



**Progress Report on Exploration of Partnerships and Joint  
Service Delivery with Hennepin County and Other  
Jurisdictions**

**911/311 Department**

**June 17, 2009**

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## Executive Summary

Staff direction from the 2009 budget adoption from December 11, 2008 provided as follows: *“Direct 911/311 to add as a key initiative in its business plan the full exploration of possible partnerships and joint service delivery with Hennepin County and other jurisdictions, including an evaluation of future technology needs and costs, in consultation with labor representatives. 911/311 is directed to report back to the Ways and Means/Budget Committee on the progress of this key initiative by June 1, 2009.”*

This report provides an update on staff work in response to the above-mentioned Council direction. We review previously conducted studies that may not have been fully discussed, we summarize current shared services discussions with potential partners, we evaluate future technology needs and costs, and we present an overview of the Governor’s Work Group on Regional Public Safety Answering Points, currently in process.

911 staff reviewed previous consolidation studies and met with potential partners, including Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO), to discuss opportunities for sharing services. This report includes several shared service options under current review. We also present two case studies of recent 911 center consolidations, and an overview of the current state of public safety dispatching in Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

The studies suggest that it is possible, given certain conditions, for organizations to merge and provide more efficient and effective services. They also assert that Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) consolidation is an unusually complex and important process, given the multiple variables involved in the delivery of public safety services.

A key finding of several studies is that while consolidation can result in cost savings, this is not always true, not does it always result in improved operations. Staff learned that certain factors (excess capacity, inefficient operations, technology replacement costs, operational similarity, solid commitment by key decision-makers) that drive successful consolidations are not evident in the current environment. Both HCSO and Minneapolis 911 operate efficiently today<sup>1</sup> and a full analysis of additional cost savings from consolidation was beyond the scope of this update.

Discussions with HCSO involved management level staff; we understand that the executive level (Sheriff) has expressed an ongoing interest in the concept of consolidation. The last time a merger was seriously discussed, the “free offer” was on the table from the County. It is not clear whether this offer would be made again. Our renewed contact was postured on the stipulations<sup>2</sup> set out by Council as staff guidance in 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, cost comparison

<sup>2</sup> No diminution of citizens’ and employees’ safety, Lowered cost to the City and County taxpayers, Commitment to continued employment of current MECC staff, and Definition of a governance framework that inspires confidence in provision of effective PSAP services

## History

Staff direction from the 2009 budget adoption from December 11, 2008 provided as follows: “Direct 911/311 to add as a key initiative in its business plan the full exploration of possible partnerships and joint service delivery with Hennepin County and other jurisdictions, including an evaluation of future technology needs and costs, in consultation with labor representatives. 911/311 is directed to report back to the Ways and Means/Budget Committee on the progress of this key initiative by June 1, 2009.”

## Entering Assumptions

The City wishes to explore opportunities to improve processes and find new ways to deliver services where it makes sense. There are many layers of government in the Metro Area, lending some redundancy to various services. While demographics, statutory requirements, and workload can be driving factors in some duplication of services, there are often ways to combine or re-work processes to the benefit of all. Re-engineering and re-organization should not be undertaken simply because it is a popular thing to do, or even because it will simply save money, (some consolidations cost more than continuing the status quo) but because the public will be better served by it. This report contains a summary of actions thus far in the key initiative added to the 911/311 Department Business plan.

A key initiative for study of shared services has been entered into the 911/311 Business Plan.

## Research & Review of Previous Consolidation Studies

There is a wealth of information in the form of previous and current local shared service studies. Staff reviewed current and previous studies that addressed consolidation of 911 call taking and public safety dispatching services:

1. Minneapolis 911/Hennepin County Sheriff 911 Dispatch Consolidation/Merger February 25, 2005

In 2004-2005, the City studied consolidation with HCSO in response to a “free dispatching” invitation issued by the County. A short deadline to accept an Urban Area Security Initiatives grant to fund the new Computer-Assisted-Dispatch (CAD) system somewhat abruptly called the question before Council. Council voted to accept the grant and this effectively determined that the County offer would not be further acted upon. Other concerns were the giving up control of a fundamental municipal function, and the potential impacts on labor and service level.

Issues identified in this study include:

- Facilities: There is currently no facility capable of managing the anticipated volume of 911 calls for the City and the County. A new facility would have to be built.
- Personnel: Several months will need to be dedicated to a range of personnel issues, including determination of HCSO's new staffing model, levels of effort, migration of City employees, etc.
- Staffing: Number of employees needed to provide service to Minneapolis cannot be reduced without compromising performance/outcome levels
- Governance: The work group had many concerns around service quality and other risks associated with obtaining emergency communication services from HCSO. A legal agreement to mitigate those risks and specify on-going financial arrangements is necessary.
- Technology issues: The County and City are each in the process of implementing a new CAD. Funding for replacement is currently available because of a Homeland Security grant.
- Results of other studies and lessons learned: Many jurisdictions, in looking for ways to economize, have considered sharing 911 emergency communications services. Any savings typically result from shared infrastructure. Successful consolidation efforts are conducted in a manner imbued with a spirit of partnership. Without this, a critical drive to solve problems is absent. This poses risk for effective 911 service provision and the police and fire services dependent on effective 911 operations.

## 2. State of Minnesota 2004 PSAP Study

During the 2003 Special Session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring a study of Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) consolidation and minimum standards. The study was conducted by the State of Minnesota Management and Analysis Division and a PSAP Advisory Committee.

I have chosen two areas to highlight in this report, as they seem to be two issues that have the greatest impact on the success of a consolidation. The report also put forth a set of best practices for PSAP consolidation which is not detailed here.

## Cost and Benefit Conclusions

- The potential for cost savings from consolidation quickly diminish above a certain level of activity (20,000 911 calls per year)<sup>3</sup>
- The potential for capital cost savings also exists when a neighboring PSAP has excess capacity, a PSAP is in need of significant capital upgrades, and the necessary transition costs are low.<sup>4</sup>
- Actual PSAP consolidations have not always resulted in cost savings. The reasons for this include: the PSAPS already had relatively high efficiencies prior to consolidation; no positions were eliminated out of the desire to avoid layoffs<sup>5</sup>.
- The likelihood of cost savings, and their magnitude, for any specific proposed consolidation, would have to be determined as part of a feasibility study that looked very closely at job responsibilities and minimum staffing requirements.

## Public Safety Conclusions

- Strong beliefs by local public safety officials that consolidation will cause them to compromise public safety services cannot be overstated.
  - Almost all of these concerns have been solvable through careful planning and implementation, or can be potentially offset by public safety benefits.
  - Just because these concerns can be solved does not mean they will be solved, and in some consolidations, they have not been solved.
  - The extent to which public safety would be affected by consolidation depends substantially on the quality of the consolidation.
  - Determining whether a consolidation would be wise for any given selection of PSAPs would require a comprehensive study.
3. Public Safety Answering Point Consolidation Analysis (City of St. Louis Park and Partnering Communities) January, 2004

Led by the City of St. Louis Park, the study approached the question of feasibility of consolidation of all or some of the independent community PSAPs in Hennepin County.

The study concluded that some efficiencies could be realized by various scenarios presented. No action was taken toward consolidation by the study partners.

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<sup>3</sup> Minneapolis alone processes about 600,000 calls per year and dispatches about 400,000 events.

<sup>4</sup> None of these conditions presently exists between Hennepin County Sheriff and Minneapolis.

<sup>5</sup> Hennepin and Minneapolis are high-efficiency PSAPS; entering assumptions support retaining all current employees at the outset.

## Potential Partners

Staff has made some inquiries and cursory analysis of potential partners for both 311 and 911 shared services. They include:

- Extending 311 services to Hennepin County,
- Hosting HCMC EMS dispatching in the MECC facility,
- Extending contracted 911 services to U of M PD,
- Minneapolis Regional Virtual Data Fusion, and
- Merging 911 and dispatching services with Hennepin County Sheriff's Dispatch.

### 311 Services

Minneapolis 311 appears to be well positioned to provide services to other municipal government organizations and independent agencies using a shared service model. 311's staffing, business processes and technology are incrementally scalable for providing efficient and cost effective citizen customer contact center and customer relationship management (CRM) solutions.

To date, 311 has held introductory meetings with the City of Bloomington, Minneapolis Public Housing, Minneapolis Park Board and Hennepin County. Discussions with Hennepin County are continuing at this time.

### University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota operates a Public Safety Department that includes 911 call answering and dispatching services. Since the majority of the U of M service area is in Minneapolis, and since U of M PD is already a CAD partner, it seemed reasonable to inquire consolidation of dispatching services with MECC. This could be done as an expansion of the existing CAD contracted services. An operational level analysis was performed to identify any roadblocks and none were found; however, the U of M ultimately declined to pursue this idea.

### Hennepin County Emergency Medical Services Dispatching

Hennepin County Emergency Medical Services (HCMC EMS) is a potential partner and already shares computer-assisted dispatch (CAD) at a contracted rate. Given the close relationship with 911 and our police and fire dispatching, there could be many operational advantages to hosting the EMS dispatchers in a shared facility.

911 Staff met with HCMC EMS Director Martin Van Buren and EMS Manager Chris Kummer to explore the issue, as there was significant interest by all parties.

A high-level analysis of HCMC's needs was discussed and the most interest centered on a co-located EMS dispatch operation, not a staff consolidation, at least not initially. A site walk-through was conducted to determine whether 911 had adequate expansion space to accommodate the EMS personnel. There is space that, if renovated, might suffice.

Expandable workstation space on the operations floor of 911 is just short of adequate to accommodate HCMC's needs. Conversations continue about using the current EOC space, as well as a cost analysis of adding radio and telephone capacity.

## **Minneapolis Regional Virtual Data Fusion**

911 is working with a vendor to pilot this technology with Hennepin County in mid-2009.

The Virtual Data Fusion solution brings this real-time information together from all sources and agencies into a common operating platform to provide current situational awareness to all connected agencies, departments and local government representatives in a secure, standards based environment. This solution will provide a secure, unified platform for sharing critical public safety and local government data across all public safety and local government agencies within Hennepin and Ramsey Counties.

This solution would also enable entities like the Minnesota State Patrol, DOT and other Counties to have secure access to real-time 911 incidents, law enforcement records and AVL equipped resource locations as allowed in response to critical incidents throughout the region. This unified solution offers complete autonomy to the individual agencies to only share data they feel is critical for regional public safety response.

The Minneapolis Regional Virtual Data Fusion solution will also extend all agencies current investment in CAD, RMS and general data systems into a unified regional data sharing and real-time situational awareness platform.

## **911/Hennepin County Sheriff Dispatch Consolidation**

911 Staff invited the Hennepin County Sheriff's Department to re-visit the concept of shared 911 call taking and dispatching, last discussed in 2005. We met with Lt. Brian Tollin, manager of the Sheriff's 911 center (HCSO).

Strategic direction in conversations with Hennepin County Sheriff's Department was framed around the stipulations previously provided as staff guidance by City elected officials and executive staff in 2004:

- No diminution of citizens' and employees' safety
- Lowered costs to City and County taxpayers

- Commitment to continued employment of current 911 staff,
- Definition of a governance framework that inspires confidence in provision of effective PSAP services

We discussed a number of possibilities for shared service arrangements. Among those were redefining the geographical boundaries we currently dispatch for, dispatching some of the inner ring suburbs from 911, dispatching HCMC EMS, and the delay of Hennepin County Sheriff's building project.

Another option discussed was implementing a regional fire dispatch center located in 911, and dispatching law enforcement from HCSO, or vice versa.

A 'third alternative' surfaced during our discussions; currently there are nine independent PSAPs in Hennepin County; a long-term political strategy to consolidate all Hennepin PSAP's into one organization could be a worthy strategy to follow, especially given the recent attention to regionalization by the Governor's Office.

Because of the stipulations and because the conditions of the 2005 "free offer" are expired, we requested answers to the following questions from Hennepin County Sheriff's Administration:

- Will the County offer dispatch services again this year to other PSAP's in Hennepin County?
- Will the Sheriff / Sheriff's Office be willing to support and move forward to the County Board a shared Minneapolis and County PSAP?

As of this date, the verbal answer from Sheriff's Administration is that "no commitments to any of these can be made at this time".

The issues identified in the 2004 study persist. While it is possible that a superior joint dispatching service might be accomplished long-term with the necessary spirit of partnership, extensive planning, proper resources, and scrupulous attention to governance, labor, and service level, our conversations thus far have not yielded this level of clarity, or allayed the significant concern of whether savings to the city and taxpayers would result.

## **Technology Replacement Outlook**

### **911**

911 has recently (2007) replaced the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system at a cost of 4.2 million dollars (plus recurring costs). The system is maintained by a partnership of 911, BIS, Unisys and the vendor (TriTech). The system is projected to meet our needs with scheduled upgrades extending into 2016. The CAD servers may have to be replaced during the next 5 years at a cost estimated at \$450K.

Future changes are inevitable as the call center and dispatching industries attempt to keep pace with technological changes. The 800 MHz radio system will likely be upgraded during the 5-year span addressed by this plan. MECC is a primary user but the system is owned by the Minneapolis Radio Shop. These costs have generally been mitigated by the State of Minnesota as part of the regional buildup of the system. Depending on technology advances such as Next-Generation 911, the recently installed 911 telephone system will also potentially be replaced. A rough estimate of this cost is about \$2 million (2011-2012).

### **311**

Over the next 5 years, 311 will continue to evolve as the primary number to call for non-emergency services and information. Necessarily, 311 will need to continue to fully represent the enterprise of the City of Minneapolis as a whole. To accomplish this, the following actions are anticipated:

Frontlink integration with the SWIS application in order to enable 311 agents to enter basic service requests for Solid Waste and Recycling.

The opportunity exists for 311 to cost effectively expand customer self service capabilities by utilizing current state of the art Voice Recognition Automated Attendant and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technologies. Such technologies could be used as an adjunct to the “high touch” approach to customer service currently deployed at 311 and provide additional call answering capabilities without having to add to the current 311 staffing model.

Frontlink Business Process Modeling (BPM) and Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) modules are needed to improve functionality, efficiency and meet 311 growth. These modules will serve to provide the additional analytics, service request configuration and tracking needed to support further enterprise wide performance measurement.

## **Current Consolidation Studies:**

In January, 2009, Governor Pawlenty signed an executive order “Providing for the Governor’s Work Group on Regional Public Safety Answering Points.”

The order specifies:

“By January 4, 2010 the PSAP Work Group will develop a comprehensive strategy for regionally based Public Safety Answering Points throughout the state. In developing the strategy, the PSAP Work Group will consider the 2004 report to the Minnesota Legislature on PSAP Consolidation and recommend:

- a. The number and recommended potential locations for regional centers;

- b. A governance structure that encourages collaboration and cooperation in the operation of regional centers;
- c. Funding sources for capital and operating costs;
- d. A preliminary set of standard operating procedures;
- e. A mitigation plan that addresses concerns identified in the 2004 PSAP Consolidation Report;
- f. Incentives that might be provided to encourage migration to regional centers; and
- g. A comprehensive implementation plan.”

The PSAP Work Group selected a project strategy of developing a “cook book” to consolidation and authorized contracting with a consultant to assist in information gathering and plan development. The consultant will be funded from state sources. The group will also be considering a report developed in a similar initiative in 2004. The work group will look at what is happening around the state and around the nation to identify issues, challenges, successes, and best practices. The group will be meeting monthly, immediately following the State Radio Board meeting on the fourth Thursday of every month.

This is a new development and should be followed closely as it has the potential to change the landscape for PSAPs in the Metro and statewide.

## **911 Case Studies**

### ***Dakota County***

The Dakota Communications Center (DCC) organization was established late 2005 through a Joint Powers Agreement between Dakota County and eleven cities located within the County. In 2004, the High Performance Partnerships (HiPP) project, conducted by the Dakota County cities and county, identified the need for the development of a centralized public safety answering point (PSAP) and dispatch center. A combination of factors – attention to homeland security, upgrades in technology, the readiness of various governmental units to act, the availability of grant money, and the financial benefits to participating governments served to bring the idea to reality.

The DCC organization is guided by a complex governance structure with three distinct committees including the Board of Directors (elected officials), the Executive Committee (city/county chief administrators), and the Operations Committee (law enforcement, fire, and EMS personnel). In addition, multiple task forces, comprised of members from the three Committees and stakeholders (law enforcement, fire, EMS, dispatch personnel), have been formed to address start up issues. Nearly 120 persons have been a part of the

DCC development process, involved in many aspects including creating policies, designing the facility, identifying personnel needs, and much more. The governance structure reflects the desire of our Members to retain local decision making in a centralized service.

A five-year minimum commitment to the project has been made by the participating jurisdictions. In 2006, construction of the facility began and was completed in late 2007. The DCC is equipped with a new 800-megahertz digital radio communications system to allow police, fire, EMS and sheriff's personnel in multiple jurisdictions to communicate with each other, enhancing the interoperability of radio systems among all first responders. The Dakota County system is part of a metropolitan wide network, which is being expanded to greater Minnesota.

The DCC is approximately 25,000 square feet and equipped with state-of-the-art dispatch consoles. A new 800-megahertz digital radio communications system allows police, fire, EMS and sheriff's personnel in multiple jurisdictions to communicate with each other and will enhance the interoperability of radio systems among all first responders.

The facility construction and required technology costs to bring the DCC into service were \$15 million, which will be paid by the Members of the DCC through a cost-sharing formula. Construction for the DCC facility began June 2006 and was completed in fall 2007.

Discussions with Kent Therkelsen, Director of DCC, centered on the questions of cost, personnel, technology, governance, and operational excellence. A key to success was the early involvement of decision-makers (elected officials, city manager and county executive level) and their commitment to making this happen.

Personnel issues were the "top issue" to consider in the consolidation. Luckily, the Board realized that staff problems can hugely influence success, and placed heavy emphasis on mediating personnel issues early on in the process.

The DCC has 64 employees. During the initial consolidation plan, all emergency communication specialists from each of the joining centers who were in good standing were assured a job. Most employees recognized a wage increase with the move. Reductions in staff were to be accomplished through attrition. Non-supervisory staff members now number 52 from the original 57 employees.

Initially, the DCC operated the independent agencies as satellites while the work of construction for the new facility and the new operating procedures were developed. While the move to DCC employment represented a new employment relationship, the DCC did acknowledge tenure at the predecessor PSAPs in placement in the pay system and also for issues such as shift selection. The combining PSAPs funded up to 576 hours of benefits with each employee. A union formed soon after implementation.

In Operations there were some trade-offs. New operational protocols were developed with input from each political entity. Lessons learned included the concept that “Better” might be defined differently depending on perspective.

Eighteen months after implementation, DCC’s fire dispatch is still not completely melded and still provides some customized services for individual fire departments, though all dispatchers in the center are cross-qualified. Originally the fire departments wanted dedicated fire-only dispatchers.

The DCC is a “true JPA” organization; it has no levy authority but does have a funding formula, which is defined in the Joint Powers Agreement. Each of the 12 political entities that uses DCC services is billed for operating costs on a per-call basis. Two non-member rural fire departments receive dispatch services on a fee basis.

The DCC Board of Directors is comprised of an elected official from each of the 12 participants and meets bi-monthly. The DCC Director is hired by and reports to the Board.

The Executive Committee is made up of the City/County managers/administrators of the 12 agencies and functions in an oversight and advisory capacity. The DCC convenes a bi-monthly Operations Committee meeting where command-level fire and police staff review complaints and discuss procedures. Law Enforcement and Fire/EMS subcommittees meet on a monthly basis and a variety of ad hoc work groups focus on specific issues as needed.

The DCC reports that the first eight to twelve months of consolidated operations was the most difficult period of time so far, as DCC staff, along with police and fire staff adjusted to the change of radio and CAD systems along with new PSAP procedures. Operations have become more stable now and DCC records indicate that high priority police and fire events are processed faster now than pre-consolidation. Fiscal efficiencies are also being experienced. The members avoided about \$3.8 million in Capital costs by constructing a single technology infrastructure and in 2008, PSAP expenditures were \$1.18 million less than estimated without consolidation.

## ***Ramsey County***

Ramsey County created a new County Department of Emergency Communications (ECC) by county resolution in 2005, combining three dispatch centers (Ramsey County Sheriff, City of St. Paul, and City of Maplewood) that services 16 agencies. The new ECC combined the Ramsey County Sheriff’s communications center, and included continuation of dispatching services for all municipalities that previously contracted with Ramsey County for emergency dispatch services. Joint Powers Agreements (JPA) were executed with the City of Maplewood and the City of St. Paul. In January of 2006, the authority of the Sheriff to provide dispatch services was formally transferred to the County Manager’s Office, and a county ordinance was passed to create a new County Department, Emergency Communications, in 2007.

We addressed the key elements of cost, personnel, technology, governance, and operational excellence with ECC Manager, Scott Williams.

The operating budget for 2009 is \$12,074,000. The cost to build and outfit the new facility was around \$12 million.

The ECC describes their organization as a work still in process. The governance model is a stand-alone County department, with a Director reporting to the County Manager. A Dispatch Policy Board composed of local elected officials and the Sheriff meets quarterly. Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement subcommittees meet bi-monthly to address issues. A Dispatch User's Group of police and fire chiefs provides oversight on quality assurance and performance measures. This group meets several times a year. Cost sharing is defined in the JPA; 60 percent of the operating budget is paid by county tax levy and 40 percent by the cities. St. Paul pays 74% of the city portion.

Difficulties in merging personnel and job functions from the three entities persist, resulting in silos within the center. Currently, there are two employers in the Center: St. Paul and Ramsey County, with different pay scales and duplication of HR, unions and administrative overhead. Employees of St. Paul perform the dispatching for City incidents, and County employees dispatch county calls, with former Maplewood employees dispatching for Maplewood and County. There is still no labor agreement in place and wide pay discrepancies (as high as \$3/hr) exist between employees performing essentially the same duties in the same space. Seniority bidding has not been resolved. ECC management recognizes the need to streamline and is actively working to address these issues, and point out in lessons learned that labor agreements should be completed before the new organization "goes live".

The ECC is currently reviewing a recently completed staffing study.

Operational issues include many customizations for the various agencies; this can be somewhat accommodated by the modern CAD system, however, ECC staff points out that it would have been good to engage a consultant to guide operating procedures development and focus on best practices early on.

The only "all new" technology for the ECC was a new phone system; this reduced the learning curve for staff as they had only one new technology to deal with.

## Appendix A

### Cost Comparison Worksheet

Agency Comparison	Budget	# FTE	#Total 911 Calls	Total "other" Calls**	Cost per 911 call (based on total operating budget)	Cost per total calls handled by agency
Hennepin Co. Sheriff	\$9,022,034*	89.0	234,634	394,428**	\$N/A*	\$N/A*
Minneapolis	\$7,387,521.	87.50	444,724	146,211	\$16.61	\$12.50
Dakota DCC	\$6,685,591	64.00	162,811		\$41.06	
Ramsey Co.	\$12,074,000.	123	313,630	537,460**	\$38.50	\$14.18
Dane County, WI	\$5,488,130.		176,695	319,124	\$31.04	\$11.07
Sarasota, FL	\$6,611,946	107	229,298	208,000	\$28.83	\$15.12

\*Includes radio shop which cannot be broken out separately at this reporting

\*\*what constitutes a "non-emergency" or "other" call varies widely; some agencies are the after-hour answering service for the police or sheriff's departments and receive many calls that are not requesting dispatch of public safety responders.

## Appendix B

### ***Overview of the Current State of 911 Dispatching in Hennepin County<sup>6</sup>***

911 call answering and public safety dispatching in Hennepin County, Minnesota, is performed at three organizational levels. Overall, there are nine PSAPs serving 47 communities. (The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) also operates a stand-alone PSAP serving the public safety communications needs at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport campus.)

Hennepin County, through the Office of the Sheriff, provides PSAP services to 35 dependent communities scattered across the County. Minneapolis provides similar services to residents within the jurisdictional boundaries of that City. Eight other communities operate stand-alone PSAPs:

- Bloomington
- Eden Prairie
- Edina
- Hopkins
- Minnetonka
- Richfield
- Saint Louis Park/Golden Valley

The inefficiencies of multiple PSAPs, both in duplication of infrastructure and staffing, can be illustrated, broadly, by looking at existing suburban PSAPs and the Minneapolis PSAP.

Minneapolis, due to the size of the operation as well as the quantity of calls handled, is relatively comparable to a prospective consolidated center serving all the suburbs in this study. The 2002-listed population of Minneapolis is 382,613 versus 387,391 in the suburban study group. The average cost per 911 call in the suburbs is \$30.45 versus \$16.38 in Minneapolis (2002 data).

### ***Minneapolis 911***

*Operational Uniqueness* – Minneapolis Emergency Communications Center (MECC) operates a structured two-stage dispatch operation using call-takers to answer phone calls from the public and dispatchers who assign calls to police officers or fire personnel. The city's CAD system routes EMS calls to either North Memorial or HCMC for EMS dispatch. There is a separate fire dispatch area for within the center and dispatchers rotate often through both fire and police dispatch console assignments to offset any threat of repetitive motion injury. The city has some excess workstation capacity in the current operation

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<sup>6</sup> Revised Final Report, City of Saint Louis Park, Minnesota and Partnering Communities Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Consolidation Analysis, January 15, 2004

due to recent remodeling and updates of telephone, radio console, and workstation facilities.

*Site* – MECC is located downtown in the basement of the City Hall/Courthouse building. It has been recently renovated (architecturally) and its voice telecommunications infrastructure has been completely updated. Adequate space already exists and staff is in-place to deliver some additional shared call taking and/or dispatching services assuming appropriate technology was utilized to deliver the calls to the suburban responders and feed the data to respective data repositories.

*Governance* – a full-time civilian director manages MECC. There is a statutorily created user board that includes representatives from city police and fire, as well as Hennepin County EMS; the user board meets regularly to discuss service issues and overall PSAP direction.

*Technical* – The facility is operating on the 800 MHz Metro Radio System. The city purchased a new Computer-Aided Dispatch System (VisiCad by TriTech) in 2007 at a cost of \$4 million.

*Staffing* – MECC has a very low turnover rate given the high number of FTE at the center compared to the other PSAPs in the study group.

*Budget/Fiscal* – Minneapolis has the lowest cost per 911 call, as well as a high number of 911 calls per FTE. Minneapolis has had a historically high dependence upon LGA but is seeking to close that gap; it had the highest percentage of its funding provided by LGA of the study communities.

*Other Tasks* – MECC staff monitor the ‘bait’ vehicles for police auto theft investigators, the ShotSpotter gunfire detection system, the Electronic Surveillance Package bank robbery tracking system for Minneapolis Police Department. MECC also performs all the missing child and young adult hot files entries and manages the off duty employment roster for MPD.

*Observations/Comments* – Minneapolis (MECC) has existing contracts for computer service with Hennepin County and North Memorial, and operates a 311 call center. There exist significant inter-departmental dependencies (detailed in the 911/311 Technology Plan) with Minneapolis Police, Fire, and EMS providers. A high level of integration and customization is provided for these agencies.

## ***Hennepin County Sheriff’s Radio***

*Operational Uniqueness* – Hennepin Sheriff’s Radio is a consolidated dispatch center that dispatches for 22 police departments, 20 fire departments, and the Sheriff’s department. All agencies participating are run with similar, fundamental protocols (considered necessary to handle so many agencies) to streamline the dispatch process. Sheriff’s Radio maintains a backup PSAP with basic 911 and full connection to the Metro Radio System in the event of a

failure in the primary PSAP site. The backup site may be available to other communities (for backup purposes) subject to appropriate negotiations.

*Site* – The current dispatch center is located in a stand-alone facility in Golden Valley. Staff expressed that they could add one additional smaller city without console additions. If more joined, they are constrained by their footprint in the existing center. They could add one ‘pod’ of three positions without further building expansion.

*Governance* – The dispatch operation is managed by sworn sheriff's office personnel, overseen as a division of the Sheriff's Office. There is a user operations committee to discuss procedural and other pertinent operational issues.

*Technical* – The entire radio infrastructure was recently upgraded with the county's migration, as the principal local anchor tenant, on the regional trunked 800 MHz radio system. The Sheriff's department also manages the technical services group that has been charged with project management and implementation of the Metro radio system within Hennepin County.

*Staffing* – There are 35 full-time and three part-time dispatchers and six sworn supervisors (sergeants) assigned to front-line PSAP operations. In addition, there are three additional positions in command-level positions. The dispatchers are represented by the Teamsters in the same unit as the detention deputies at the county jail.

*Budget/Fiscal* – Communities who joined Sheriff's Radio previously (some by active solicitation) receive their dispatch services free of charge. The county has not yet communicated future funding strategies or if they will allow any other communities to opt-in. In an interesting public policy quirk, all Hennepin County residents already pay for dispatching services through the county's tax levy. Those residents within communities that operate separate PSAPs also pay for local dispatch services within their own local tax levy. Therefore, taxpayers in communities operating autonomous PSAPs are paying for this service twice.

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HCSO/MECC (911) "Merger" Possibility  
Final report to the Minneapolis City Council  
February, 2005  
Jeff Nelson, PSC Alliance Incorporated  
[Jeff.nelson@psc Alliance.com](mailto:Jeff.nelson@psc Alliance.com)

Revised Final Report  
City of St. Louis Park, MN and Partnering Communities  
Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Consolidation Analysis  
Project ID #03-D-25-025  
Jeff Nelson, PSC Alliance Incorporated  
[Jeff.nelson@psc Alliance.com](mailto:Jeff.nelson@psc Alliance.com)