



State of Vermont
Department of Public Safety
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To: Vermont General Assembly
From: Commissioner Michael Schirling, Department of Public Safety
Via: House Committee on Government Operations
Senate Committee on Government Operations
Re: Law Enforcement Body Worn Cameras – Statewide assessment & General update
Date: December 21, 2020

Statewide Assessment

Pursuant to S.124/Act 166 the Department of Public Safety was directed to:
“consult with the Council and the Law Enforcement Advisory Board to investigate the possibility of a statewide group purchasing contract for law enforcement body cameras and of central storage locations. If the Department recommends such a group, it shall detail its recommended structure and operation.”

To begin this work, we conducted a statewide assessment of body worn camera (BWC) usage and needs. During this assessment, we gathered information from almost all law enforcement agencies statewide. High-level detail is as follows:

There are two major vendors whose equipment is primarily in use in Vermont – Motorola Watchguard and Axon.

BWC units are in use in the majority of agencies and by the majority of officers in Vermont including:

- VT State Police - approximately 205 units in use
- Statewide other agencies - approximately 36 agencies and 360 units in use

BWC units needed to equip officers at agencies without body worn cameras:
Statewide need - approximately 26 agencies and 300 units needed

Statewide Group Purchasing Exploration

To assess the cost to acquire, deploy, and annually maintain BWC an additional 350 units (to account for agencies who have not responded to our survey) we used information from the VT State Police vendor – Motorola Watchguard – regarding the cost of adding these units.

The following is the best current assessment of costs based on 350 additional units:

- Hardware (cameras and accessories) \$574,000 + \$1,500 per location (one time cost*)
- Hardware (wireless connectivity for cars) \$419,000 (one time cost*)



- Software (annual licenses) \$235,000 (annual cost)
- Not included are installation, training, and other costs.
- *It should be noted that the one time costs recur after 4-6 years for hardware updates / new technology.

This assessment includes local, county, state agencies (including VT DMV Enforcement and Fish & Wildlife).

Creating a statewide purchasing option is a viable alternative to facilitate the purchase of body worn cameras and/or to transition existing contracts to a more unified system for acquisition and annual service and storage costs.

However, there are other challenges related to further expansion of BWC use statewide including but not limited to:

1. Funding the cost of acquisition and ongoing service and storage for many communities with limited and strained budgets.
2. Costs and complexity associated with managing the BWC program, equipment maintenance, management of the stored video, and responses to public information requests related to the video.

It is premature to specifically recommend statewide purchasing as the direct and ancillary costs to municipal and county agencies is an essential component of the viability of that recommendation. To the extent that a statewide contract for purchase, maintenance, and data storage reduces those costs to agencies, statewide purchasing is a good option.

Body Worn Camera Policy Development

While development of an updated statewide policy will ultimately be completed by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council and the Law Enforcement Advisory Board, the Department of Public Safety has been working on updating the current statewide policy based on feedback received during ongoing statewide community and stakeholder engagement. Survey mechanisms have been created at dps.vermont.gov/modernization to enable feedback, in addition to feedback received via email and in virtual meetings.