

# Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning Project Stakeholder Update



*November 2024*

## ***Happening Now: Data Collection and Analysis***

The majority of the data collection process has been completed and efforts are underway to compile and analyze all of the data. The first major deliverable item for the project is the Inventory and Assessment Report, which is currently in development. The report will include the following items:

- An inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and equipment
- The number of full-time and part-time personnel
- The total spending on dispatch service
- An identification of communications dead zones
- Gaps in dispatch service and/or significant challenges
- An assessment of the dispatch service provided
- An assessment of training elements and standards
- An analysis of each center's policies and procedures
- A review of existing quality assurance procedures

The draft of the report will be delivered at the end of the month. It will undergo extensive review by the Task Force and project team and comments will be incorporated. The final Inventory and Assessment report will be available in mid-December.

## ***Project Status***

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

- Development continues on the draft Inventory and Assessment Report, which will be delivered on 11/29.
- Radio coverage analyses have been performed for the current state radio assets and some regional systems to identify coverage gap areas.
- Planning for the workshops has continued, and recommended attendees have been identified. The Lessons Learned workshop is scheduled for Friday 11/22. Additional workshops will be planned for the weeks of 12/9 and 12/16. Invitations will be sent out prior to the end of November.
- The third Community Listening Session has been rescheduled to 12/6.
- Cybersecurity assessments have begun.
- A schedule adjustment has occurred to accommodate two drafts of the System Design Options report, including a draft prepared for legislative and public review.
- MCP and Televate are holding additional weekly meetings to ensure continued collaboration on pending deliverables.

## Did You Know?



### The Critical Roll of 911 Call Processing and Dispatch in Vermont Public Safety Communications

The Vermont Public Safety Communications program highly values and considers the roll of the statewide 911 Call Processers and Dispatchers as fundamental to the public safety communications landscape in Vermont. In recognition of the importance of this valued community of professionals, the Task Force includes members of the dispatch profession and has directed outreach to engage and document their operational requirements and gaps such that improvements can be recommended to further enable them to deliver excellent service to their communities. Among the key discoveries to date include the need for standardized 911 Call Processer and Dispatcher training and certification.

Telecommunicator training and certification are considered essential for Vermont 911 Call Takers and Dispatchers. These Vermont professionals support and typically adhere to the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) (see <https://www.apcointl.org/> for APCO International's website, or see <https://www.apco-atlantic.org/> for the chapter where Vermont is a member) library of best practices and procedures; however, there is no universal State of Vermont training and certification program for public safety dispatchers. The Vermont Enhanced 911 Board (<https://e911.vermont.gov/>) does provide a training program for 911 Call Takers who work out of the State of Vermont 911 System, which is anchored on the APCO procedures and training recommendations. The Vermont 911 System consists of six diverse Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) locations collectively serving as one statewide 911 system. All 911 calls are initially routed to one of these answering points based on the originating caller's location and are either dispatched directly from one of these locations, or, are transferred to one of the 37 Dispatch Centers throughout the state (see [VT System Planning Stakeholder Update October 2024.pdf](#) for additional information) where they are dispatched. The challenge is that there are no State sanctioned certification and training programs for the dispatchers working out of these Dispatcher Centers.

While the training for most new and experienced dispatchers varies from agency to agency, much of the current training for new dispatchers is provided on the job by experienced dispatchers. Experienced dispatchers may sign up for advanced training programs, several of which are offered in New Hampshire (with whom Vermont maintains a relationship of cross state boundary emergency dispatching relationship) and by attending advanced classes delivered by experienced dispatchers from Vermont. Key challenges for Dispatch Centers regarding mandatory dispatcher training include their inability to backfill dispatchers during their training, funding to pay for the initial and advanced training, and their ongoing need to provide responsive emergency dispatching to their communities.

In the absence of a Vermont certified and state provided dispatcher training program, a number of dedicated Vermont dispatchers have developed a Dispatcher Training Program and volunteer as frequently as possible, typically a couple of times per year, to offer the training. Members of this training program, and other dedicated dispatchers, have advanced an initiative for the State of Vermont to sanction, fund, and certify Communications Training Officers (CTO) to deliver the training program as a mandatory training course for all dispatchers leveraging a state provided training academy. There is also an interest by the dispatcher community to create a Dispatcher Association similar to those for Fire, Police, and Sheriffs that exist in Vermont.

The Vermont Public Safety Communications Task Force is prioritizing the goals of promoting uniform dispatcher standards and training within the current program and continues to conduct outreach and assessment of the current landscape for these highly valued Telecommunicator professionals.

***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](mailto:DPS.PSCTaskForce@vermont.gov)

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