

Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning Project Stakeholder Update



September 2024

Happening Now: Data Collection and Analysis

September has been a key month for the project as we are nearing the completion of the data collection. As of September 19th, all dispatch centers have been visited and interviewed and all four Town Hall meetings have been held. The Task Force appreciates the excellent attendance and participation from stakeholders throughout the state at the Town Hall sessions. Although there are many unique situations, several themes emerged from the Town Halls, including:

- Wireless coverage for both public safety radio and cellular communications is lacking in many areas and must be improved
- Many different dispatch center funding and governance models exist, and more commonality and equity would be beneficial
- Funding for improvements to public safety communications will be very challenging and Task Force recommendations must address these challenges
- Funding must also address communications system sustainability
- Some level of control must be maintained by the municipalities (“local control”)
- Fire/EMS dispatching would benefit greatly from a fully functional CAD system
- Dispatch center staffing levels remain a challenge
- Staff training must remain a priority, and common standards should be established

We also heard a variety of success stories across the state where several entities in a region have banded together, pooled resources, established partnership agreements, and are operating at a higher level of service than the members would otherwise be able to do individually.

The project team’s next steps will include holding community listening sessions to solicit input from the general public, analyzing the data collected to date, developing key attributes of potential solutions, and preparing for upcoming workshops to gather further input from stakeholders throughout the state.

Project Status

- MCP completed all dispatch center visits and interviews.
- All four Town Halls were held.
- Planning for the Community Listening Sessions occurred.
- MCP contacted agencies to help complete the cyber security surveys.
- MCP continues to compile and analyze the data collected from the questionnaires and dispatch center visits.
- MCP’s wireless team is in the process of developing maps of the wireless information that has been collected.
- Televate reached out to additional public safety leaders to understand and document coverage challenges.

Did You Know?



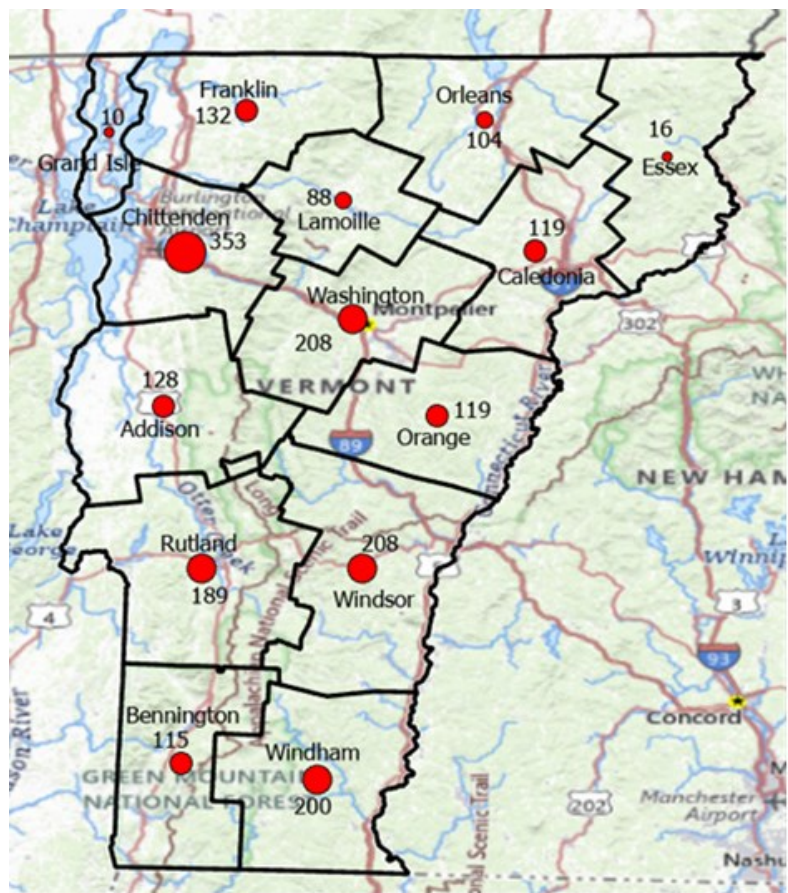
Integral to the data collection process, the project team has been investigating the existing Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems in use throughout the state. A review of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) data base indicates there are over 5,100 different frequency and radio site transmission location combinations licensed within Vermont and some neighboring portions of New Hampshire.

Of those 5,100+ combinations, the Very High Frequency (VHF) band (150-170 MHz) is the most common in use, with a total of almost 3,000 frequency/location combinations. This frequency band is used primarily by local fire and EMS agencies throughout Vermont.

The majority of the remaining frequency/location licenses, over 1800, are in the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band (450-470 MHz). In Vermont, these licenses are used primarily by the State Police and local sheriff and police departments.

It is interesting to note that the FCC database indicates that there are over 1,800 different physical locations used for transmitting/receiving LMR radio signals and providing radio coverage. Not surprisingly, Chittenden County lists the most at over 300 locations. Grand Isle County shows the fewest number of locations at only ten (10). However, it is somewhat surprising to see that Essex County has the second fewest number of locations at just 16.

Inadequate radio coverage is one of the key concerns of the first responder community in Vermont. Therefore, one of the primary challenges of this project will be to compile all radio site location and frequency data, analyze it, and determine the best options to utilize these resources to improve radio coverage for first responder agencies throughout the state.



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

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