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H.494

Draft Amendment Regarding Regional Dispatch and Public Safety
Communications

Sec. X. PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM; DISPATCH;
INVENTORY; DESIGN

(a) The General Assembly finds that protecting public safety and welfare is an essential function of State government and it is in the public interest to establish a statewide reliable, secure, and interoperable public safety communications system, comprising integrated 911 call-taking and regional dispatch systems, and to ensure that the system is equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessible by all persons throughout the State.

(b) The transition to a public safety communications system as specified in subsection (a) of this section shall be overseen and managed by the Enhanced 911 Board, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Safety, the Secretary of Digital Services, the Commissioner of Public Service, and relevant State and local public safety and government stakeholders. In addition, the Board is authorized to retain a project manager and one or more additional consultants with relevant expertise in public safety communications technology, design, and financing to assist with the requirements of this section.

(c) The establishment of a statewide public safety communications system shall occur in essentially three phases that include data collection and analysis,

1 design, and implementation. Certain aspects of each phase may occur
2 simultaneously as deemed appropriate by the Board.

3 (1) Data collection and analysis. The Board shall conduct a complete
4 inventory and assessment of all aspects of dispatch service currently provided
5 in Vermont and, to the extent possible, dispatch service currently provided
6 outside Vermont for response agencies located in Vermont, which shall
7 include:

8 (A) an inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and
9 equipment, including facilities, hardware, software, applications, and land
10 mobile radio systems, referring to and incorporating any existing relevant data
11 collected by a State or municipal entity;

12 (B) the number of full-time and part-time personnel currently
13 performing dispatch service, taking into account personnel who have other
14 responsibilities in addition to providing dispatch service;

15 (C) identification of the person at each dispatch center who is
16 responsible for coordinating and overseeing dispatch service;

17 (D) the current total spending on dispatch service in Vermont, taking
18 into account all federal, State, and municipal appropriations and fees;

19 (E) to the extent feasible, identification of the communications dead
20 zones in the State, meaning those areas that lack the infrastructure to support
21 public safety land-mobile-radio communications or cellular voice and data

1 service, or both, and taking into consideration all cell towers that are part of the
2 FirstNet statewide public safety radio access network; cellular mapping efforts
3 conducted by the Department of Public Service; and any existing, relevant
4 mapping data collected by a dispatch center or other entity;

5 (F) with the assistance of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, a
6 needs assessment to determine where and to what extent there are gaps in
7 dispatch service or significant challenges to the delivery of dispatch service
8 and to identify those municipalities that are likely to be most affected by either
9 the curtailment of dispatch service from the two State-run public safety
10 answering points or from a new financing mechanism for the continuation of
11 such service;

12 (G) a review of the contracts or agreements between existing dispatch
13 centers and the municipalities and response agencies each center serves;

14 (H) an assessment of the service provided by each dispatch center
15 and identification of particular challenges or vulnerabilities, if any, including
16 with regard to workforce, failover procedures, communications technology,
17 costs, and governance.

18 (2) Design. On or before January 15, 2024, the Board shall develop a
19 preliminary design for a public safety communications system and, on or
20 before January 15, 2025, the Board shall submit to the General Assembly a

1 final design proposal. To the extent practicable in the time allotted, the
2 preliminary design shall incorporate:

3 (A) technical and operational standards and protocols that ensure an
4 interoperable and resilient system that incorporates computer-aided dispatch
5 systems and land mobile radios;

6 (B) technology life cycle standards to ensure system and database
7 upgrades are timely, sufficiently financed, and properly managed;

8 (C) system and database security and cybersecurity standards;

9 (D) continuity of operations standards and best practices that
10 encompass failover procedures and other system redundancies to ensure the
11 continuous performance of mission-critical operations;

12 (E) workforce training standards and other staffing best practices that
13 support the retention and well-being of dispatch personnel;

14 (F) a resource allocation plan that ensures dispatch service is
15 available in all regions of the State, including the establishment of new
16 dispatch centers or expanded capacity and capability of existing dispatch
17 centers, if deemed appropriate by the Board;

18 (G) a process for annually reviewing the budgets of dispatch centers;

19 (H) a recommended governance model to ensure effective State and
20 regional oversight, management, and continuous improvement of the system,
21 including identification of staffing or operational needs to support such

1 oversight and management of the system by the Board or by another State
2 agency, if deemed appropriate by the Board;

3 (I) cost estimates for implementing the system in Vermont, including
4 operational and capital costs;

5 (J) a recommendation for sustainably and equitably financing the
6 system that shall include consideration of:

7 (i) existing budgets for regional and local dispatch;

8 (ii) the population, grand list, and call volume of each
9 municipality;

10 (iii) existing and potential State funding streams;

11 (iv) available federal funding opportunities for public safety
12 agencies and emergency communications systems, including equipment,
13 network infrastructure, and services; and

14 (v) a review of financing models adopted in other jurisdictions for
15 public safety communications systems;

16 (K) any other standards or procedures deemed necessary or
17 appropriate by the Board.

18 (3) Implementation. It is the intent of the General Assembly that a
19 statewide public safety communications system will be fully operational on or
20 before July 1, 2026. To that end, the Board shall develop a strategic

1 implementation plan that includes target dates for how and when the transition
2 to a fully operational system will occur.

3 (d) On or before January 15, 2024, the Board shall submit the findings and
4 recommendations required by this section in a written report to the Senate
5 Committees on Government Operations and on Finance and the House
6 Committees on Government Operations and Military Affairs, on Ways and
7 Means, and on Environment and Energy.

8 Sec. Y. EFFECTIVE DATE

9 This section and Sec. X shall take effect on passage.