

OSO LANDSLIDE REMBEMBRANCE DAY

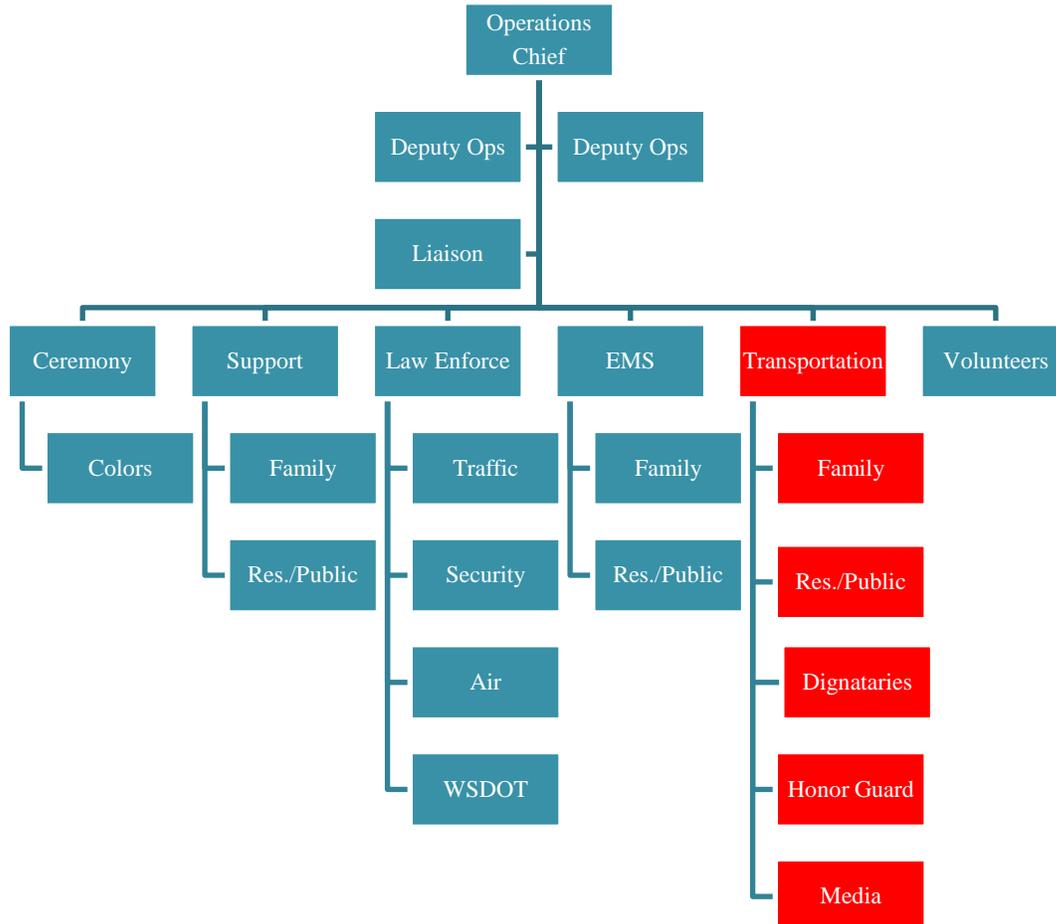
Jim Bloodgood, PE
Snohomish County Traffic Engineer

Oso, Washington is a small, rural community located in unincorporated Snohomish County on State Route 530 between the cities of Arlington (pop. 17,000 approx.) to the west and Darrington (pop 1,400 approx.) to the east. On March 22, 2014 a devastating landslide occurred at 10:45 AM that wiped out part of the community and took the lives of 43 victims. The community followed the Boston Marathon bombing lead and the phrase "Oso Strong" came to be

To commemorate the one year anniversary of the event, a Remembrance Day ceremony was planned at the slide site with the following objectives:

- Provide remembrance for the families, community, volunteers, and first responders in a thoughtful, solemn and respectful manner.
- Facilitate a safe event by coordinating the actions of multiple partners and stakeholders.
- Ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information.

To achieve these objectives the following organizational structure was put in place:



Agencies and organizations involved in the event included:

- Washington State Patrol
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management
- Northwest Incident Management Team

- Snohomish County Sheriff's Office
- Snohomish County Public Works

For the event a 3.2 mile section of SR 530 would be closed from 9:00 AM until Noon. It was estimated that approximately 2,500 would attend. Snohomish County Public Works staff was responsible for the transportation element of the event.

The families of the victims had requested private time at the slide site prior to the ceremony, so separate parking and transportation for the families and for responders/public were provided on both the east and west sides of the closure. (While the event was not closed to the public, it was requested that the "public" in this case be limited to those who responded and provided aide in the rescue/recovery effort.) In addition separate parking and transportation were provided on the west side for an honor guard, volunteers and dignitaries, and the media. Each parking area had a parking manager and volunteers to assist in organizing and directing parking activities. These parking facilities were located on an approximately 15 mile stretch of SR 530 and communications between facilities were conducted using 800 MHz radios.

To provide the families with time alone at the ceremony site, separate staging/delivery points would be provided east and west of the ceremony site for non-family attendees. Figure 1 provides an overview of the parking and staging locations for the various groups.

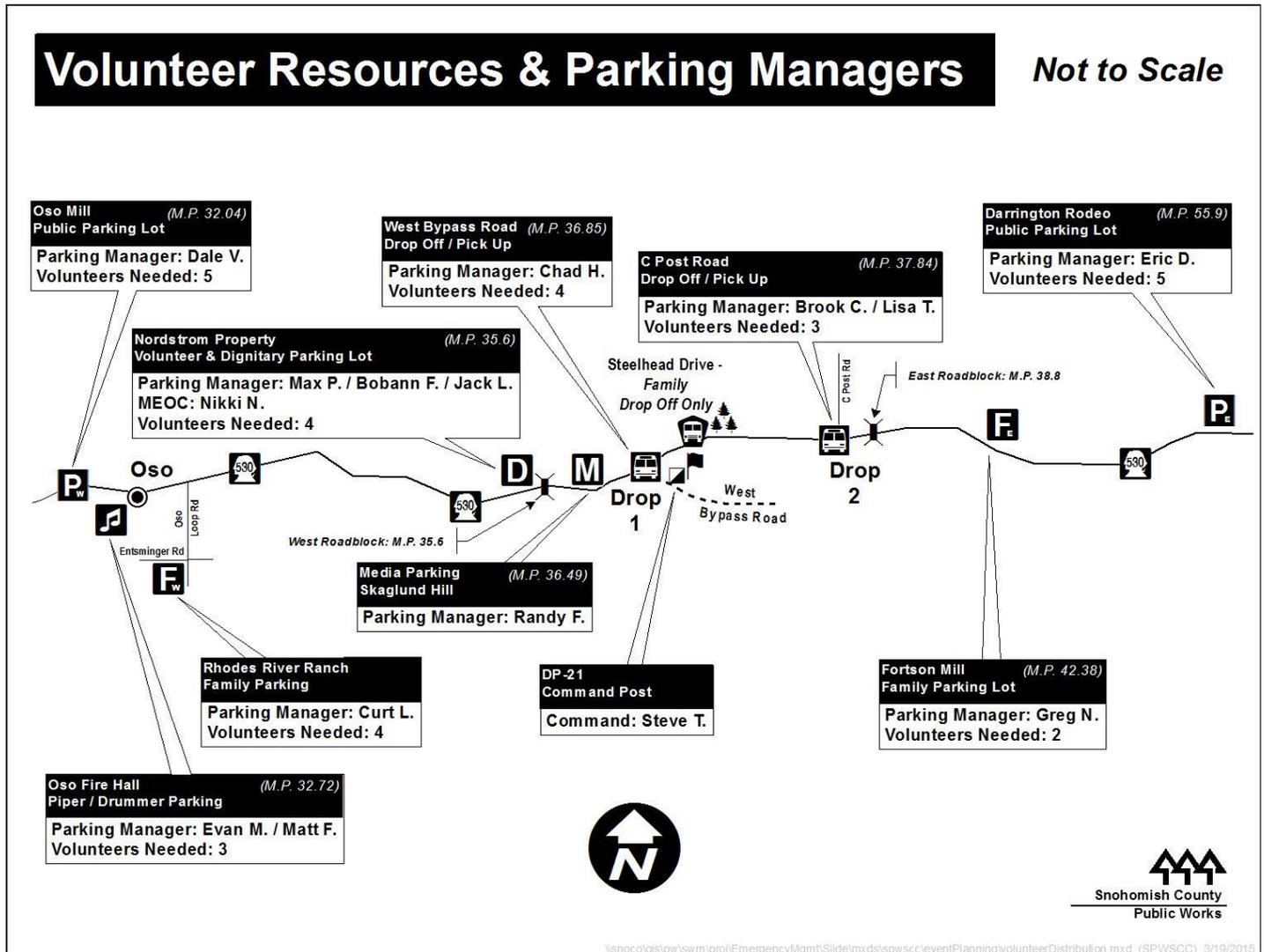


Figure 1

To provide transportation for the event the following vehicles were made available:

- 17 school buses from the Arlington School District

- 5 school uses from the Darrington School District
- 4 vans from Community Transit
- 4 vans from Snohomish County
- 2 Para-transit vans
- 6 gators

Because it was expected that more attendees, both from the families and the responders/public, would be on the west side the vehicles were to be deployed as follows:

- 9 Arlington buses at the Oso Mill site (Responders/Public)
- 3 Arlington buses/ 1 Para-transit van at the Rhodes River Ranch site (Families)
- 8 vans at the Nordstrom site (Volunteers/Dignitaries)
- 2 Arlington buses at the Oso Fire Station (Honor Guard)
- 3 Arlington buses/1 Para-transit van at the Forston Mill site (Families)
- 5 Darrington buses at the Darrington Rodeo site (Responders/Public)
- 2 gators each at the east & west drop off/pick up points and at Steelhead Drive.

Each bus would have a “marshal” who was also equipped with 800 MHz radio. Van and gator drivers would also have radios. The gators would be available to transport those who needed to leave the site for any reason.

Drop off/ pick up point for the families would be the ceremony site, Steelhead Drive. The drop off/pick up points for responders/public, dignitaries and the honor guard would be located approximately ½ mile west of Steelhead Drive at the west bypass road, and approximately ½ mile to the east at C-Post Road. C-Post Road would also be the location of the command post of the bus managers, aka “Bus Czars.”

Parallel to SR 530 is Whitehorse Trail. This is a former railroad right of way that has been purchased by the Snohomish County Parks Department for recreational uses. Not all of Whitehorse Trail is open but a portion to the east of C-Post road is open and would be used for circulating buses and staging buses for post ceremony deployment. Figure 2 shows the bus circulation for the Oso Mill site. The circulation would be the same for the Rhodes River Ranch site.

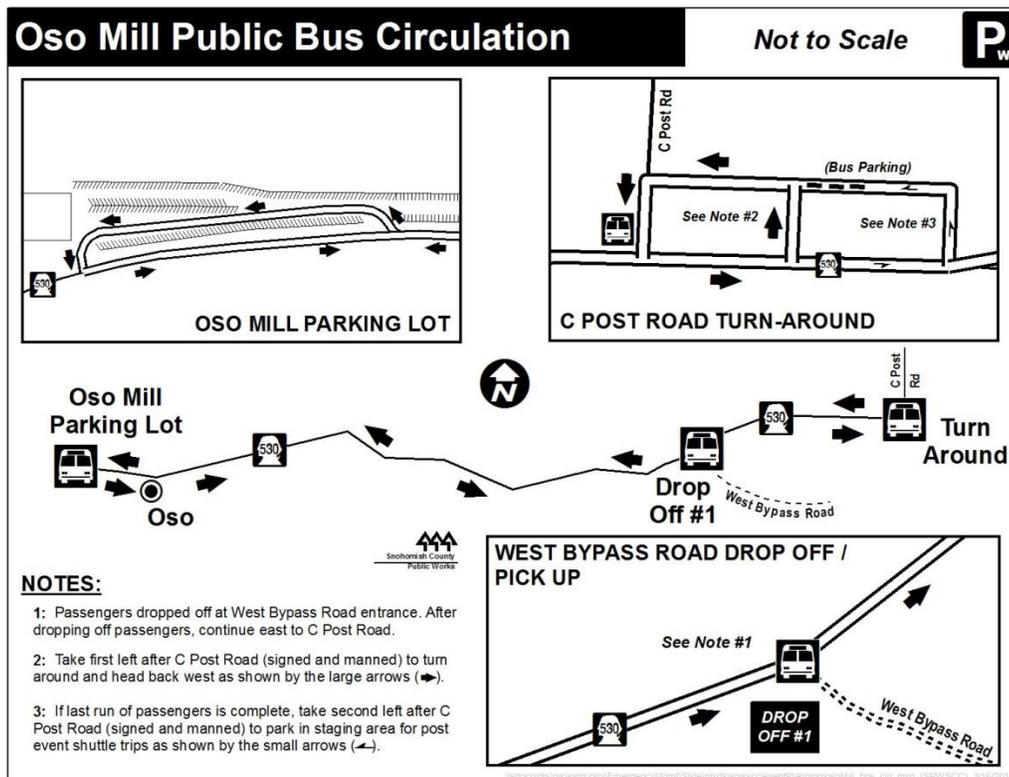


Figure 2

As can be seen, the buses would use the west portion of Whitehorse Trail to circulate for a return trip and after the last trip would stage in the east portion for post ceremony deployment.

Figure 3 shows a similar circulation plan for the parking areas on the east side of the closure.

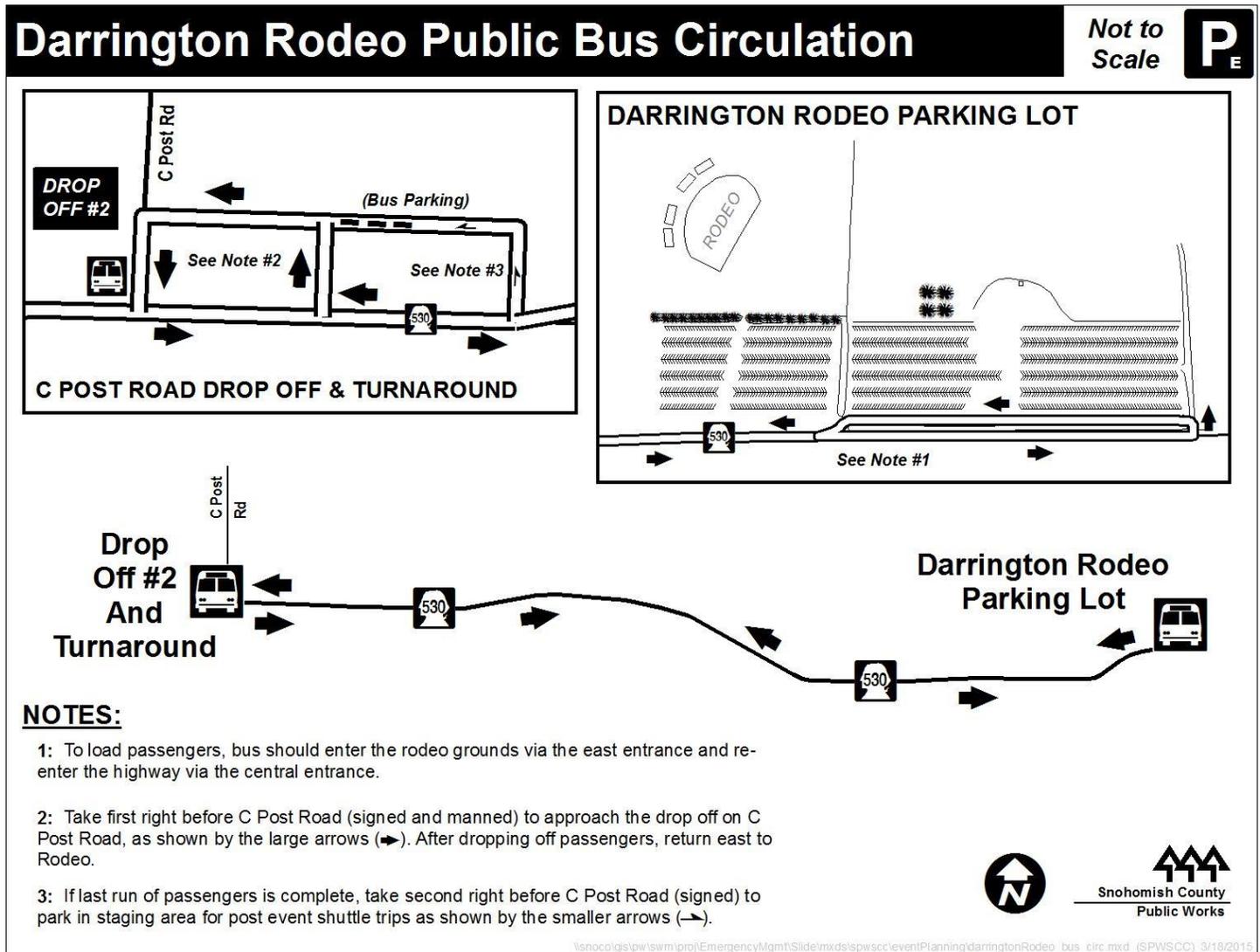


Figure 3

Drop off of attendees would be under live traffic conditions so it was important to have ample off road area for attendees to stage east and west of Steelhead Drive and personnel to keep people off the road until the road was closed. Once the road was closed attendees could move on to SR 530 as the drop off/pick up points were inside the closure.

The schedule of events for the SR 530 Remembrance Day was developed in a very detailed manner with military like precision, as follows.

- 0445 Communications vans in place at Nordstrom and operational
- 0500 Parking lot managers and volunteers arrive at Nordstrom, sign in and receive briefing/equipment
- 0600 Operational briefing at the Oso Fire Station
- 0600 Four (4) CT buses and two (2) Snohomish county vans staged at the Nordstrom site. Begin volunteer loading and movement to assigned destinations.
- 0630 Honor Guard, Color Guard, and Pipe and Drums arrive at Oso Fire Station
- 0630 Two (2) buses at Oso Fire Station
- 0630 Volunteers at assigned posts

- 0645 Color Guard, Honor Guard, and Pipe and Drums load buses at Oso Fire Station and move to destinations: Ceremony Flag and west drop point.
- 0700 Buses stage at Darrington Rodeo and Oso Mill sites
- 0700 Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums at west drop point.
- 0715 Color Guard at Ceremony Flag
- 0730 Buses stage at Rhodes River Ranch and Fortson Mill locations for families
- 0800 Families arrive at Rhodes River Ranch and Fortson Mill locations
- 0815 First of family buses leave Rhodes River Ranch and Fortson Mill for Steelhead Drive
- 0830 All media at media staging are at the top of Skaglund Hill by this time
- 0845 Second of family buses leave Rhodes River Ranch and Fortson Mill for Steelhead Drive
- 0900 WSP closes SR 530 both eastbound and westbound.
- 0900 Dignitaries arrive at Nordstrom site
- 0900 Selected buses and vans position themselves for later return trips**
- 0915 Family quiet time at Steelhead Drive**
- 0930 Dignitary van transports leave Nordstrom site for west drop off point.
- 0950 Honor Guard, Pipes and Drums, responders, public, and dignitaries move from C-Post and west drop off point to Steelhead Drive.
- 1015 Honor Guard, responders, public and dignitaries stage on both side of Steelhead Drive.
- 1015 Family only time at Steelhead Drive is complete.

CEREMONY

- 1037 Moment of Silence
- 1038 Color Guard – flag to full staff
- 1039 Amazing Grace (bagpipers)
- 1043 Bell Ceremony (reading of names)
- 1055 Prayer
- 1100 Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums march offsite to west pick up location

END CEREMONY

- 1105 Family time to interact with responders, public and dignitaries at Steelhead Drive
- 1115 Color Guard, Honor Guard, and Pipes and Drums leave west pick up location for Oso Fire Station
- 1130 Begin to move responders, public and dignitaries to C-Post Road for transport back to vehicle parking
- 1145 First bus and van cycles to return families, responders, public and dignitaries to parking locations
- 1200 WSP opens SR 530 east and west
- 1230 Second and final bus cycle returns families, responders, public and dignitaries to parking locations
- 1300 All bus transport complete. Restage Snohomish County vans at C-Post Road for late departures
- 1300 SR 530 Remembrance Event complete
- 1300 Site Cleanup
- 1500 SR 530 Remembrance Event delegation period ends

The events in bold represents the fifteen minute window to be used to position the buses and vans at their post ceremony staging areas. There would be no noise from the buses to be heard after 0915. Also, no big, yellow school buses were to be visible from the Steelhead Drive ceremony site. Figure 4 shows the post ceremony staging of buses and vans.

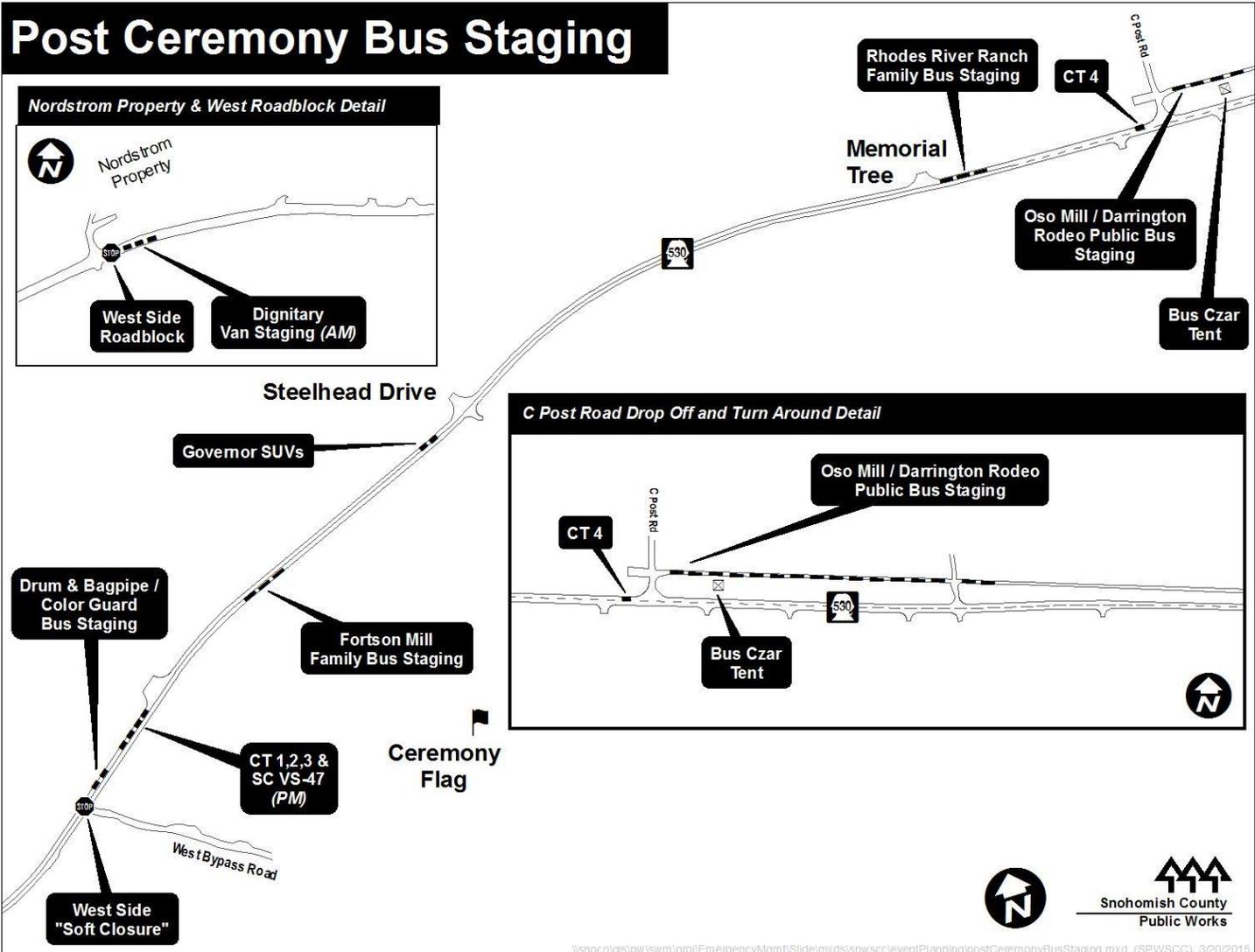


Figure 4

The two buses for the Honor Guard and the Drum & Bagpipe Corp were to be sent to the West Bypass Road. The Fortson Mill family buses were to head west on SR 530 to a school bus turnaround, head eastbound and stage to the west of Steelhead Drive and out of sight of the ceremony site. The Rhodes River Ranch family buses were to stage westbound on SR 530 at the Memorial Tree east of Steelhead Drive and also out of sight of the ceremony site. Once the ceremony was over the Fortson Mill and Rhodes River Ranch family buses would move up to Steelhead Drive to pick up family members. The Darrington Rodeo and Oso Mill responder/public buses were to stage on Whitehorse Trail at C-Post Road. After the ceremony all the responders/public and the media were to go to C-Post Road for rides back to their parking sites.

All in all, it was a good transportation plan and it turned out very well. There were glitches which actually turned out to be positives in the end. For example, due to the cold and blustery weather conditions, the Fortson Mill buses and a stray Darrington Rodeo bus were intercepted at Steelhead Drive and were used to keep family members warm. Also, the stray Darrington bus took off without her marshal and for awhile, it was not known where that bus was. Fortunately, another Darrington driver was able to contact the stray bus via cell phone and the driver and marshal were reunited. In addition, there was one Arlington bus driver that did not attend the pre event briefing and was out of place a few times but staff adapted and everything turned out fine. It was a very successful event!

After the event when all had returned to the Nordstrom site to turn in the equipment and radios, there was a lot of high fiving and fist bumping by public works staff. They knew they had just participated and experienced something incredible and. In addition to being Oso Strong, they were also Oso Proud!



Below are a couple of emails received the day after the event:

"Hello,

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your work over the past weeks that made yesterday's SR530 Landslide One Year Remembrance possible. You all worked tirelessly on an event that changed course multiple times during the planning phase. Thank you all for your patience with the process and with me as we worked through the challenges. As a team coming from different backgrounds and disciplines your work honored those 43 who lost their lives, the survivors, their families and the residents.

Yesterday all of your planning provided an event that went smoothly without any major issues. As items arose the needs were met quickly and completely. I received comments from Families, Elected Officials, Responders, and the public in appreciation for a very moving, loving, honoring and professional remembrance.

I am honored to have had this opportunity to work with you all.

*Thank You again,
Steve Mason
Operations Section Chief
NWIMT"*

"On behalf of the families... THANK YOU. It all went as planned. If there were any snafus or issues, you all did a wonderful job making sure they were taken care of before anyone knew about it. The two uncontrollable factors were the amount of attendees and the weather. We didn't quite see 2000 people but the ones that were there were the ones that wanted and needed to be there. The weather? Who knew it'd be windy and chilly? No one. But hey... someone made the call and nearly a hundred hospital blankets were suddenly issued to keep people warm. Hand warmers appeared out of nowhere. Warm coffee was there when it was needed. The walled tents kept the cold breeze out. The buses with heat in them were on scene without anyone getting upset. AMAZING. Simply amazing. Even the families that were upset during the planning process apologized several times to me and Tim. The family lantern lighting ceremony was awesome as well... with a fantastic turnout. I found words to write this email... but words alone do not do justice for what each and everyone of you did for this. You all deserve so much more than what I can say or do. Each one of you are welcome to my fire anytime..." Dayn Brunner