from a variety of sources?
- ❑ Are decisions being communicated clearly and efficiently to all relevant internal and external partners?
- ❑ Are incidents and adjustments being tracked for both immediate response and after-action evaluation?
- ❑ Is information being shared with the public when applicable?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



CROWD MANAGEMENT

Effective crowd management is a cornerstone of safe and seamless transit service during major special events. These events often generate sudden and concentrated ridership spikes, bringing together large numbers of first-time users, occasional riders, and visitors unfamiliar with the local language, transit system, or fare structure. Left unmanaged, these surges can lead to service disruptions, safety concerns, and negative passenger experiences.

Transit agencies must prepare for these unique dynamics through cross-departmental coordination, tailored operational strategies, and thoughtful design of station environments. Crowd management during events is not limited to the platform or fare gate—it extends into public right-of-way, entrances, queueing areas, and platform access points. From ensuring track safety at at-grade crossings to balancing flows at multi-station venues, every physical and procedural detail contributes to overall crowd control.

Achieving success requires a coordinated effort between Operations, Safety and Security, Marketing, Customer Experience, and Public Communications teams. This includes early collaboration with law enforcement and venue security, training for frontline staff, proactive communication with the public, and strategic deployment of wayfinding and crowd-control infrastructure. A well-executed crowd management plan can not only ensure rider safety and reduce operational strain but also improve the public's overall perception of the transit agency's ability to serve at scale.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Identify potential crowd hotspots and develop flow management strategies including barriers, staff deployment, and platform control.	Implement crowd control measures, monitor density, and coordinate across teams to respond to surges.	Evaluate which strategies effectively managed rider movement and adjust plans for capacity, safety, and comfort.

PLANNING



Crowd management planning begins with identifying the event-specific characteristics that will impact rider behavior and crowd flow at each transit access point. Factors such as venue location, ridership projections, station design, fare collection systems, and audience demographics must all be considered. Agencies should conduct detailed station walk-throughs, identify critical pinch points, and determine staffing, signage, and equipment needs well in advance.

Early coordination with law enforcement, venue operators, and internal departments ensures that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. This is also the time to establish queueing strategies, barrier placement, and platform load limits. The planning phase should include the development of pre-event communications to educate riders on station access, boarding locations, fare payment, and wayfinding.

- + Conduct site assessments of each key station to identify crowd pinch points and queuing needs.
- + Assign crowd management responsibilities across Operations, Security, Marketing, and Customer Experience teams.
- + Coordinate with external partners (law enforcement, venue security, city departments) to align responsibilities and protocols.
- + Forecast staff and ambassador needs based on station layout, ridership volume, and event type.
- + Develop clear wayfinding and signage plans tailored to each station and anticipated crowd movement.
- + Ensure training for ambassadors and frontline staff includes crowd management protocols.
- + Identify and procure crowd control equipment (e.g., stanchions, fencing, retractable gates).

Questions

- Have critical stations been assessed for crowd flow and queuing?
- Have staffing plans accounted for peak arrival and departure periods?
- Are there designated teams responsible for platform crowd control and wayfinding?
- What is the strategy for managing large crowds at at-grade crossings or escalator bottlenecks?
- Have signage and wayfinding plans been translated for multilingual audiences?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

04

Safety & Emergency Management





During event operations, successful crowd management depends on real-time coordination, effective deployment of trained staff, and active monitoring of crowd conditions. Transit agencies must be able to respond quickly to changes in crowd behavior and density, especially near fare gates, station entrances, platforms, and shuttle stops.

Frontline staff, including ambassadors, law enforcement, and security personnel, should be stationed at key points to manage queues, support boarding processes, and provide timely information. Communication tools and escalation protocols must be in place to respond to emerging issues such as overcrowding or service disruptions.

- + Deploy field staff early and conduct pre-event briefings at each location.
- + Monitor crowd density and flow using on-site observers, CCTV, or radio updates.
- + Adjust queue lines and platform access dynamically as needed.
- + Communicate changes to operations teams, venue partners, and ambassadors in real time.
- + Use signage and ambassadors to guide customer flow and reduce congestion at fare gates or narrow passageways.
- + Ensure visibility of multilingual and ADA-accessible communication for diverse rider needs.

Questions:

- Are all crowd control points adequately staffed and equipped?
- Are field teams effectively communicating and escalating issues in real time?
- Are pedestrian flows being actively managed and adjusted based on crowd conditions?
- Are platform load limits being respected and enforced safely?
- Are frontline staff receiving timely updates about service or crowding conditions?

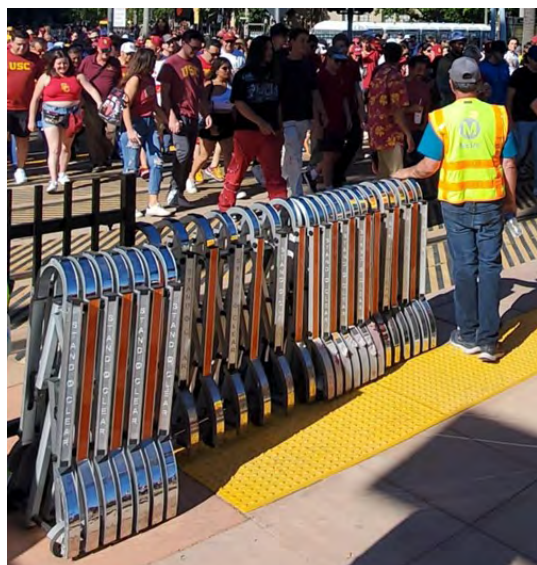


Figure 37. Accordion style gates Credit: LA Metro

GAMECHANGER

Accordion style gates can be helpful for ensuring safe crossing near at-grade tracks while trains are running.



Following the event, agencies should evaluate the effectiveness of their crowd management strategy by reviewing staff feedback, crowd flow observations, incident logs, and customer feedback. This helps identify what strategies worked, which bus stops and/or stations faced the most pressure, and what could be improved.

Evaluations should be shared across departments and with partner agencies to strengthen interagency coordination and inform future planning. Particular attention should be paid to training gaps, equipment readiness, signage clarity, and communication protocols.

- + Conduct debriefs with ambassadors, operations accessibility, and security teams to capture crowd-related challenges and insights.
- + Review crowd movement patterns at each key station or access point.
- + Identify areas where signage, queuing, or communication could be improved.
- + Document successful tactics for future events and adjust standard crowd management protocols accordingly.

Questions:

- Were any locations over or under-resourced in terms of staff or equipment?
- What were the most frequent customer questions or sources of confusion?
- Did signage and queueing structures function as intended?
- What feedback did ambassadors, accessibility, and/or frontline staff share about crowd conditions?
- What adjustments should be made to improve safety and flow for the next event?



05



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



Customer experience plays a critical role in shaping how the public perceives both an event and the transit agency that supports it. During special events, the stakes are higher than normal. Many riders may be first-time users unfamiliar with the system, while regular customers may have difficulty navigating altered service. A well-planned and designed customer experience can significantly reduce stress, enhance satisfaction, and contribute to the overall success of the event. Transit agencies are uniquely positioned to set the tone for the attendee experience before guests reach the venue.

A thoughtful approach to customer experience requires coordination across multiple operational areas including signage, wayfinding, fare payment, crowd control, accessibility, and even contingency planning for weather. From station ambassadors and multilingual signage to safe and efficient boarding zones, every interaction is an opportunity to build trust and leave a lasting impression. Proactive planning ensures customer needs are not just met, but anticipated—particularly in high-pressure environments with large, diverse crowds. Moreover, prioritizing customer experience is not just about service—it reflects an agency’s values around inclusion, dignity, and equity. Ensuring that riders of all abilities can move through the system confidently, that information is clearly communicated, and that every touchpoint is well-managed reinforces transit’s role as an essential part of event delivery. Whether through functional reliability or delightful moments of engagement, an intentional customer experience strategy creates conditions for long-term ridership growth and stronger public support.



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Customer Information, Signage, and Wayfinding

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ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL MOBILITY

Ensuring accessibility and universal mobility is essential to delivering an inclusive transit experience during special events. These events often attract large and diverse crowds, including riders with various abilities, older adults, families with strollers, and individuals unfamiliar with the transit system. Effective planning and coordination are required to remove barriers and create a seamless, respectful journey for all riders, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive needs.

Accessibility must be embedded into every stage of event operations, from station access and vehicle boarding to signage, staffing, and communication. Transit agencies should look beyond regulatory compliance by adopting a people-first approach that enhances dignity, independence, and comfort for all passengers. This includes involving disability advocacy groups and community stakeholders early in the planning process to better understand and meet the needs of all users.

Universal mobility is not just about physical infrastructure. It is about designing a rider experience that ensures everyone can safely and confidently access the event. When accessibility is treated as a core element of special event planning and delivery, agencies can help foster a transit culture that prioritizes equitable service delivery, safety, public trust, and inclusive mobility for all.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Ensure facilities, services, and customer information are designed to accommodate people of all abilities, including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive needs.

Monitor accessibility features in real time and provide on-the-ground support to ensure inclusive access to stations, vehicles, and wayfinding tools.

Gather feedback from riders with disabilities and advocacy groups to evaluate gaps and improvements needed for future accessibility.

PLANNING



Accessibility planning sets the stage for a successful and inclusive rider experience during special events. Transit agencies must evaluate how infrastructure, staffing, and communications will support all users, especially those with disabilities, limited mobility, or other accessibility needs. Proactively engaging with community partners and advocacy groups helps identify potential gaps, ensuring that services meet a wide range of user requirements and comply with all legal obligations.

- + Conduct an accessibility audit of stations, vehicles, signage, and temporary event infrastructure.
- + Involve disability advocacy groups and community stakeholders early in the planning process.
- + Review ADA requirements and ensure all planned services comply with applicable laws.
- + Plan for accessible queuing areas, restrooms, and customer support zones.
- + Ensure accessible paths of travel between transit and event venues, including curb ramps, elevators, and pedestrian routes.
- + Incorporate accessibility needs into staffing plans, including training for ambassadors and operators.
- + Prepare accessible digital and print materials, including wayfinding maps and announcements.
- + Ensure mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters) can be accommodated on vehicles and at boarding points.
- + Procure portable restroom facilities for stations without restrooms.
- + Assign designated emergency stop or diversion points on all routes taken by paratransit vehicles for customers needing extra or emergency assistance.
- + If the event day is forecasted to have high temperatures, purchase water bottles for staff to hand out to customers and operators.
- + Prepare PA announcements and signage to alert passengers that they may need to stay on board longer than normal so that customers with vulnerabilities can opt out of taking transit if needed.
- + Test all station elevators at full capacity prior to the event and repair any elevators beyond end of life to prevent potential outages.
- + Conduct training for fixed-route operators on wheelchair securement and lift operation and how to properly inform customers with mobility impairments about their transit options.

Questions

- Have stations and vehicles along the service route been evaluated for accessibility gaps?
- Are accessible paths of travel clearly marked and free of construction or obstructions?
- Have community organizations provided input on accessibility priorities for this event?
- Do customer service staff and ambassadors have the tools and training to support people with accessibility needs?
- Are accessible communication materials being developed and reviewed for accuracy?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action





During the event, it is essential to implement accessibility measures as planned while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of riders. This commitment encompasses the overall rider experience and might include access to real-time information, staff assistance, or intuitive system navigation. Field staff must be equipped to efficiently assist individuals with mobility, visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments with dignity and assuredness, and know when and how to escalate concerns when appropriate. Clear signage, operational accessibility tools, and visible staff support make a significant difference in delivering a consistent, quality, inclusive, and accessible rider experience to all customers.

- + Ensure accessible signage, paths, and boarding platforms are actively maintained and monitored.
- + Position ambassadors or customer experience staff at key access points to assist riders.
- + Monitor the use and availability of elevators, ramps, and accessible vehicles.
- + Provide clear and audible announcements on service changes or crowding conditions.
- + Quickly resolve any disruptions that may affect accessible travel (e.g., blocked ramps, broken elevators).
- + Track and document any accessibility-related complaints or incidents for follow-up.
- + Station maintenance staff on-site to proactively address any elevator or escalator outages.

Questions:

- Are personnel clearly visible and available to support riders with accessibility needs?
- Are accessible boarding areas, signage, and communication tools functioning as intended?
- Are real-time service changes being shared in accessible formats?
- Are there established procedures for assisting riders if an accessibility feature fails (e.g., lift not working)?



After the event, agencies should undertake a comprehensive review to evaluate the effectiveness of their accessibility strategies. This process involves gathering feedback from riders to capture their experiences, analyzing incident reports for any accessibility-related issues, and debriefing with front-line personnel to gain operational insights. These reflections not only help identify barriers and successes but also uncover opportunities for continuous improvement. The findings should be systematically documented, shared with relevant departments and community stakeholders, and thoughtfully integrated into future planning efforts.

- + Review and analyze feedback from individuals with disabilities and community partners.
- + Evaluate any accessibility-related service disruptions and the agency's response.
- + Identify trends in customer complaints or requests related to accessibility.
- + Share after-action findings with internal and external stakeholders.
- + Update training materials and planning procedures based on lessons learned.

Questions:

- Were accessibility measures sufficient to meet rider needs during the event?
- Were any barriers identified that prevented equitable access?
- Did staff and volunteers feel prepared to assist riders with disabilities?
- What improvements can be made to infrastructure, training, or communication?
- How can the agency better engage accessibility advocates in future event planning?



GAMECHANGER

During the Club World Cup, LA Metro offered guided rides where passengers could ride to the matches with transit ambassadors. This program was a helpful way to encourage ridership while providing support for vulnerable transit users.

<p>Match 1 June 15, 2025 Paris Saint-Germain vs. Atletico de Madrid</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 9:00 AM Second group at 10:00 AM</p>	<p>Match 2 June 17, 2025 CF Monterrey vs. FC Internazionale Milano</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 2:30 PM Second group at 3:00 PM</p>	<p>Match 3 June 19, 2025 Paris Saint-Germain vs. Botafogo</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 2:30 PM Second group at 3:00 PM</p>
<p>Match 4 June 21, 2025 CA Riverplate vs. CF Monterrey</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 2:30 PM Second group at 3:00 PM</p>	<p>Match 5 June 23, 2025 Atletico de Madrid vs. Botafogo</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 2:30 PM Second group at 3:00 PM</p>	<p>Match 6 June 25, 2025 Urawa Red Diamonds vs. CF Monterrey</p> <p>Meet at Union Station East Signage Tower First group at 2:30 PM Second group at 3:00 PM</p>

Figure 38. Ambassador guided ride schedule *Credit: LA Metro*





CUSTOMER INFORMATION, SIGNAGE, AND WAYFINDING

Clear, timely, and accessible information is one of the most important parts of the rider experience during special events. With large crowds, many first-time riders, and potential real-time service changes, agencies need to be proactive in making sure that all riders are aware of transit access locations, service times, route changes, and fare payment options.

Customer information, signage, and wayfinding aren't just about navigation, they build trust, reduce confusion, and keep people safe. The best results come from early collaboration across departments and with outside partners to ensure messaging is consistent and signs are placed where riders need them most. This effort should be supported by well-trained ambassadors and real-time digital tools that can guide riders and adapt as conditions change. A successful communication plan produces materials that are inclusive, consistent, and easy to understand, regardless of language ability or transit experience. By thoughtfully planning and thoroughly reviewing information and signage strategies, agencies can deliver a smooth experience during high-profile events.



Planning

Develop a unified signage and information plan tailored to the event, integrating digital tools, physical signs, and multilingual support.



Delivery

Deploy signage and customer service personnel to guide passengers and provide real-time updates across digital channels.



After-Action

Assess clarity, impact, and effectiveness of communication strategies and adjust for future events.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: CUSTOMER INFORMATION, SIGNAGE, AND WAYFINDING PLANNING



Providing clear, accurate, and accessible information is critical to delivering a successful customer experience during special events. Early planning should focus on how attendees will navigate the system, understand service changes, and find their way to and from event venues. This requires coordination across departments and with external partners such as event organizers, local jurisdictions, and venue operators to align messaging, branding, and signage.

- + Develop a comprehensive communications plan that includes pre-event outreach and real-time updates.
- + Coordinate with the event organizer to incorporate event-specific branding and naming conventions into materials.
- + Confirm wayfinding signage locations through joint walk-throughs of critical stations and access points.
- + Ensure consistency across all customer-facing platforms, including digital displays, websites, mobile apps, printed materials, and social media.
- + Translate key materials into multiple languages based on the expected demographics of event attendees.
- + Ensure all signage and materials follow accessibility standards (e.g., font size, contrast, alternative text).
- + Coordinate with partner agencies to unify wayfinding approaches at key transfer points.

Questions

- Have signage and digital communication plans been aligned with internal departments and external partners?
- Have all information and wayfinding assets been reviewed for accessibility and clarity?
- Are walk-throughs scheduled to finalize the placement of signage and ambassador stations?
- Are all communication channels prepared to deliver consistent, timely updates?
- Are there materials prepared to support multilingual and first-time transit users?



GAMECHANGER

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency which operates Muni, deploys staff ambassadors to provide bilingual wayfinding support during large scale events.



Figure 39. Staff ambassadors Credit: SFMTA



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

05

Customer Experience





During the event, customers rely on signage and live information to navigate a potentially unfamiliar and crowded system. Real-time communication must be responsive, consistent across channels, and updated quickly to reflect changing conditions. Frontline staff, digital tools, and wayfinding signage should be strategically deployed to ensure that riders are well informed and comfortable navigating the system.

- + Ensure emergency information from the EOC and JIC is communicated to passengers in real-time.
- + Monitor passenger information monitors, PA systems, and digital signage to quickly identify and respond to system outages.
- + Deploy ambassadors or other customer service staff to key access locations to provide wayfinding support.
- + Ensure consistent messaging across transit apps, websites, station signage, and PA announcements.
- + Inform passengers of real-time transit adjustments by updating signage promptly and informing customer-facing personnel.
- + Keep close communication with partner agencies and event venues to update the public in real time.

Questions:

- Are customer service teams and ambassadors equipped with the most up-to-date service information?
- Is signage properly placed, visible, and unobstructed at all key customer touchpoints?
- Are updates being delivered consistently across all channels (text alerts, PA announcements, ambassadors, etc.)?
- Is there a plan for quickly replacing or correcting signage if information changes?
- Are customers with limited English proficiency receiving the support they need?



After the event, agencies should assess how effectively information was delivered and whether riders were able to navigate the system with ease. Feedback from customers and front-line staff can reveal gaps in notification, locations that need more signage, and station notification assets (e.g. PA systems) that need improvement.

- + Conduct debriefs with ambassadors and station staff to gather feedback on customer information effectiveness.
- + Send out an online survey to assess customers' perception of the transit experience.
- + Review customer inquiries, complaints, and social media feedback to identify patterns.
- + Assess whether communication systems (e.g., PA systems, digital information monitors) performed reliably.
- + Identify areas that caused confusion or contributed to bottlenecks due to a lack of signage.
- + Update templates, wayfinding maps, and internal protocols based on lessons learned.

Questions:

- Were customers able to easily understand signage and announcements?
- Were any aspects of the system (fare payment, queuing areas, transfer points, etc.) confusing or difficult to navigate?
- Did ambassadors or staff identify common customer questions or points of confusion?
- Were multilingual digital tools and wayfinding assets effective in communicating live updates?
- What improvements can be made to communication tools or wayfinding signage for future events?





FARE PAYMENT

Fare payment options play a key role in attracting riders, determining crowd flow, and shaping the overall customer experience. During large-scale events, standard fare collection processes may need to be adjusted to reduce delays, ease boarding, and prevent crowding at fare machines or station entrances. Proactive fare policy planning and rider education help streamline transit access and create a more seamless journey for riders.

Offering free or reduced fares on event days can help reduce barriers to transit for event attendees. Strategic partnerships with event organizers, local companies, and regular advertising partners are helpful for securing fare sponsorships to prevent lost revenue on free fare days. These collaborations make riding transit easier for occasional riders and visitors unfamiliar with local fare systems.

A well-designed fare approach should prioritize ease of use and take into consideration potential revenue impacts. Whether through contactless payments, mobile apps, or integrated ticketing solutions, the goal is to minimize friction at transit access points and enhance the rider experience.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Confirm fare media policies and promote payment options in advance. Negotiate fare sponsorship/integrated ticketing agreements if applicable.

Monitor fare system functionality and deploy additional staff at high-traffic points to troubleshoot issues.

Review fare system performance, rider feedback, and fare revenue generated during the event.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: FARE PAYMENT

PLANNING



Fare planning for special events should focus on early adoption of a fare policy and proactive rider education. Agencies should evaluate whether standard fare collection methods will be sufficient or if temporary adjustments—such as free fare windows, prepaid passes, or integrated ticketing—are needed to meet event demands. It is important to conduct a walk through of critical stations and other transit access points to understand what fare solutions will be needed based on the unique station infrastructure. Coordination with mobile app providers and potential sponsors can open opportunities for innovative or cost-reducing fare strategies.

- + Conduct a walk through of all critical stations, noting the fare infrastructure at each one.
- + Assess the need for fare modifications during the event (e.g., free fare periods, flat fares, prepaid passes), taking into account the rider demographics, expected event attendance, and fare infrastructure of key stations.
- + Explore integrated ticketing options that combine event access and transit use in a single pass or app.
- + Work with technology vendors to ensure mobile fare systems can handle demand and are user-friendly for out-of-town visitors.
- + Coordinate with potential fare sponsors to negotiate fare coverage agreements.
- + Ensure any fare policy changes are reflected in customer communications, signage, and digital systems.
- + Prepare outreach and education for customers unfamiliar with local payment systems or technologies.
- + Include fare policies in training for ambassadors and other frontline staff.

Questions

- Will the agency offer discounted or free fares during the event to support crowd flow and encourage ridership?
- Has the agency coordinated with event organizers or sponsors to fund fare promotions or integrated ticketing?
- Are fare systems (e.g., readers, vending machines, mobile apps) prepared for increased use?
- Has the agency accounted for fare collection needs across modes, including paratransit and regional services?
- Is customer messaging about fare payment clear and accessible across all platforms?
- Are frontline staff prepared to educate riders on the agency's fare policy?



GAMECHANGER

The Outside Lands Music Festival reimburses San Francisco Muni for all event attendee's fares. Ticket holders are able to ride when showing their festival wristband upon boarding.

Figure 40. Festival wristband example



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

05



Customer Experience



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: FARE PAYMENT **DELIVERY**

During the event, fare systems must be reliable, flexible, and able to accommodate high passenger volumes. Agencies should monitor fare collection points for crowding or equipment issues and be prepared to deploy staff to assist riders, troubleshoot problems, or manage line formation. If fare-free service or modified policies are in effect, clear signage and ambassador support are essential.

Depending on the station infrastructure, it may be more efficient to have fare enforcement staff visually check tickets instead of scanning. For stations with swing gates, it may be beneficial to keep the fare gate open and have staff check tickets visually to allow for smoother crowd flow.

- + Monitor fare collection areas for crowding and equipment reliability.
- + Deploy staff or ambassadors to assist customers with payment or app usage at key locations.
- + Track fare validation and boarding times to identify problem spots.
- + Coordinate with enforcement staff to ensure fare policy changes are consistently applied.
- + Be prepared to suspend fare collection temporarily if needed for safety or service efficiency.
- + For events with international audiences, it is important to account for potential issues with foreign credit cards.

Questions:

- Are fare collection systems operating reliably under increased load?
- Are customers able to pay fares quickly and easily or validate mobile passes?
- Is staff available to support troubleshooting or customer questions?
- Are any fare-related delays contributing to boarding issues or station congestion?
- If fare adjustments were implemented, are they functioning as intended?
- Are fare enforcement staff monitoring and responding to fare evaders?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: FARE PAYMENT **AFTER-ACTION**



After the event, agencies should review how fare strategies performed under pressure, including any breakdowns, customer confusion, and fare evasion incidents. Evaluating boarding speed, equipment performance, and the effectiveness of any promotions or partnerships can help refine fare policy for future events. Feedback from staff, riders, and partners can uncover areas where fare processes either enhanced or hindered the overall experience.

If utilizing fare gates or another scanning system, it is important to track the number of fare payments at each station. This will help inform the amount of fare revenue generated during the event and inform the number of transit riders and modal split for future event planning efforts.

- + Analyze fare transaction data to assess ridership, boarding times, and fare revenue generated.
- + Gather feedback from frontline staff and ambassadors about rider experiences and equipment issues.
- + Evaluate the success of any fare promotions or partnerships in terms of ridership and operational benefits.
- + Identify any gaps in customer communication about fare policies or payment options.
- + Use findings to improve fare readiness plans, training, and vendor coordination for future events.

Questions:

- Did fare policies help reduce confusion at the station and bottlenecks at ticket vending machines?
- Were any equipment failures or payment issues observed during peak periods?
- Did riders report any confusion about payment methods or fare requirements?
- How effective were sponsorships, discounts, or integrated ticketing programs?
- What changes should be made to fare systems, policies, or outreach for the next event?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



SURPRISE & DELIGHT

Large-scale events offer transit agencies a unique opportunity to go beyond moving people by transforming the rider experience into a vibrant extension of the event itself. Through thoughtful, creative activations such as live performances, branded experiences, and interactive displays, agencies can create memorable “wow” moments that elevate satisfaction, ease crowding, and build long-term ridership.

This approach, often referred to as “surprise and delight” is more than just entertainment and can be particularly effective at building positive rider sentiment and improving crowd control by engaging customers while they wait. When aligned with operations, marketing, and accessibility goals, these activations can promote loyalty that converts new or occasional riders into regular ones, and opens the door for strategic partnerships, sponsorships, and new revenue opportunities.

Equally important, these activations reinforce transit’s role as a welcoming, community-centered service. Surprise and delight strategies are most effective when tailored to the event’s audience and coordinated across departments, especially Customer Experience, Marketing, and Operations. Whether through a cooling bus at a hot outdoor festival or a karaoke stage near a busy station, these efforts help reinforce transit as not just a mode of travel, but part of impactful experiences that reflect local culture, improve system navigation, and leave lasting impressions on riders.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Explore opportunities to enhance the rider experience with positive, unexpected elements such as performances, giveaways, or photo ops.	Execute customer engagement initiatives that uplift the atmosphere and enhance public perception of transit.	Measure the impact of these efforts through feedback or engagement data and consider scalability.
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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: SURPRISE & DELIGHT

PLANNING



Surprise and delight activations begin with identifying the right opportunities and locations based on event type, customer demographics, and operational constraints. It requires coordination with internal station/major bus hub and parking facilities departments to identify effective activation locations and collaboration with external partners such as event organizers, local businesses, and community groups. Activation concepts should be inclusive, aligned with agency goals, and designed to complement crowd management efforts rather than interfere.

Examples of successful surprise and delight implementations at transit stations and parking facilities can include farmers markets, cultural celebrations, live music, art installations, community organization pop-ups, and product giveaways. Surprise and delight can also be implemented on-board vehicles for events such as holiday celebrations, speed dating, and art installations.

- + Coordinate with internal station facilities teams to identify high-traffic stations or event-adjacent areas for potential activation sites.
- + Coordinate early with event planners and city departments to align activations with street closures and event branding.
- + Tailor experiences to the expected event audience (e.g., family-friendly, multilingual, cultural).
- + Recruit partners such as local artists, community groups, or regional companies to support or sponsor activations.
- + Ensure that ideas align with safety standards and do not obstruct station access or impede operations.
- + Plan activations that reduce perceived wait times and support platform or queuing management.

Questions

- What stations will be highly trafficked during the event?
- What partners or sponsors can help execute or fund the activation?
- What local organizations can be engaged to help execute the event and spotlight the community?
- Does the event require a cooling station or shaded waiting area?
- Are additional ambassadors or volunteers needed to help staff the activation?
- Is staff trained and available to support pop-up activations and customer engagement?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

Customer Experience





During the event, delivery of surprise and delight tactics requires real-time coordination, staff support, and flexibility. Activations should be monitored and adjusted as needed to reflect crowd conditions, weather, and shifting demand. Marketing teams, ambassadors, and volunteers should be stationed on site to manage engagement and ensure activations enhance the rider experience without creating confusion or disruption.

- + Deploy staff to engage riders at activations and distribute marketing materials.
- + Use activations strategically to manage platform dwell times or high-volume stations.
- + Share live updates on social media to encourage customer participation and wayfinding.
- + Monitor public response and adjust setup or staffing levels accordingly.
- + Maintain accessibility and ensure signage is clear and inclusive.
- + Monitor feedback from customers to inform future activations.

Questions:

- Are activations operating safely and effectively during peak periods?
- Are staff actively engaging riders and answering questions?
- Do activation elements support crowd management (e.g., entertain riders in the queue)?
- Are riders responding positively via in-person feedback or social media?



Figure 41. Disney station activation Credit: SacRT

GAMECHANGER

For a Maroon 5 concert, SacRT had karaoke machines and held a singing competition at a light rail station, and for a Disney on Ice show, SacRT had people dressed as princesses taking photos with riders waiting for the train. These station activations help engage crowds and minimize frustration caused by long wait times.



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



After the event, agencies should evaluate the impact of surprise and delight tactics, both quantitatively (e.g., participation, social engagement) and qualitatively (e.g., staff feedback, rider sentiment). The goal is to identify which efforts were most effective, which partnerships were valuable, and what could be scaled or improved in future events.

It is important to collect feedback from all volunteers, businesses, and/or community organizations involved with the activation. If these groups have a positive experience executing the activation, they are more likely to participate in future activations and promote transit to their networks.

- + Collect feedback from riders, ambassadors, and partners on the experience.
- + Evaluate participation levels and identify which activations supported operational goals.
- + Document setup requirements and logistical needs for future planning.
- + Assess sponsorship outcomes and partnership opportunities.
- + Compile photos, testimonials, and impact stories for internal reporting and future buy-in.
- + Track all equipment and staffing costs to inform future surprise and delight activation budgets.

Questions:

- Which activations were most effective in improving customer experience or managing crowds?
- Did activations contribute to increased awareness of transit services?
- What partnerships were successful and worth continuing?
- What changes would improve setup, staffing, or communication in future events?
- How can surprise and delight be further integrated into the agency's service strategy?
- What costs were associated with planning and delivering surprise and delight activations?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



WEATHER RESILIENCY

Special events happen rain or shine, so transit agencies must build weather resiliency into their event operations. Whether facing heatwaves, storms, snow, or ice, weather can impact vehicle reliability, station access, passenger safety, and crowd flow. As extreme weather becomes more common, integrating weather preparedness isn't just smart, it's essential for delivering safe, reliable, and comfortable transit service during every event. Effective weather resiliency requires close coordination across Operations, Maintenance, Safety, and Customer Experience teams. Planning should include physical measures like shelter and cooling, service backup plans, and clear, proactive communication to keep riders informed and confident.

For events that occur during the summer or other times of high heat, it is important to ensure that long queue lines incorporate heat mitigation tactics such as shade structures, hydration stations, and fans. For events that occur during the winter or other times of cold temperatures, it is important to minimize the amount of time that riders spend outdoors, ensure heating systems on-board vehicles and at stations are intact, and ensure that the fleet is able to operate at extreme temperatures. For events that occur during days with rain or snow, it is important to ensure that fleets are equipped to handle wet conditions and that emergency evacuation plans are in place in the case of flooding on-board vehicles or in underground stations. It is also important to ensure that safety measures are in place for crowds moving on wet ground.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Develop contingency plans for extreme weather, including alternate routing, staffing adjustments, customer communication protocols, and evacuation plans.	Monitor weather conditions and activate plans in coordination with safety, emergency management, and operations teams.	Monitor weather conditions and activate plans in coordination with safety, emergency management, and operations teams.
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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: WEATHER RESILIENCY

PLANNING



Planning for weather resiliency begins with identifying weather-related risks tied to the season, event schedule, and geography. Potential weather-related hazards can include flooding at stations, icy roads, power outages, and passengers or staff overheating. Agencies should ensure vehicles and infrastructure are equipped to handle conditions like rain, snow, or extreme heat, and confirm internal protocols for incident response, rider information, and evacuation during severe weather.

Weather resiliency planning should also account for queuing areas and vehicles boarding zones. For high temperatures, agencies should plan to provide water to riders and take other heat mitigation measures such as temporary shade structures. For low temperatures or precipitation, consider indoor or covered facilities that can be used for queuing in areas that are typically outdoors.

- + Review historical weather patterns and assess risks based on the timing and location of the event.
- + If temporary infrastructure is needed, work with in-house facilities teams and/or third party vendors to procure the necessary equipment.
- + Ensure contingency service plans are in place for snow, ice, or heat-related equipment failure.
- + Confirm availability of weather-protected spaces for queuing, waiting, or staff staging.
- + Prepare alternative crowd routing plans in case outdoor queues are affected by storms.
- + Coordinate with partner agencies (e.g., public works, utilities, emergency services) for weather-related response.
- + Include weather-related updates in all customer-facing platforms and signage plans.

Questions

- What extreme weather scenarios are most likely during this event?
- What equipment and supplies are needed to protect staff, riders, and vehicles from extreme weather?
- Are service plans adaptable to heat-related slowdowns or snow-related detours?
- Are accessible, weather-protected areas identified for staff and riders?
- Have heating, cooling, or rain shelter options been coordinated?
- Are contracted staff and vendors aware of agency weather protocols?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action

Customer Experience





During the event, weather monitoring and flexibility are critical. Conditions can change rapidly, requiring quick shifts in staffing, communications, or service levels. Agencies must be prepared to respond with real-time adjustments while continuing to provide clear and accessible updates to riders.

- + Monitor weather forecasts continuously and use thresholds (e.g., temperature, wind speed) to trigger contingency actions.
- + Activate cooling buses, shade tents, or heating stations where needed.
- + Adjust vehicle headways and vehicle types based on weather-related demand and equipment performance.
- + Ensure staff and security are equipped to manage slippery surfaces, heat exhaustion, or cold-related illness.
- + Reinforce clear communication through signage, loudspeakers, and digital channels.

Questions:

- Are contingency plans being activated appropriately based on weather conditions?
- Are frontline staff prepared and equipped to respond to weather-related needs?
- Are customer wait areas safe, accessible, and weather-protected?
- Are customers being notified promptly of any weather-related delays or reroutes?



Figure 42. Cooling bus Credit: CTA

GAMECHANGER

For outdoor events like festivals and marathons, CTA implements a stationary cooling bus where event attendees and non-ticketed fans can cool off, charge their phones, take transit informational materials, and ask CTA employees transit-related questions. These cooling buses help CTA inform riders about transit service and fares and build long term community relationships. This is also a great way to encourage new riders by facilitating an approachable environment to become familiar with the bus and obtain information on how to use the service.



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



Post-event, agencies should assess how well weather-related plans held up under real-world conditions. Feedback should be collected from riders and staff about the effectiveness of heat mitigation strategies, incident response times, evacuation protocols, and other weather response approaches. Lessons learned around the timing and effectiveness of these techniques should be documented and used to refine future practices. Vehicles, fare gates, monitors, and other key station infrastructure should be surveyed after the weather event to ensure all damages are reported and addressed. If any equipment (e.g. elevator/escalator, monitor, vehicle) experienced outages due to extreme weather, document the amount of time it took to resume operation.

- + Review weather impacts on service reliability, station access, and customer experience.
- + Assess the effectiveness of mitigation tactics such as cooling/heating stations or rerouted queues.
- + Identify infrastructure improvements (e.g., shelter installations, drainage fixes) for future resilience.
- + Document staff and rider feedback related to weather conditions and agency response.
- + Document the amount of time it took to resume operations after weather related outages.
- + Identify and repair any equipment damaged by severe weather.

Questions:

- How did weather conditions affect service, safety, and crowd flow?
- Were any vehicles or key infrastructure damaged by extreme weather?
- Were mitigation efforts timely and adequate?
- What improvements are needed for future weather-resilient planning?
- What infrastructure gaps were exposed?
- Was customer communication clear, timely, and accessible during the weather event?
- Were there any staff or rider safety concerns during the weather event?
- If stations needed to be evacuated, how long did this take and was everyone able to get out?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery

06



AGENCY-WIDE SUCCESS STRATEGIES



These four elements form the backbone of a successful special event operation. While they may not be visible to the public, they enable every aspect of service delivery—from planning through execution and review—to function smoothly under pressure. Budget, training, technology, and contingency planning are interdependent disciplines that ensure agencies are resourced, responsive, and resilient throughout the event lifecycle.

A well-structured **budget** ensures that all elements of the operation are properly funded, including frontline staffing, signage, equipment, and emergency support. Effective **training** prepares teams across departments to fulfill their roles, adapt in real time, and deliver consistent customer experience, and investing in the development of an adequately scaled **workforce** ensures the ability for agencies to meet special-event staffing needs as needed. Strategic use of **technology** can increase situational awareness, support communication, and reduce manual strain on staff. And strong **contingency planning** ensures that disruptions—whether due to weather, infrastructure issues, or security incidents—can be addressed without compromising safety or service.

Together, these internal systems provide the foundation for reliable operations, informed decision-making, and continuous improvement. Agencies that invest in these areas early are better equipped to respond to dynamic conditions and deliver a positive rider experience during high-demand events.



Planning



Delivery



After-Action



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A clear and well-coordinated budget is foundational to delivering successful transit service during a special event. Agencies must plan for direct and indirect costs across staffing, equipment, signage, communications, operations, and contingency measures, and capital projects. Given the unpredictable nature of major events, budgeting must be flexible enough to support real-time needs while remaining accountable to financial oversight processes. Collaboration between operations, finance, and department leads ensures that resources are aligned with service goals and that there is clarity on how funds will be tracked and managed before, during, and after the event.

The financial planning process should begin with a clear understanding of both expected costs and available funding sources. This includes forecasting expenditures for enhanced service levels, personnel, infrastructure, safety measures, and potential contingencies. Additionally, effective budget planning involves aligning with event organizers, government agencies, and other partners to explore funding opportunities, secure necessary resources, and ensure all stakeholders are on the same page regarding financial responsibilities.

06

Agency-Wide Success Strategies



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Planning	Delivery	After-Action
Establish a clear budget early, including staffing, equipment, and capital costs. Consider available grants, sponsorships, or other external funding sources.	Track real-time spending and flag unexpected costs to avoid overruns.	Compare projected vs. actual costs and document lessons learned to improve future budgeting approaches.

PLANNING



Establishing a comprehensive event budget during the planning phase ensures that all operational, staffing, and support needs are appropriately resourced. Work with finance teams to estimate costs based on the service plan and labor projections. Include line items for communications, signage, overtime, technology, outside vendors, and contingency reserves. Seek out potential fare sponsorships/integrated ticketing, federal and state grant opportunities, and other creative funding solutions to help cover event-related expenses that the agency is not able to cover. This is especially relevant for events that necessitate capital improvements or temporary infrastructure procurement.

Employing a project code is helpful to keep track of the labor hours, equipment costs, and contracts associated with a special event. Having employees denote specific tasks in their time sheets is useful for calculating budgets for future events.

- + Develop a full-cost estimate that accounts for staff compensation, staff training, supplemental vehicles, maintenance costs, real estate costs associated with park and ride, temporary infrastructure, new technology and staffing and logistical supplies needed to maintain internal command centers.
- + Engage government relations teams to identify potential state and federal grant opportunities that could be used to cover event-related costs.
- + Coordinate with local corporations, event organizers, and regular advertisers to understand the potential for sponsorships/integrated ticketing during the event.
- + Ensure alignment with union agreements and potential costs for mutual aid or borrowed personnel.
- + Budget for training time and any technology or equipment deployment unique to the event.
- + Coordinate with partner agencies to identify cost-sharing opportunities or facilitate mutual aid support if needed.

Questions

- Has a dedicated event budget been developed and approved?
- Were special event costs included in the annual budget process?
- Have applicable government grants been identified?
- Have conversations been initiated with potential fare sponsors and advertisers?
- Have all department needs been captured, including operations, communications, safety/security, and customer experience?
- Is there a contingency fund or mechanism to access additional resources if needed?
- Have vendor contracts and lead times been factored into the budget?
- Are financial tracking tools and reporting responsibilities assigned?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the event, all unexpected expenses for real-time needs must be monitored and documented. Agencies may encounter unexpected overtime, extended service hours, or emergency response costs during an event. Coordination between finance and operations is critical to make timely decisions and prevent overspending.

It is also critical to have systems in place to monitor revenue generated from advertising partners, fares, and parking facilities. This will help determine the net amount of money the agency generated or lost during the event.

- + Monitor staffing and overtime expenses daily to ensure they stay within anticipated levels.
- + Document all expenses in real time, including services, supplies, and outside support.
- + Coordinate closely with procurement and finance for any last-minute needs or reallocations.
- + Track spending on scalable services (e.g., crowd control or shuttles) that may change based on real-time demand.
- + Monitor fare payment systems and other revenue sources to track total revenue generated during the event.

Questions:

- Are actual expenditures aligning with planned costs?
- Are emerging needs being addressed through pre-identified budget mechanisms?
- Is documentation in place for all financial decisions and resource use?
- What real-time adjustments had to be made that were not included in the original budget?
- Do the amount of overtime hours align with the number originally allocated in the budget?
- How much money is being generated from advertising partners, fare payments, and other revenue sources?



GAMECHANGER

The Zero Fare for Clean Air program, funded by House Bill 353 in 2019, encourages transit use to improve air quality along the Wasatch Front. Zero Fare days are declared through a science-driven partnership between UTA and the Division of Air Quality (DAQ), which monitors pollution levels and calls Mandatory Action Days when ozone and particulate matter reach unhealthy levels, signaling Utahns to reduce high-emission activities like driving.



Figure 43. Zero fare for clean air promotion Credit: UTA



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



Following the event, agencies should compare actual costs to initial forecasts to understand budget accuracy and identify opportunities for better financial planning. Document all funds received from grants, sponsorships, advertisers, and revenue generated during the event. Document the labor, equipment, and contract costs that were tracked through the project code to understand the amount of funds used by each department. If actual costs were higher than initial forecasts, identify areas where the budget needs to be increased for future events or areas where efforts could be cut back to stay in budget. Document lessons learned in the after-action report and refine the budgeting process for future special events.

- + Conduct a detailed financial review with department leads to reconcile actuals versus the original budget.
- + Identify where costs were higher or lower than expected and why.
- + Document all funds received from grants, revenue, and alternative funding sources.
- + Determine whether contingency funds were sufficient and used appropriately.
- + Use data to improve the budgeting model for future events of similar scale.

Questions:

- How accurate were initial budget projections compared to actual costs?
- Were the funds received from external sources sufficient to cover event operations?
- How were the labor hours charged to the project code spread out throughout departments?
- Were there any unanticipated expenses that should be incorporated into future budgets?
- Did the agency face financial constraints that limited service or support during the event?
- How can future budget planning better account for flexible service needs?
- Are there any external funding sources that can be used to help mitigate expenses for future events?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery




Training is integral in preparing staff to deliver safe, responsive, and rider-centered service during special events. Operators, frontline workers, security teams, ambassadors, and supervisors all need clear, practical guidance to handle the unique demands these events bring. That means knowing how to navigate service changes, follow emergency procedures, manage large crowds, communicate effectively, and deliver an excellent customer experience, often under pressure. Effective training should be cross-functional and tailored to the unique dynamics of each event. It requires coordination across departments and partners to ensure everyone is aligned and ready to act as a unified team. Just as important, training should be flexible enough to evolve as new challenges arise, because in special events, no two days are the same.

Effective workforce training plans include event specific information, threat detection procedures, de-escalation protocol, transit service plans, key contact information, and contingency plans for each function. It is critical to facilitate in-person dry runs and tabletop exercises to ensure that staff are sufficiently prepared for all potential scenarios and familiar with their assigned locations. Coordination with host committees, partner transit agencies, and law enforcement is essential to ensure inclusion in cross-agency training efforts and provide consistent messaging during staff briefings.

06

Agency-Wide
Success Strategies



 Planning	 Delivery	 After-Action
Train staff on customer service, safety, and emergency roles. Include simulations and cross-agency coordination.	Reinforce training with briefings and shift debriefs. Provide on-site support.	Gather feedback on training effectiveness and update materials as needed.

PLANNING



Training during the planning phase should focus on developing content, identifying participants, and scheduling sessions to ensure all involved personnel are informed and confident. Training should reflect the roles and responsibilities specific to the event and incorporate both agency-wide and department-specific elements.

- + Develop event-specific training materials covering operational adjustments, customer experience expectations, emergency protocols, and partner coordination.
- + Identify all staff and contractors who require training, including full-time employees, ambassadors, mutual aid support, and external vendors.
- + Plan training sessions with adequate lead time and consider formats such as in-person briefings, tabletop exercises, digital modules, and dry runs.
- + Coordinate with Human Resources and department leads to ensure mandatory participation and coverage across all shifts.
- + Include language access, ADA, and equity-related content to ensure inclusive service delivery.

Questions

- Has a training plan been developed that reflects the scale and nature of the event?
- Are all operational and customer-facing staff accounted for in the training rollout?
- Do training materials address emergency procedures, security protocols, and coordination with other agencies?
- Are tabletop or simulation exercises being planned to test readiness and interagency communication?
- Is training being offered in multiple formats and languages if necessary?





During the delivery phase, training must be reinforced through pre-shift briefings, supervisor check-ins, and ongoing communication. Any late hires or reassigned staff should receive just-in-time training to ensure consistency and confidence on the ground.

- + Conduct daily briefings to review updates, staffing changes, service issues, and safety protocols.
- + Use supervisors and field leads to reinforce key training messages and provide real-time support to staff.
- + Offer refresher resources (e.g., tip sheets, hotline support, station assignments) to help staff respond effectively.
- + Ensure ambassadors, security, and customer service personnel are deployed with clear, accessible reference materials.

Questions:

- Are all deployed staff and volunteers trained and briefed on their responsibilities?
- Are frontline staff receiving timely updates on any operational changes or security updates?
- Is there a mechanism for staff to raise concerns or request clarification in real time?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



After the event, agencies should assess how well training prepared staff and where improvements are needed. Collecting feedback from participants can strengthen training content and delivery for future events.

- + Collect feedback from trained personnel to understand what worked and where there were knowledge gaps.
- + Review any operational issues that may be attributed to insufficient or unclear training.
- + Update training materials to reflect lessons learned and improve readiness for future events.
- + Share results with HR, operations, customer experience, and safety teams to align future training strategies.

Questions:

- Did training adequately prepare staff for their assigned roles and responsibilities?
- Were there areas of confusion that impacted customer service, safety, or operations?
- What improvements can be made to training formats, timing, or content for future events?



GAMECHANGER

LA Metro recruits two pool of internal staff from across the agency to support SoFi Stadium events and USC Coliseum events. At the beginning of the season, this group receives training on crowd control, customer service, and general safety related to working at key stations.



Figure 44. Agency staff support Credit: LA Metro



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



Scaling up service for a major event is not possible without the support of a strong workforce. While it is important to maintain a strong roster of operations, maintenance, and security staff for frontline roles, it is equally as important to invest in the workforce behind the scenes. Service planners, schedulers, emergency managers, public information officers, and customer experience professionals all play a large role in planning and executing a special event.

Unified command centers including the agency's control center, EOC, and field command posts are also critical aspects of providing successful special event service. To operate effectively throughout the duration of an event, these command centers must be well-staffed with individuals who are empowered to make quick, informed decisions. Customer service staff are also a critical part of special event service. Agencies that have a customer service center must prepare to operate at full capacity in the days leading up to a special event and throughout the duration of an event. It is also critical to initiate early discussions with unions to ensure that special event shifts do not interfere with union agreements.

Partnering with Human Resources to establish a comprehensive staffing plan and accurately forecast recruitment needs is essential to ensure sufficient personnel coverage for the entirety of the major event.

06

Agency-Wide Success Strategies



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Develop a staffing plan, assess workforce gaps, initiate labor union discussions, and begin filling open positions.

Deploy increased staffing levels. Monitor command posts and information centers to understand whether contingency staff are needed.

Assess whether staffing levels were sufficient. Identify any departments that need to supplement staff for future events.

PLANNING



Planning workforce transit for large-scale special events demands a strategic and collaborative approach to ensure operational readiness and service continuity. At the forefront of this effort is early engagement with labor unions, which helps align expectations and secure cooperation for temporary service modifications, overtime needs, and expanded roles. Transparent discussions with union leadership and non-represented staff pave the way for flexible staffing arrangements and joint training protocols, especially when supplemental personnel are brought in from other agencies or departments.

- + Engage union leadership during the initial planning phase to discuss anticipated service modifications, overtime needs, and temporary role expansions.
- + Engage management who oversee unionized staff to align expectations and gain input.
- + Negotiate flexible staffing arrangements, including cross-agency resource sharing and temporary reassignments.
- + Map current workforce distribution across operational, supervisory, and technical roles.
- + Analyze turnover and tenure trends to anticipate attrition and retention challenges.
- + Evaluate skill gaps in areas such as crowd management, emergency response, and technology integration.
- + Launch targeted recruitment campaigns for mission-critical roles, including operators, field supervisors, ambassadors, and EOC staff.
- + Review PTO policies to ensure alignment with staffing needs for special events, particularly pertinent attention for agencies that rely on non-FTE ambassador or office staff.
- + Allocate funding from federal programs (e.g., dedicating 5% of Low-No awards to workforce development initiative)

Questions

- Are there registered apprenticeships and internal advancement paths to build a pipeline of skilled workers that can be leveraged?
- What unions does the agency staff have existing agreements with? Will these agreements need to be amended to accommodate special event shifts?
- Do vacation blackouts interfere with union agreements?
- Where are there gaps in the existing workforce?
- Have certain divisions and/or departments experienced high rates of turnover or callouts?
- What funding opportunities are available to supplement staffing needs?
- Are customer information centers fully staffed and prepared to operate at full capacity during the event?
- Are there enough trained EOC personnel to staff the EOC throughout the event duration? If not, are there other internal staff that can be trained to fill in as contingency EOC staff?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



Delivering effective workforce transit operations during large-scale special events requires a dynamic blend of strategic staffing, real-time monitoring, and inter-agency coordination. As transit agencies face surges in ridership and heightened operational complexity, the ability to deploy increased staffing levels becomes a cornerstone of successful event execution.

- + Scale up staffing levels to meet increased ridership and operational complexity.
- + Identify whether the agency is maintaining baseline service or expanding to accommodate event-specific transit needs.
- + Deploy personnel across critical roles: operators, field supervisors, transit ambassadors, and EOC staff.
- + Staff command posts and information centers with personnel trained to interpret live data (e.g., CCTV, crowd sensors).
- + Monitor conditions continuously to determine if contingency staff are needed.
- + Maintain situational awareness to respond to surges, disruptions, or security incidents.
- + Position transit representatives within EOCs to facilitate real-time decision-making.
- + Enable seamless coordination with law enforcement and emergency services.
- + Use live feedback loops to adjust staffing and service levels dynamically.
- + Activate mutual assistance agreements (e.g., TransMAC) to share resources and personnel.
- + Coordinate protocols and training across agencies to ensure consistent service delivery.
- + Mobilize regional support networks for rapid deployment of vehicles and staff.

Questions:

- Are internal command centers (e.g. operations control center, EOC) fully staffed with shifts covering the duration of the event?
- Are extra operators, customer information staff, command center staff, and EOC staff on standby in case the assigned staff are not able to work for any reason?
- Were any staffing positions filled through a mutual aid agreement? Did these staff receive sufficient training?
- Are there systems in place to monitor the staffing levels in information centers, control room settings, and on the frontlines?
- Are there systems in place to survey staff after the event to gather feedback about how the workforce can be improved for future events?
- Were the recruitment teams fully staffed to support the event at the outset?



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



Following a large-scale special event, conducting a thorough assessment of workforce transit delivery is essential to ensure operational effectiveness and inform future planning. The first step is to evaluate whether staffing levels were sufficient to meet the demands of the event. This involves analyzing performance metrics such as service reliability, incident response times, and rider feedback, as well as reviewing reports from command posts and emergency operations centers to identify any areas of strain or overextension.

- + Assess staffing levels for command centers, customer information centers, frontline staff, and other key functions.
- + Gather feedback from all staff involved in the event to understand how workforce development and training can be improved for future events.
- + Review reports from command centers to understand if staffing reallocations were needed and if this caused strain on any particular function.
- + If positions were filled through a mutual aid agreement, assess whether staff were sufficiently trained.
- + Analyze response time to any incidents that occurred during the event.
- + Evaluate the effectiveness of the internal planning committee and identify any opportunities to refine planning workstreams for future events.

Questions:

- Where are there opportunities to strategically solicit feedback from staff and riders to refine future workforce strategies?
- Were staff brought in through mutual aid agreements adequately prepared for their role?
- Were there any incidents during the event? If so, how quickly were staff able to respond?
- Were command centers, EOCs, and customer information centers able to operate at full capacity throughout the duration of the event?
- Did any staff need to be strategically reallocated during the event? If so, did this create a strain on any functions?
- Did riders report any complaints about agency staff during the event?
- Are there clear communications on where to report complaints?
- Where can staffing levels be adjusted to better support special event service in the future?
- Did internal planning committees function as needed? Are there any opportunities to streamline planning workstreams or leverage different internal departments for future events?

GAMECHANGER

SacRT offers one-on-one assistance at job fairs so that candidates can leave with a job offer in-hand. This has been an effective strategy for increasing SacRT's workforce.



Figure 45. Job fair recruitment Credit: SacRT



After-Action

Delivery

Planning



From real-time communications and system monitoring to public information and interagency coordination, the right technology can help agencies respond quickly, manage crowds, and keep riders informed. Whether it's handheld radios for field teams, digital signage in stations, fare payment apps, or crowd analytics platforms, thoughtful use of technology can make transit more responsive, seamless, and safe.

But technology isn't enough by itself, success depends on how well they're integrated into staff workflows, training programs, and communication plans. Technology should support, not complicate, operations. That means choosing user-friendly platforms, ensuring interoperability across agencies, and training staff to use them with confidence. With proactive planning, even smaller agencies can use technology to level up service delivery and create a better experience for all riders.

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Agency-Wide
Success Strategies



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Identify needed tools (e.g., fare readers, radios, tracking). Confirm compatibility and staff readiness.	Monitor systems and troubleshoot issues. Document outages or failures.	Review tech performance and update deployment strategies for future events.
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PLANNING



Planning for technology begins with identifying what tools are available, what tools are needed, and how they will be deployed during the event. Agencies must ensure their systems can support event demands and are interoperable with partner systems where coordination is required.

- + Inventory existing systems and confirm their functionality and capacity for high-volume operations.
- + Identify additional technology needs based on event scale (e.g., portable radios, surveillance cameras, crowd monitoring tools, digital signage, etc.).
- + Coordinate with IT and partner agencies to ensure cybersecurity, compatibility, data sharing, and redundancy.
- + Secure any necessary equipment rentals, software licenses, or vendor support early to avoid delays.
- + Confirm availability and testing of communication systems (e.g., dispatch consoles, mobile devices, incident reporting apps).

Questions

- Does the agency have the technology needed to support communication, monitoring, and service management during the event?
- Are tools such as CCTV, vehicle tracking, and public information displays ready and tested?
- Are digital tools (e.g., crowd analytics or incident reporting platforms) integrated into the agency's event plan?
- Has training been scheduled for staff using new or event-specific technology?



GAMECHANGER

SEPTA recently implemented an open-loop fare collection system that allows riders pay directly with their own bank cards or digital wallets without needing to load money onto a transit-specific card. This fare payment system has helped reduce barriers for first-time riders and improve crowd flow during major events.



Figure 46. Contactless fare payment Credit: SEPTA



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the delivery phase, technology enables agencies to maintain situational awareness, coordinate with partners, and adapt service in real time. Ensuring technology is functioning, monitored, and staffed appropriately is key to operational success.

- + Monitor real-time tools (e.g., AVL, crowd analytics, security feeds) to support on-the-ground decision-making.
- + Ensure radios, mobile apps, and field tech tools are distributed and functioning.
- + Use digital signage, social media, and real-time alerts to keep the public informed of service changes or disruptions.
- + Maintain communication between dispatch, field staff, and external partners through interoperable systems.

Questions:

- Are real-time tools actively monitored and integrated into field decision-making?
- Are communication systems enabling effective coordination across teams?
- Are any tools experiencing outages or performance issues that require a workaround?
- Is the public receiving timely, accurate service information across channels?



After the event, agencies should assess the performance of all technologies used and determine what worked, what failed, and what can be improved or expanded for future use.

- + Review the functionality and performance of all tech tools used during the event.
- + Gather feedback from staff and partners on ease of use, reliability, and integration.
- + Document any gaps or delays that were linked to technology issues or limitations.
- + Consider upgrades or new investments based on lessons learned.

Questions:

- Did the technology support operational goals and real-time responsiveness?
- Were there any technology failures that disrupted service or communications?
- What tools were most effective in managing the event or improving the rider experience?
- How should the agency evolve its tech infrastructure to better support future events?





CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Contingency planning is a crucial element in ensuring that all unexpected occurrences during a special event are addressed proactively and efficiently. No matter how robust the initial planning may be, events of large scale bring a high degree of uncertainty. Transit agencies must prepare for a wide range of scenarios—extreme weather, unanticipated crowd surges, geopolitical disruptions, vehicle breakdowns, labor shortages, and more.

Effective contingency planning is grounded in close coordination with partner agencies, event organizers, local jurisdictions, venue security, law enforcement, and operations contractors. Plans should include designated response teams, backup equipment, pre-positioned assets, and clear communication protocols that can be implemented at a moment's notice. Mechanisms like Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), emergency communication networks, and mutual aid agreements are essential to achieving response agility. For high-impact events such as global summits or large festivals, contingency planning must also consider resource borrowing, long-range supply logistics, and specialized staging or retrofitting needs for borrowed fleets. The scope of contingency preparation must reflect the complexity and visibility of the event, ensuring both system resilience and a positive customer experience.

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Agency-Wide
Success Strategies



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Develop protocols for disruptions, delays, or emergencies. Clarify roles and escalation paths.

Activate plans as needed. Maintain real-time coordination across teams.

Evaluate effectiveness and update contingency playbooks based on what worked or failed.

PLANNING



Effective contingency planning during the pre-event phase lays the foundation for operational resilience and adaptability. This phase is focused on identifying potential disruptions—such as extreme weather, security concerns, or service breakdowns—and developing detailed response strategies. Planning must include coordination across internal departments and with external partners to ensure resource readiness, clarity of roles, and alignment on emergency protocols. Agencies should proactively assess whether their existing fleet, staffing, and infrastructure can support contingency needs or if mutual aid or vendor support is required.

- + Develop comprehensive, scenario-based contingency plans aligned with operational, safety, and customer experience goals.
- + Identify internal and external risks, including political protests, large-scale crowding, equipment failures, and climate-related events (extreme heat, rain, snow).
- + Confirm agency readiness through tabletop exercises or functional drills.
- + Coordinate with internal maintenance, staffing, and communications teams to align rapid-response protocols.
- + Evaluate existing fleet and workforce availability and prepare supplemental support plans if borrowing is required.
- + Update and brief staff on the agency's COOP and ensure relevant protocols are accessible and rehearsed.
- + Develop fleet contingency acquisition plans with milestones including inventory screening, inspection, retrofitting, and operations logistics.
- + Station maintenance staff near high-risk areas to reduce response times for in-field vehicle failures.

Questions

- Has the agency identified and documented all major risks associated with this event?
- Are contingency plans integrated with COOP protocols and rehearsed through drills or exercises?
- Is the agency's existing fleet sufficient to support backup service, or are additional vehicles needed?
- Have staging areas been designated for standby vehicles and personnel?
- Are all stakeholders aligned on radio channels, emergency alert systems, and chain-of-command escalation?
- Are staff prepared to shift to backup operations seamlessly if needed?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



The delivery phase is when contingency plans move from concept to implementation. As the event unfolds, agencies must continuously monitor live conditions and maintain readiness to activate alternate service strategies at a moment's notice. Success during this phase depends on the strategic positioning of standby resources, seamless communication between field and control teams, and coordination with law enforcement and event partners. Flexibility and speed are critical to addressing incidents before they escalate and ensuring transit service continues to operate safely and efficiently.

- + Monitor real-time conditions that may trigger contingency actions—this includes crowd surges, protests, severe weather, or mechanical failures.
- + Ensure standby fleets and supplemental personnel are ready and positioned strategically for rapid deployment.
- + Maintain clear, real-time communication between field staff, control rooms, and partner agencies.
- + Activate alternate routes, supplemental bus bridges, or platform crowd management measures as needed.
- + Make adjustments swiftly to signage, service announcements, and ambassador briefings to reflect live changes.
- + Ensure maintenance, operations, and enforcement teams remain flexible and on-call throughout the event.

Questions:

- Are contingency fleets and operations staff deployed or on standby in appropriate locations?
- Is there continuous communication between operations, law enforcement, and transit control centers?
- Have any conditions triggered contingency activation, and is the response timely?
- Are real-time alerts and updates being shared with the public across all communication channels?
- Is staff receiving current guidance as conditions evolve?



GAMECHANGER

During Super Bowl LIII, MARTA enlisted regional bus operators who do not operate on weekends to supplement their workforce. These operators were deployed to staff a bus bridge the day before the event which allowed MARTA to continue operating bus routes as normal.



Figure 47. MARTA bus Credit: MARTA



Delivery

Planning

After-Action



Following the event, the after-action phase provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of contingency plans. This includes reviewing which strategies were activated, how well they worked, and what improvements are needed. Gathering feedback from internal teams and external partners helps refine future contingency planning and ensures lessons learned are translated into updated protocols. Documenting all actions, response times, and coordination outcomes ensures institutional memory and supports stronger preparation for future events.

- + Conduct a full review of all contingency activations, even if only partially deployed.
- + Gather feedback from field supervisors, frontline staff, and partner agencies about response timing and clarity.
- + Evaluate the adequacy of resources, staff coordination, and communication infrastructure.
- + Update contingency and COOP plans based on real-world performance and challenges encountered.
- + Assess the outcomes of borrowed fleet deployment, including retrofitting success, safety, training needs, and post-event return processes.
- + Document long-lead acquisitions and analyze cost forecasting, risk management, and logistical success.

Questions:

- Which contingency plans were activated, and how well did they perform?
- Were response times appropriate and staffing levels adequate?
- Did any unforeseen challenges emerge that were not accounted for in the plan?
- Were borrowed vehicles or mutual aid agreements effective and timely?
- What communications or training gaps should be addressed before the next event?
- How can documentation and scenario planning be improved to better prepare the agency for future disruptions?



After-Action

Planning

Delivery



AFTER-ACTION PROCESS

The success of a special event should not be measured solely by the absence of issues. It must also be evaluated by how well the agency learns from the experience. While this playbook provides after-action considerations across many individual disciplines, this section focuses specifically on the formal process needed to capture agency-wide lessons learned in a timely, structured, and repeatable format. A strong after-action process ensures that insights—both operational and strategic—are not lost and are readily available for the next event, whether it is weeks or years away.

An effective after-action process is about more than just documentation. It is about building institutional memory. That requires clarity on who owns the process, when and how input is gathered, how feedback is validated, and how findings are synthesized into actionable recommendations. The cadence, speed, and transparency of this effort can make the difference between continuous improvement and repeated missteps. Agencies that institutionalize after-action reporting as a core component of their event lifecycle are better equipped to strengthen service, sharpen coordination, and align future operations with long-term goals.

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Agency-Wide Success Strategies



Planning



Delivery



After-Action

Set up a framework to collect data and feedback, define success metrics, and assign post-event review responsibilities.

Track decisions, performance data, and field feedback to support both immediate fixes and later evaluation.

Facilitate internal debriefs, compile findings, and generate recommendations to improve future special event planning.

PLANNING



Effective contingency planning during the pre-event phase lays the foundation for operational resilience and adaptability. This phase is focused on identifying potential disruptions—such as extreme weather, security concerns, or service breakdowns—and developing detailed response strategies. Planning must include coordination across internal departments and with external partners to ensure resource readiness, clarity of roles, and alignment on emergency protocols. Agencies should proactively assess whether their existing fleet, staffing, and infrastructure can support contingency needs or if mutual aid or vendor support is required.

- + Assign a lead person or department to oversee after-action coordination
- + Define clear success metrics tied to the event's goals
- + Prepare templates and feedback tools in advance
- + Establish expectations for department participation in post-event reviews
- + Set a tentative timeline for debriefs and report finalization

Questions

- Has someone been designated to lead the after-action effort?
- Are the tools and methods in place to gather meaningful feedback?
- Have departments been briefed on their expected role in the process?
- Is there a clear definition of what success means for this event?
- Has a post-event timeline been drafted and communicated?



Planning

Delivery

After-Action



During the event, agencies should begin capturing real-time observations, decisions, and issues that may inform the after-action process. This includes tracking what deviates from the original plan, documenting response actions, and collecting informal feedback from staff. Starting this process during delivery improves accuracy and reduces the burden of post-event recollection.

- + Track key decisions, workarounds, and emerging issues as they occur
- + Encourage staff to log observations and suggestions throughout the event
- + Distribute a survey to capture incidents and successes.
- + Maintain version control for any updated plans or operational changes
- + Begin compiling incident data, service performance, and customer feedback

Questions:

- Are we capturing decisions and deviations from the original plan in real time?
- Have staff been encouraged to share observations that may be useful later?
- Are event changes being documented in a format that can inform post-event analysis?
- Is the agency collecting performance data and public feedback for after-action use?



GAMECHANGER

MARTA developed a template for special event planning based on best practices from previous events. Early in the planning phase, staff enter event-specific information into the template to determine the work that will be needed from each department.

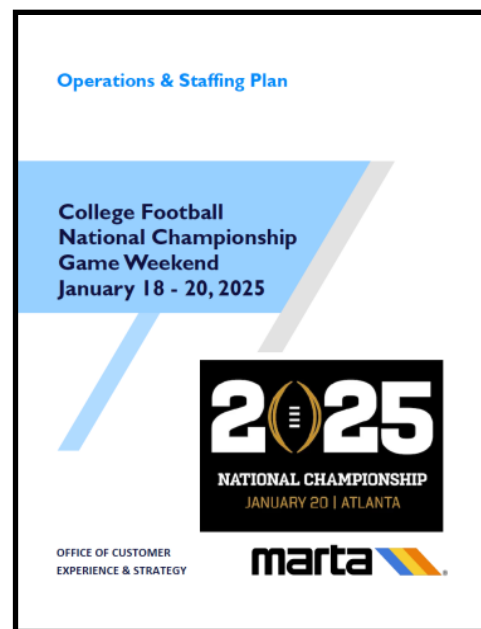


Figure 48. College Football National Championship operations and staffing plan
Credit: MARTA



The period immediately following an event is the most critical time to evaluate what worked, what didn't, and why. To ensure lessons are captured effectively, agencies should hold a structured feedback session within one week of the event while details are still fresh. This session should include all relevant departments and external partners where possible. Information gathered should be compiled into a formal report with actionable recommendations that are shared, stored, and assigned for follow-up. The ultimate goal is not only to document outcomes, but to build institutional knowledge that strengthens readiness for future events.

- + Hold an internal feedback session within one week of the event – do not wait for everyone to be able to attend as it will delay vital window of knowledge capture.
- + Use structured templates to collect input across departments
- + Include external partners in joint debriefs when applicable
- + Identify both successes and areas for improvement
- + Translate findings into clear, actionable recommendations
- + Assign ownership for implementing each recommendation
- + Finalize a written after-action report and store it in an accessible system
- + Schedule a future check-in to assess progress on implementation

Questions:

- Has a cross-departmental feedback session been scheduled within one week of the event?
- Have we gathered input from all departments, including field staff and contractors?
- Are themes emerging that point to policy, training, or resource gaps?
- Are there clear takeaways that can be turned into action items?
- Has a final report been drafted, reviewed, and shared with future planning teams?
- Has ownership been assigned for each key improvement?
- How will we track whether recommendations are implemented before the next event?

