

Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning Project Stakeholder Update



December 2024

Happening Now

The draft of the first major deliverable item for the project, the Inventory and Assessment Report was provided to the Task Force via remote access. The report includes the following items:

- An inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and equipment
- The number of full-time and part-time personnel for each dispatch center
- The total spending on dispatch service
- Gaps in dispatch service and/or significant challenges
- An assessment of the training elements and standards, policies and procedures, quality assurance procedures, and dispatch service provided by each center
- An assessment of Statewide trends concerning key elements of dispatch service and how they compare to national trends
- A propagation analysis of the Vermont State Police network, as well as a sample local system analysis
- A list of all frequencies and communications sites in use by public safety agencies throughout the State
- An identification of communications dead zones
- An assessment of the cyber security processes and procedures for each dispatch center as well as Statewide trends

Dozens of comments from Task Force members and Televate were compiled and provided to MCP. These comments have been addressed and the team is working to finalize the document. Each dispatch center will also be provided with the inventory and assessment data for their center to give them the opportunity to verify and/or update the information.

Project Status

These are the major activities and accomplishments that have taken place this month.

- The draft Inventory and Assessment Report was provided to the Task Force via remote access. Comments were compiled and provided to MCP to be addressed and to update the report.
- Radio coverage analyses have been performed and are being updated to incorporate new information.
- The third Community Listening Session was held 12/6.
- The following system planning workshops were held to provide additional input into the system planning process:
 - Lessons Learned from previous regional studies and activities
 - Dispatch operations: procedures, policies, training, etc.
 - Governance
 - Dispatch/mission-critical technologies, and
 - Wireless coverage: LMR and cellular/broadband
- A draft outline of the system planning document was provided and will be reviewed.

Did You Know?

The Task Force facilitated multiple workshops in November and December 2024 (with one additional planned for January 2025) that engaged Vermont public safety, members of the legislature, and other key stakeholders to share their insights, experiences and recommendations. The workshops focused on Planning and Lessons Learned, Operations, Governance, Mission Critical Technologies, Radio and Cellular – Wireless, and Funding. Recommendations from the first three meetings are summarized below. Keep an eye out for information about the other meetings in our upcoming stakeholder updates!

Planning and Lessons Learned

A panel of experts involved in the formation or attempted formation of regional Public Safety communications centers, or who are currently a director of a regional Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) or communications center shared their insights, experiences, and recommendations on how to design a viable regional communications center governance model. The focus on the discussion included the lessons learned from successful and failed governance models and how to best plan for the future. Key recommendations from the workshop members include the following:

- Governance structure must include a voice for the towns and cities that receive dispatching services.
- Elected government leaders along with public safety (police, fire, and emergency medical) chiefs and leadership, as well as dispatchers need to have seats on the governance committees.
- Two key requirements for regional communication centers to be successful are governance and funding.
- The cost paid by towns and cities to receive dispatching services must be equitable.
- Engaging the town select boards is essential – provide incentives for towns to join and maintain allegiance to a 911 communications center.
- Outreach to labor unions to make unions representatives comfortable with communications center structure and governance.

We want to know what topics you'd like to learn more about!

For direct inquiries to the Task Force regarding the project, please contact DPS.PSCTaskForce@vermont.gov

Visit our website at <https://dps.vermont.gov/committees-boards/communications>

Did You Know? (cont'd)

Operations Workshop

A group of experts from around the State were invited to discuss several aspects of dispatch operations and provide opinions on what is working well and what is not working well. The group discussed a variety of topics, such as policies and procedures, personnel, training, leadership and planning, quality assurance/quality improvement, recruiting and hiring, response alternatives, and facilities. With a focus on providing realistic guidance and objectives, the Task Force recommended:

- Focus on serving customers and include the hospital system.
- Seek a state-of-the-art solution.
- Account for local control and equity and equality – focus on the people who need the service.
- Focus on technology. Agencies need a CAD upgrade – a true CAD system with response plans.
- Standardize training.
- The study must yield result that will be felt throughout the State.
- Establish governance for the new model that drives funding, technology, etc.
- Dispatchers should be from local agencies familiar with the area, and a common dispatch center should be used for agencies in a given area when possible.

Governance

A team of PSAP and dispatch center governance experts, many of whom are dispatch center directors, engaged in a thoughtful discussion on governance models, equitable funding, local control and regionalization, and governance solutions to guide the future of public safety communications in Vermont. Individually and collectively, the participants shared their experience in designing and managing successfully governed dispatch organizations and provided recommendations to guide the future of PSAP/dispatch centers in Vermont. A few of their key recommendations are listed below.

- A governance structure managed under a clearly stated operational charter with by-laws, and a governance committee is essential.
- In a successful future governance model, the towns have full representation, pay similar fees, and receive a similar quality of dispatch services.
- Communications centers cannot become so large that they cannot manage the high speed/low drag ebbs and flows of the emergency call taking and dispatch work.
- What's not working are the fees that towns are charged to be dispatched when considering that some towns are dispatched at no cost.
- The cost of 911 public safety communications systems and how we pay for it are keys to Vermont's future success.

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