

RECOMMENDATIONS

DECEMBER 1, 2025



Vermont Public Safety Communications Task Force

1 Public Safety Communications Project Overview and Recommendations

In pursuit of a reliable, secure, and interoperable statewide public safety communications system, the Vermont General Assembly, through Act 78 of 2023, established the Public Safety Communications Task Force to oversee and manage all phases of the system's development, design, and implementation. Throughout the resulting Statewide Public Safety Communications System Planning project, the Task Force engaged in outreach and collaboration with the statewide public safety stakeholder community to gather and analyze information about the existing public safety dispatch, land mobile radio (LMR), mobile data, and other critical communications systems. This process resulted in the Task Force recommendations, summarized below, which are designed to advance a reliable, secure, and interoperable statewide public safety communications system that is equitably and sustainably financed and universally accessible by all people throughout the State. In summary, the Task Force is requesting support for the development of a formal Public Safety Communications governance board, along with approval to allocate the remaining Act 78 budget to the initiatives presented.

The goal of achieving operational standards and fee equity across the entirety of dispatching landscape is a challenging objective to achieve in one movement. The following Task Force recommendations will deliver key system upgrades and improve interoperability by creating common dispatching standards and best practices facilitated through training, building a common quality assurance framework, and through the introduction of critical public safety technologies, many of which can be integrated in year one. These recommendations will also provide a strong public safety communications system foundation that will foster common operating architecture and innovations that will better protect and serve Vermont's public and first responder community. Importantly, these recommendations will provide a pathway on which future improvements to the statewide public safety communications system can be achieved.

Strategic Objective	Task Force Recommended Action
Governance	Establish a Governance Board that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates as an independent entity • Has decision-making authority and the authority to approve minimum technical and operational standards, hire staff, and enter into agreements • Promotes service improvement and organic consolidation based on common performance benchmarks
Reliability	Governance Board to Establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum set of policies, procedures, and protocols to be followed by all dispatch centers serving Vermont • Standardized QA process and resource materials in support of dispatching • A list of approved initial and ongoing training programs, followed by a statewide certification program • Templates to standardize job classifications, job descriptions, and promote dispatcher professional reclassification • Ongoing dispatcher training and leadership workshops covering strategic planning, change management, and continuity of operations • Support for hybrid staffing across centers for resource backfill and staffing emergencies • Solutions and best practices to facilitate statewide public safety communications system technical and operational fail over

Strategic Objective	Task Force Recommended Action
Interoperability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system with multi-discipline functionality (police, fire, EMS), CAD-to-CAD interoperability, interfaces to location data, mapping, the State's records management systems, paging and alerting Expand the use of RapidSOS and state GIS resources for all dispatch centers Update the Land Mobile Radio (LMR) infrastructure, while taking into account existing systems and expansion plans, to deliver reliable public safety radio across common dispatch areas to enable regional and statewide interoperability based on robust LMR network design coverage, channel capacity, and interoperability standards
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance Board and operations to be covered by remaining Act 78 funding for three years, at which time proposed dispatch fee assessments will continue to provide funding
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a fee formula that incorporates towns not currently paying for dispatch service and adjusts rates according to system utilization. This formula will be designed to offset ongoing costs of the common LMR system, shared statewide dispatch technologies and services, and actual dispatch service to municipalities. It should be introduced in an incremental structure to allow stakeholders to make appropriate adjustments, and the formula should reflect reasonable and relatively equivalent fees representative of existing dispatch agreements.
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish statewide cybersecurity Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) framework Perform periodic assessments and direction
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All dispatch centers provide dispatch service subject to specific policy and technology benchmarks as defined by the Governance Board Collected dispatch fees support technology and shared resources for all dispatch centers The Governance Board will work with the Community Broadband Board and Public Service Department to provide coverage gap data to cellular providers

2 Alignment of Act 78 Objectives to Proposed Task Force Recommendations

In support of the Vermont General Assembly's goals of protecting the safety and welfare of the public as an essential function of State government and in advancing the public interest in establishing a statewide reliable, secure, and interoperable public safety communications system, the Public Safety Communications Task Force has aligned its recommendations for achieving these objectives to the Act 78 stated requirements and outcomes. The following table aligns the Task Force recommendations by category to the Act 78 requirements as stated in Section C.114 Public Safety Communications System, Dispatch, Inventory, Design.

Recommendation Category	Relationship with Act-78 Objective
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend a governance model to ensure effective state and regional oversight, management, and continuous improvement of the system Collection and assessment of any other information the Task Force deems relevant Process for annually reviewing the budgets of dispatch centers

Recommendation Category	Relationship with Act-78 Objective
Dispatch Operational Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the assistance of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, a needs assessment to determine where and to what extent there are gaps in dispatch service • Assessment of the services provided by each dispatch center and the identification of particular challenges or vulnerabilities • Technical and operational standards and protocols that ensure a reliant interoperable system incorporating computer-aided dispatch and land mobile radios • Continuity of operations standards and best practices that encompass failover procedures
Training and Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of full-time and part-time personnel performing dispatch services • Workforce training standards and other staffing best practices that support the retention and well-being of dispatch personnel • Resource allocation plan that ensures dispatch service is available in all regions of the State
Public Safety Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System and database security and cybersecurity standards • Technology life-cycle standards to ensure system and database upgrades are timely, sufficiently financed, and properly managed
Land Mobile Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of the communications dead zones, those areas that lack the infrastructure to support public safety land mobile-radio communications
Dispatch Center Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of all existing dispatch infrastructure and equipment
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current total spending on dispatch service in Vermont State, and municipal appropriations and fees, and projected budgets • Cost estimates for implementing the system in Vermont, including operational and capital costs • Options for sustainably and equitably structuring the financing of the public safety communications system

3 Act 78 Budget Allocation and Public Safety Communications System Funding

The proposed Vermont Public Safety communications funding and cost sharing strategy was designed by the Task Force to fully leverage the initial Act 78 allocation of \$11,000,000 through investment in key public safety communications technologies, operational dispatch policies, procedures, and ongoing dispatcher training. The Task Force proposes investing in the Public Safety Communications Governance Board to ensure effective state and regional oversight, management, and continuous improvement of the system. The remaining Act 78 budget will fund key initiatives over the initial three years of Communications Board oversight of the interoperable public safety communications system operations and technology enhancements. Additional post year three funding would be derived from the dispatching fees charged to Vermont towns not currently paying for the dispatching services provided to them by the Vermont Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) in Westminster and Williston operated by the Vermont State Police.

The Task Force additionally proposes an initial investment into the improvement of public safety land mobile radio (LMR) systems. Despite recent investment and improvements, LMR systems used by Vermont's first responders are not currently meeting the operational requirements of dispatchers, fire and emergency medical service (EMS) professionals and volunteers, and local police departments. These systems are anchored on aged radio technologies; have numerous coverage, interference, channel

capacity gaps, and operational inefficiencies; and experience greater maintenance cost and support due to their siloed architecture. An enhanced LMR network, which provides a public safety lifeline communications capability, will greatly improve the quality and reliability of public safety communications and greatly simplify the dispatch process. Furthermore, ongoing system enhancements by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to its LMR network can be leveraged to provide foundational steps toward an improved statewide LMR network. Although completion of a truly centralized network will require significantly more investment, the proposed initial enhancements will provide some immediate improvements and represent a cost-effective step that cannot be reproduced if not coupled with ongoing DPS system upgrades.

Recommendation Category	Proposed Funding Allocation
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of the Governance Board for the first three years - \$1.59M • Funding supports dedicated staffing and funds ongoing committee activity.
Dispatch Operational Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in the Governing Board operations plus an initial investment of \$30k that is continued for two additional years
Training and Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial investment of \$150k that is continued for two additional years
Public Safety Technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new multi-discipline CAD system – up front 5-year investment of \$2M • Short-term mapping support of \$40k that is continued for two additional years • Development of a Cybersecurity Governance, Risk, and Compliance framework - \$150k
Land Mobile Radio (LMR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial investment to support the development of a reliable interoperable public safety LMR network to address existing coverage and performance quality service gaps - \$4.5M to include planning and initial deployment • Much of the initial deployment is to be done in conjunction with VSP's COPS grant work to maximize efficiencies • This initiative will create a strong foundation supporting future improvements
Dispatch Center Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of benchmarks included in the Governing Board operations
Dispatch Equity Funding Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch fees post Year 3 based upon a fee formula, under development, that may include elements such as a base fee and separate assessments for services. • Consideration of alternative funding options that have been leveraged by other states and municipalities to fund Public Safety communications systems

4 Implementation Schedule and Associated Outcomes

The proposed Task Force recommendations will deliver near and long-term advancements to the critical public safety communications system's infrastructure and for the state's dispatchers, first responders, and to the citizens served by these professionals. Under the guidance of the Task Force and the future Public Safety Communications Board, significant improvement can be implemented during the first year of operations. In subsequent years, the initiatives launched during year one can be expanded and completed. The proposed governance structure, including stakeholder committees focused on dispatch operations, land mobile radio, dispatch fee equity, and others, will be established during year one, and will continue to guide the future of the public safety communications systems and best practices, which continually evolve in response to technological advancements and critical emergency incident response.

As illustrated in the following implementation schedules for year one, the Task Force is positioned to secure a Computed Aided Dispatch (CAD) system that delivers an essential solution to better integrate the existing statewide 911 system with dispatch centers and improve the quality of emergency incident notification and response at all dispatch centers and PSAPs. During year one, the future Public Safety Communications Board and priority stakeholder committees will be created and their respective work in pursuit of a reliable, secure, and interoperable statewide public safety communications system advanced. In subsequent years, the ongoing collaboration of rural and urban, and state and local community stakeholders will ensure the implementation, operations, and future enhancement of the Vermont Public Safety Communications System.

