

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 8, 2018  
**TO:** CRCOG Executive Committee  
**FROM:** Lyle Wray, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Regional 911 Dispatch Center Concept for the Capital Region

This is the second strategic planning memo following up on Board discussion from earlier in 2018.

CRCOG has been involved in 911 dispatch mergers and consolidation discussions for about 20 years. The following three questions attempt to distill possible next steps on 911 dispatch for the metropolitan region should the Policy Board support the direction offered.

The following three questions are offered as a starting point:

1. Is there Policy Board support to offer a voluntary regional 911 system serving 250,000 – 300,000 or more residents in the medium term under a joint powers agreement with a board of involved towns and cities?

2. How should the public safety communications systems under rapid change be factored into the regional 911 discussion relating to developments such as Next Generation 911, FirstNet and 5G?

3. What approaches should be taken to explore a regional 911 opportunity? Four possible elements of an approach are:

- Survey of towns on communication investment and on dispatch.
- Focus groups from towns and others to explore broad and selected issues.
- Feasibility study for regional 911.
- Implementation study for regional 911.

Based on the Policy Board's wishes with respect to the first question, a more fleshed out outline would be offered.

Below are some notes for background on the issue.

## **Background**

Major changes coming in public safety communications that will be costly to towns and cities. NG 911, First Net, 5G and more. CRCOG members are at different places in adopting these systems.

Capitol region has one sub-regional dispatch center, several two or three town centers and many single town dispatch centers (map attached).

### **Why Regional Dispatch?**

With more than 100 911 dispatch centers, CT has more per capita than many other states (e.g. Houston and Harris county dispatch center serves the population of CT with one center).

Well managed larger 911 centers offer more:

- Long-Term Cost savings. While there would likely be significant up-front development and transition costs, all indications are for significant savings over the long term. One example: Single town dispatch with 55 dispatchers serving 120,000 population and the attached example of a regional dispatch center with 66 dispatchers serving 415,000 population.
- Resilience.
- Specialization of response.
- Training and development resources.

### **Approach**

For 20 years CRCOG has facilitated conversations on consolidated dispatch centers in the region.

Economies of scale and other benefits more likely to occur at larger scale in the hundreds of thousands.

Suggested new approach elements:

- Stand up a regional dispatch center that can be expanded based on a voluntary “coalition of the willing”.
- Use a joint powers agreement to create a new center with governance from members.
- Consider acquiring assets from an existing center or develop a new one.
- Consider back up for a larger center in another region.

**Feasibility Plan.** One way to proceed would be to issue an RFP to develop a concept plan that covers:

Governance: Possibly two boards. Elected officials and a second of public safety and technology and communications staff.

Standing up an initial center and scaling over time.

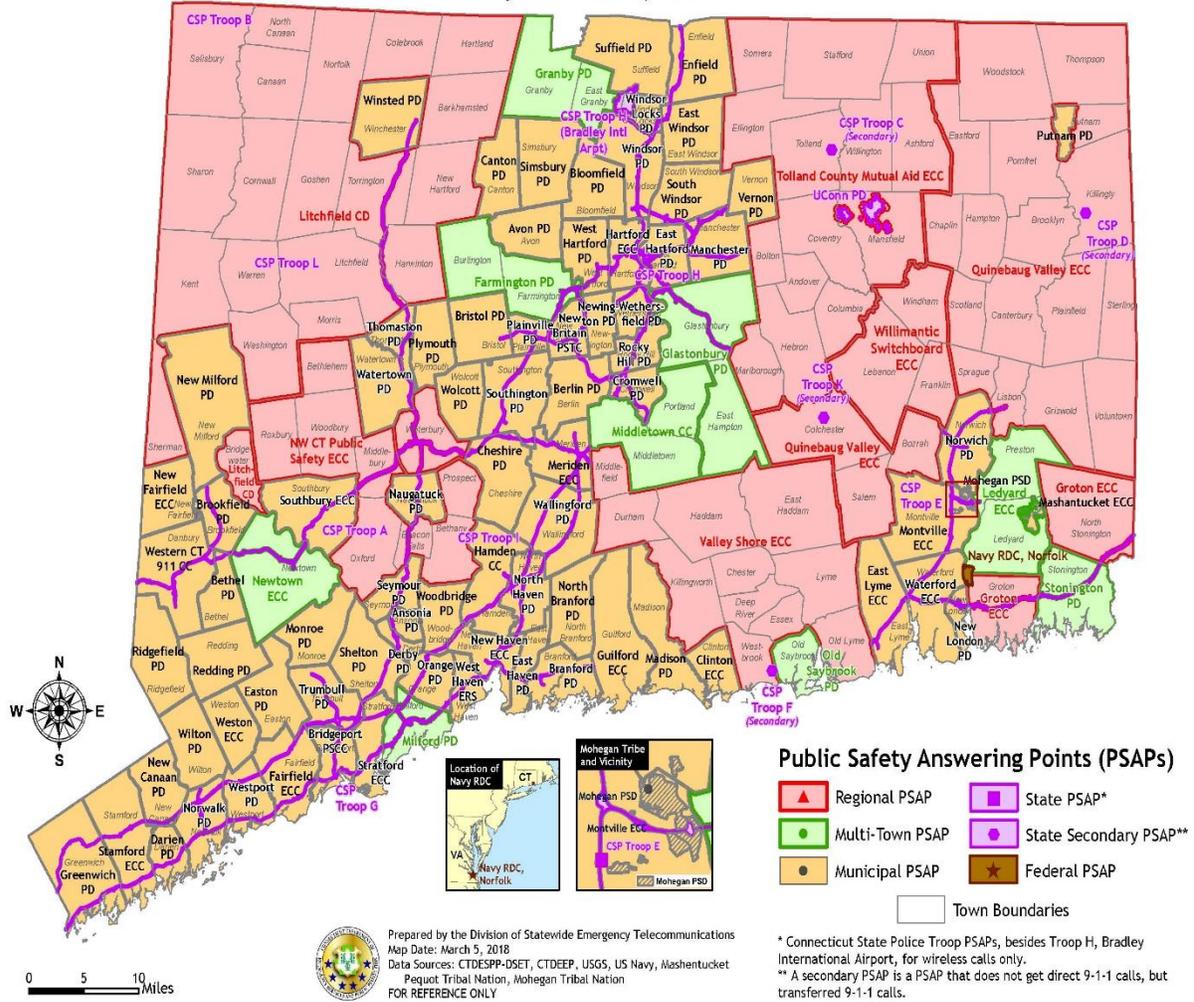
Financing outline. For example, proportional payment based on a three-year average of call proportions.

Broad technology requirements.

**Implementation Plan.** Later, a detailed plan on transitions for current staff and facilities, construction or conversion of existing facilities, etc. This would include seeking state or other funding for development and start up.

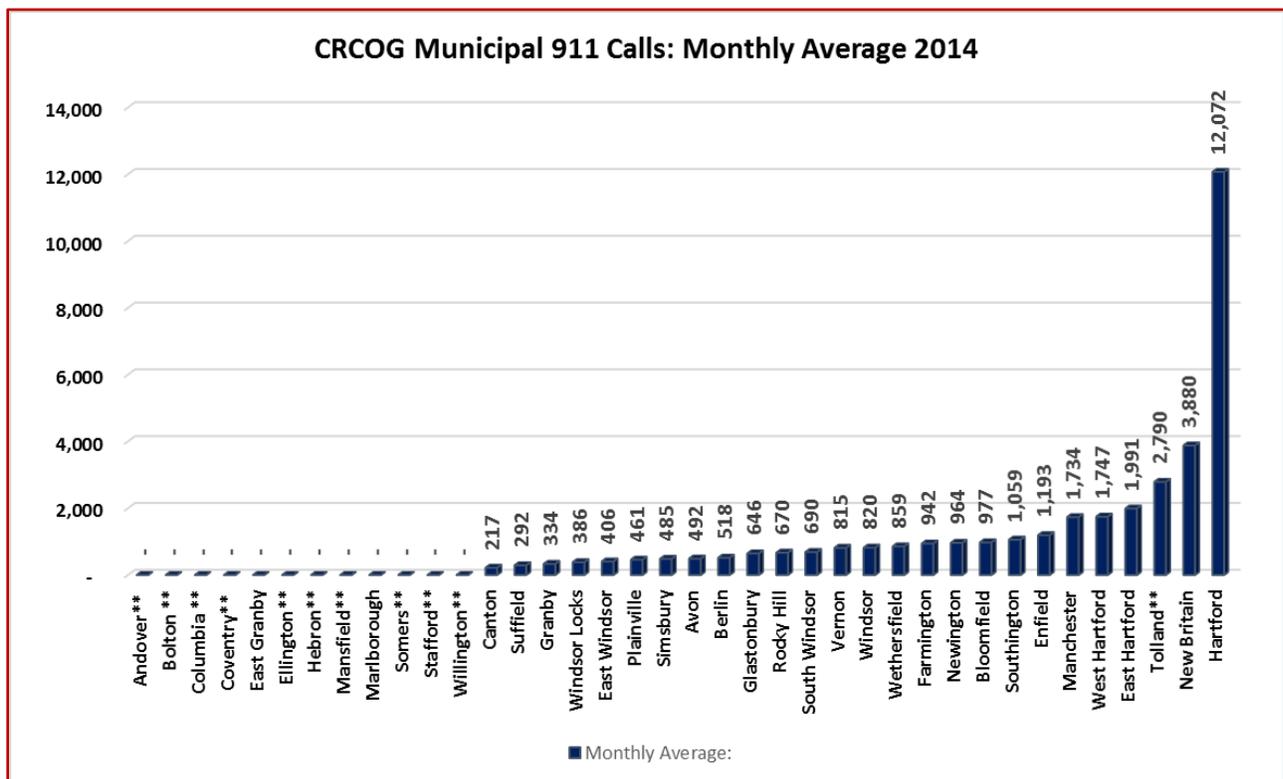
# Connecticut 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points

As of November 1st, 2017



## Monthly Call Average 2014:

CRCOG town Police Departments, who report to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, had a combined monthly average of **37,441** emergency call intakes at their designated dispatch centers in 2014. This includes the 12 CRCOG towns who participate in the Tolland County ECC (TN) mutual aid dispatch cooperative, based in Tolland. Of the individual towns reporting, the monthly call average ranges from **217** in the Town of Canton to **12,072** in the City of Hartford.

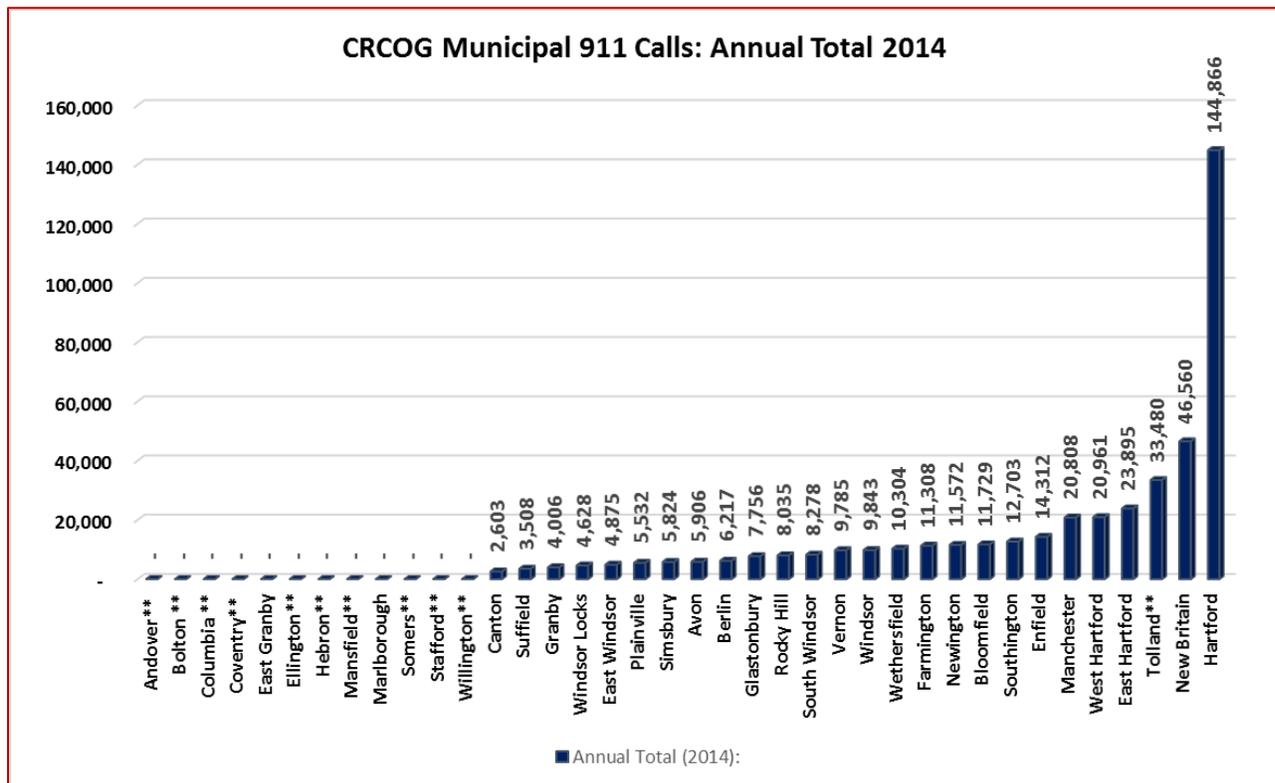


**Source:** 2014 9-1-1 Call Volume Report, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Retrieved from [http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/oset/e911\\_call\\_volume/2014\\_e9-1-1\\_call\\_counts.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/oset/e911_call_volume/2014_e9-1-1_call_counts.pdf)

- Charts do not include municipal data for municipalities with Resident State Troopers (RST): 12 CRCOG municipalities currently have a RST Troop or Secondary Services that aid or replace functions of a municipally funded police department.
- **\*\*TOLLAND COUNTY ECC (Mutual Aid Fire Service)** = provides mutual aid 911 FIRE/EMS assistance for the CRCOG towns of Mansfield, Coventry, Hebron, Coventry, Willington, Andover, Tolland, Bolton, Ellington, Stafford, Somers, and Vernon. Aggregate numbers are denoted under Tolland.

## Annual Call Total 2014:

CRCOG town Police Departments, who report to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, had a combined annual call total of **449,294** emergency call intakes at their designated dispatch centers in 2014. This includes the 12 CRCOG towns who participate in the Tolland County ECC (TN) mutual aid dispatch cooperative, based in Tolland. Of the individual towns reporting, the monthly call average ranges from **2,603** in the Town of Canton to **144,866** in the City of Hartford.



**Source:** 2014 9-1-1 Call Volume Report, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Retrieved from [http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/oset/e911 call volume/2014 e9-1-1 call counts.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/oset/e911_call_volume/2014_e9-1-1_call_counts.pdf)

- Charts do not include municipal data for municipalities with Resident State Troopers (RST): 12 CRCOG municipalities currently have a RST Troop or Secondary Services that aid or replace functions of a municipally funded police department.
- **\*\*TOLLAND COUNTY ECC (Mutual Aid Fire Service)** = provides mutual aid 911 FIRE/EMS assistance for the CRCOG towns of Mansfield, Coventry, Hebron, Coventry, Willington, Andover, Tolland, Bolton, Ellington, Stafford, Somers, and Vernon. Aggregate numbers are denoted under Tolland.

## Resources

- CT 911 call center map.  
[http://www.ct.gov/despp/cwp/view.asp?a=4437&Q=515090&desppNAV\\_GID=2127&desppNav=](http://www.ct.gov/despp/cwp/view.asp?a=4437&Q=515090&desppNAV_GID=2127&desppNav=)
- CT 911 2017 Call Volumes.  
[http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/2017\\_9-1-1\\_Call\\_Counts\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/despp/lib/despp/2017_9-1-1_Call_Counts_Final.pdf)
- Sample regional dispatch center for 400,000 residents.  
[https://www.hometownsource.com/sun\\_thisweek/community/apple\\_valley/answering-when-duty-calls-dakota-communications-center-continues-to-evolve/article\\_d5fc44f8-0768-11e8-af8d-37b32e36f9df.html](https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_thisweek/community/apple_valley/answering-when-duty-calls-dakota-communications-center-continues-to-evolve/article_d5fc44f8-0768-11e8-af8d-37b32e36f9df.html)

## Answering when duty calls: Dakota Communications Center continues to evolve as it turns 10

[by Tad Johnson](#) Feb 1, 2018

- For the past 10 years, the Dakota Communications Center has worked with the same number of dispatchers as when it started in 2007.
- While 911 call volume and the county's population has increased by thousands, the dispatch crew has largely remained the same.
- That consistent presence was the idea from the outset when Dakota County looked to consolidate five different 911 dispatch centers into one that would be located in south central Rosemount.
- DCC Executive Director Tom Folie says the center is saving taxpayers about \$1 million each year, and its efficiency and effectiveness is reducing the amount of time it takes for first responders, law enforcement officials and firefighters to arrive at an emergency scene.
- In January, DCC celebrated its 10-year mark with a reception at the center for county officials and other guests.
- During an interview in advance of the event, Folie looked back at the center's history, and noted that its future continues to evolve.
- This year, the center's dispatch floor, which was originally designed in a wide format putting some dispatchers far across the long room from each other, will be reorganized.
- A new configuration will bring dispatchers closer together, so they can communicate better with each other.
- Folie said the reorganization will happen in stages as stations are rebuilt piece by piece in new locations while others are kept running.
- New phones and computer-aided dispatch systems are recent additions. The old CAD system, which assists with dispatching by voice and data along with preserving call history, had outlived its useful life, Folie said.
- After a new phone system is installed, text-to-911 calls will go directly to the DCC in Rosemount.
- Currently text-to-911 calls go to a central location in the metro area before being relayed to a dispatch center like DCC.
- The 2019 budget projection includes the addition of three dispatchers to the current 54 due to the implementation of text-to-911 and other potential technology changes.
- Folie said determining whether to go to a new piece of software or hardware is taken very seriously due to the disruptions, additional training and costs such changes cause.
- He said the cost-benefit analysis must show that it is going to save money or bring vast improvements to call response.
- Folie, who has been the executive director since October 2016, worked for the company that provided the DCC with its first CAD system — the one that was recently replaced.
- At the time the former Apple Valley police officer and Dakota County assistant attorney was a public safety manager for LOGIS — a public consortium of government entities created to provide technology services to the public sector.
- After LOGIS (Local Government Information Systems) and Folie helped Dakota County make the conversion to a consolidated dispatch, LOGIS did the same for Rice and Steele counties along with the police departments in the large geographic cities of Bloomington and Minnetonka.
- LOGIS continues to provide services to Dakota County along with dozens of other counties and cities throughout Minnesota.
- Changes big and small have helped improve operations at the center.

- A recent alteration to phone keypads helped it increase the percentage of calls it has cleared from dispatch in 7 seconds or fewer. The national standard for calls cleared within 7 seconds is 80 percent.
- Folie said the DCC is rated among the top 4 percent in the country in terms of its call response time.
- Some of that is due to technology, but Folie says it's really about the people who work there.
- Some of the staff members at the DCC have been dispatchers since the 1980s. Folie said they are looking at some retirements in the near future, but the DCC is able to attract top talent because it is a good place to work and it offers competitive wages.
- The center has a workout area and wellness program that encourages dispatchers to get up and moving during breaks since the job involves a lot of sitting, Folie said.
- The job also involves a lot of talking to 911 callers and emergency crews.
- Folie said the call volume at the DCC increased almost immediately after it was built. He said the number of calls rose from about 120,000 to 175,000 in the first year. In 2016, the center recorded a total of 316,771 CAD events, which is an increase of 297,822 from 2014. That works out to 867 CAD events every day and 36 every hour.
- DCC continues to be funded based on a member-fee assessment, which has member cities and townships funding the budget based on a three-year average of CAD calls.
- This year, members will pay \$8,368,566 — a 2.74 percent increase over 2017.
- The percentages paid by the six cities in the newspaper's coverage area for 2018 based on the average calls 2014-16 are: Burnsville 14.52 percent, Eagan 14.34 percent, Lakeville 13.15 percent, Apple Valley 10.76 percent, Rosemount 5.03 percent and Farmington 3.61 percent.
- Dakota County pays 7.86 percent in member fees.
- The 2018 budget for the DCC is \$9.18 million, which is on the low end of what was estimated for the center 11 years ago when cost analyses were being done.
- If the dispatch centers had remained separate, it was estimated their combined budget would be over \$10 million in 2018.
- More about the DCC is at <http://www.mn-dcc.org>.
- Contact Tad Johnson at [tad.johnson@ecm-inc.com](mailto:tad.johnson@ecm-inc.com) or at [twitter.com/editorTJ](https://twitter.com/editorTJ).