

February 28, 2022

Mary S. Hooper, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations

Jane Kitchel, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

IN RE: Transition to Statewide Regional Emergency Communications, Working Draft Updated
1/26/2022

Dear members of House and Senate Appropriations Committees:

As stakeholders involved in the daily business of Emergency Medical Services, this group has formed to advocate for best practices as they apply to the communities we serve in the State of Vermont. The undersigned has been requested, by unanimous motion, to address concerns with the proposed Transition to Statewide Regional Emergency Communications (“The Transition”), presented by W. Michael Schirling, Commissioner, Department of Public Safety.

The Transition proposed has failed to consider the stakeholders who will be the most impacted by a Regional Dispatch approach. In fact, the proposal intends to empanel a committee of stakeholders to handle implementation, not to address if the proposal is sound in its current form. We are concerned on several levels:

1. The proposal leaves many unanswered questions regarding implementation. How will it work?
2. What is the plan for backup and redundancy to ensure that the system is failsafe?
3. How will the system be funded moving forward? Who will pay once the initial investment and “sunset” is expended?
4. The funding model in the proposed Transition document includes FY 23 and a cessation of funding 24-36 months afterward. Will it then fall to the taxpayers or to the EMS providers themselves to maintain?

As you are aware, Emergency Medical Services are in financial crisis in Vermont and nationwide. They operate largely on Medicare and Medicaid based reimbursement which doesn't cover the cost of lifesaving care provided. EMS agencies simply do not have any additional funds to support the proposed Transition. We are concerned that this proposal will force already cash stretched EMS agencies to absorb the cost and that there will be delays and critical failures which will impede the community's access to lifesaving care.

We would like to express our opposition to the proposal.


Respectfully Submitted,



Drew Hazelton, on behalf of
The Vermont EMS Advisory Committee


CC:

Senate Committee on Appropriations

Stephanie Barrett, Associate Fiscal Officer 

Chrissy Gilhuly, Senior Staff Associate 

House Committee on Appropriations

Maria Belliveau, Associate Fiscal Officer 

Theresa Utton-Jerman, Senior Staff Associate 

House Committee on Government Operations

Andrea Hussey, Committee Assistant 

Senate Committee on Government Operations

Gail Carrigan, Committee Assistant 