

September 2016

TO: Councils and Commissions of Member Agencies of SNOCOM and SNOPAC

FM: Joint Task Force on Consolidation¹

RE: Informational Update on the SNOCOM-SNOPAC Consolidation Discussions Project

Purpose of this Briefing

This briefing is intended to provide an overview of the goals and status of the ongoing consolidation discussions between SNOCOM and SNOPAC.² These two agencies provide 911-call taking and emergency police/fire/medical dispatch for the County Sheriff, all local government fire services agencies based in Snohomish County, and all cities in the County except Bothell.

No action is required of member agencies at this time. An additional informational briefing will be circulated later in 2016. No decisions on consolidation are anticipated until the first quarter of 2017. Project updates are posted monthly on the SNOCOM and SNOPAC websites (<http://snocom.org> and <http://snopac911.us>).

Any council, commission or fire/police agency which would like to receive a briefing on the consolidation discussions should contact either Terry Peterson, Executive Director of SNOCOM (tpeterson@snocom.org / (425) 774-2521) or Kurt Mills, Executive Director of SNOPAC (kmills@snopac911.us / (425) 407-3907).

Policy Issues/Project Goals

911-call taking and emergency police, fire and emergency medical dispatch --public safety communications -- is a critical public safety service. These operations are also known as "PSAPs"—Primary Service Answering Points. All 911 calls in the County are directed to either SNOCOM or SNOPAC: each of these PSAPs / agencies answer 911 calls, determine the type of emergency responder necessary to help the caller, and then issue a radio dispatch request and direction to the appropriate emergency responder vehicle(s) (police, fire, medical).

PSAP operations are a technology intensive, 24-7-365 operation, and rely upon highly-trained staff. The shorter the time in which a call can be answered, correctly assessed, and the appropriate vehicle dispatched, the better the public safety outcomes.

¹ For a list of the Joint Task Force members and staff team, please see **Attachment C**.

² SNOCOM's formal name is "Southwest Snohomish County Public Safety Communications Agency." SNOCOM's member agencies are listed at **Attachment B**. SNOPAC's formal name is "Snohomish County Police Staff and Auxiliary Services Center." SNOPAC's member agencies are listed at **Attachment C**.

SNOCOM and SNOPAC are both locally-governed, and are funded primarily with a combination of member agency assessments and 911 tax dollars collected by the state and allocated to the County.

The goal of the current consolidation project is to evaluate and develop information and materials necessary to allow the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards, and their member agencies, to make a decision as to whether SNOCOM and SNOPAC should consolidate in some manner. The agencies have created a Joint Task Force and charged it with accomplishing this goal. Members of the Joint Task Force and the support team are set forth at **Attachment A**.

The deliverables to support the decision on consolidation will include development of **two options**:

1. An examination of the *status quo* – expected costs and service levels over the next 10 years if consolidation does not occur.
2. A proposed consolidation option, including proposed governance, services, facilities, assessments and overall costs over the next 10 years

The major policy issues being explored include:

1. What services would be provided in a consolidated agency, at what service levels?
2. Where would a consolidated agency operate from (facilities)?
3. Since the two agencies now provide partial back-up services for one another, how would redundancy/survivability of operations be addressed if the agencies consolidate?
4. What would it cost to provide service under a consolidated agency? How does that compare to the status quo option? What efficiencies of scale can be captured?
5. How would members be assessed for costs of a consolidated agency—and how does that compare to current assessment formulas?
6. How would the agency be governed? Who would serve on the governing Board?
7. What would the organizational structure look like? What does it mean for staffing levels over time? Is a full consolidation proposed or something less than that (shared operations/systems of some configuration)?

To see how these issues are being incorporated into the work of the Joint Task Force, please see **Attachment D**, the approved 4-phase work plan of the Joint Task Force.

Project Status

As of this date, no decisions have been made whether or not to consolidate SNOCOM and SNOPAC.

The Joint Task Force has been meeting since January 2016. It has completed the first phase of its work plan, excepting the development of a baseline scenario component template (in progress), and has shared that work with the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards. (See **Attachment D** for the work plan.)

The Joint Task Force has invited members of **SERS**, the Snohomish Emergency Radio System, to join their deliberations in a non-voting advisory capacity. SERS is another locally governed and funded agency operating countywide, which owns and manages the countywide radio infrastructure that SNOCOM and SNOPAC rely upon (800MHz handheld radios, communication towers to direct the radio signals to emergency vehicles, etc.). If SNOCOM and SNOPAC decide to consolidate, a **later phase of work** will consider whether and how SERS should also be consolidated with that consolidated dispatch agency.

The Joint Task Force, and the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards have approved a **Statement of Shared Values and Principles** applicable to the operation of a public safety communications center—whether operated in today’s format as two separate agencies, or as a single, consolidated agency. This statement is presented at **Attachment E**.

The Joint Task Force and the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards have also approved a **communications plan**, and a **mission statement, process, membership and timeline document** (both documents are posted at the SNOCOM and SNOPAC websites.) Both agencies will be posting identical information regarding the project on their websites.

In June, a **survey of all SNOCOM and SNOPAC Board members** was conducted, and a summary of themes and issues prepared and shared with the Joint Task Force and Boards (this is also posted online).

An **employee survey** (all employees of SNOCOM, SNOPAC and SERS were invited to participate) was conducted in August, and the results of that survey are being compiled.

An **RFP to develop data and options relative to facility needs** of a consolidated agency will be issued this fall.

A range of **comparative governance models** has been developed and reviewed by the Joint Task Force and the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards. The Joint Task Force has

begun discussing governance principles. No governance recommendations have yet been made by the Joint Task Force or Boards.

Agency staff have completed an **analysis of call transfers** and shared it with the Joint Task Force and SNOCOM and SNOPAC Board.

Agency staff have provided an initial assessment of issues related to **redundancy/survivability** – how services are provided if there is a major incident disabling one or both operations.

It is important to note that both SNOCOM and SNOPAC are formed by interlocal agreements by and among their member agencies. Those two interlocal agreements have very different terms with respect to amendment and termination; however, if the recommendation is made to proceed with a consolidation option, then each and every member agency of SNOCOM and SNOPAC will need to decide for itself whether to join a proposed consolidated agency.

The Joint Task Force and the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards are committed to keeping all member agencies up to date on the discussions—this briefing being an example of that commitment. The Joint Task Force and the Boards are also committed to providing all member agencies the information needed to make an informed decision with respect to consolidation, should that be the ultimate recommendation of the Boards.

Decisions and Major Findings to Date

A few important **framing decisions** have been made thus far:

1. The Boards of both SNOCOM and SNOPAC have committed that should consolidation occur, no layoffs will be made in the transition to a consolidated agency.
2. Service levels in a consolidated approach should be the same or better than that which can be provided by the two agencies separately.
3. If a decision is made to consolidate SNOCOM and SNOPAC, then work will begin to study possible consolidation of SERS in to the new agency.
4. Project progress will be communicated regularly and transparently to all Board members/agencies, client agencies and employees.

At a joint SNOCOM-SNOPAC Board meeting on September 15, a report on the **scope and impact of “call transfers,”** prepared jointly by the Executive Directors of SNOCOM and SNOPAC, was presented. See **Attachment F** for the executive summary of the call transfers report.

Background

Since the early 1970s, police, fire and emergency medical dispatch service has been provided to cities and public fire agencies in Snohomish County by two local agencies: SNOCOM and SNOPAC. SNOCOM serves fire agencies and cities largely in the southwest part of Snohomish County. SNOPAC serves the remaining areas of the County. The service territories of the two agencies overlap in some places (e.g., police/sheriff response in the area are dispatched by a different agency than are fire responders for that same area). For a **service territory map**, see **Attachments G**.

In the last 30 years, there have been at least three different efforts to explore consolidation of these two agencies, motivated by various issues including concerns about service levels, duplication of effort, call transfers, and potential economies of scale. These efforts did not result in a decision to consolidate, for various reasons.

The current effort began in 2014, with the two agencies and the E911 Board jointly hiring an independent consulting firm (Matrix Consulting) to provide an overview of the issues, and a detailed operational and financial assessment. The Matrix Consulting report was issued in three phases, the last of which was delivered in March, 2015. The report concluded that the consolidation of SNOCOM and SNOPAC is feasible and that there are “many reasons to move forward with consolidation.” The report outlined several potential approaches to consolidation, along a spectrum from “no action” to full consolidation.

There was concern that some of the Matrix Consulting Report conclusions were based on operating decisions that would not be acceptable to the agencies. Therefore, SNOCOM and SNOPAC formed a Joint Task Force in December 2015, and charged it with developing information and materials necessary to allow the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Board and their member agencies to make a decision as to whether SNOCOM and SNOPAC should consolidate in some manner. The Joint Task Force is advisory to the SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards.

The Joint Task Force has been meeting since January of this year, and is supported by the Executive Directors of SNOCOM and SNOPAC. Since May, the group has also been supported by an independent third-party facilitator.

Attachments:

- A. SNOCOM-SNOPAC Joint Task Force on Consolidation –Members and support staff
- B. Member agencies of SNOCOM
- C. Member agencies of SNOPAC
- D. Work Plan for the Joint Task Force
- E. Statement of Shared Values and Principles
- F. Executive Summary of Staff Report on Call Transfers

G. Service Territory Maps for SNOCOM and SNOPAC

Attachment A

SNOCOM-SNOPAC Joint Task Force on Consolidation –Members and support staff

SNOCOM
Bob Colinas, SNOCOM Board Vice-President, Mayor, City of Brier (Vice Chair of Joint Task Force)
Brad Reading, SNOCOM Board Alternate, Interim Fire Chief, FD#1
Bryan Stanifer, SNOCOM Board Alternate, Interim Police Chief, City of Lynnwood
SNOPAC
Steve Guptill, SNOPAC Board Chair, Assistant Fire Chief, City of Monroe
Rick Smith, SNOPAC Board, Police Chief, City of Marysville
Roy Waugh, SNOPAC Board, Commissioner, FD #7, (Chair of Joint Task Force)
SERS (Non-Voting)
Al Compaan, SERS Board Alternate, Police Chief, City of Edmonds
Jon Nehring, SERS Board President, Mayor, City of Marysville
Jon (Wiz) Wiswell, Interim Executive Director, SERS
JTF Support Team:
Terry Peterson, Executive Director, SNOCOM
Kurt Mills, Executive Director, SNOPAC
Karen Reed, Karen Reed Consulting, Facilitator

Attachment B

Member Agencies of SNOCOM

City of Brier

City of Edmonds

City of Lynnwood

City of Mill Creek

City of Mountlake Terrace

City of Mukilteo

Sno. County FD 1

Sno. County FD 7

Town of Woodway

Attachment C

Member Agencies of SNOPAC

POLICE:

Arlington Police Department
Darrington Police Department
Everett Police Department
Gold Bar Police Department
Granite Falls Police Department
Lake Stevens Police Department
Marysville Police Department
Monroe Police Department
Snohomish County Sheriff's Office
Snohomish Police Department
Stanwood Police Department
Stillaguamish Tribal Police
Department
Sultan Police Department

FIRE:

Snohomish County Fire District 4
Snohomish Fire & Rescue
Snohomish County Fire District 5
Snohomish County Fire District 7
Snohomish County Fire District 15
Snohomish County Fire District 16
Snohomish County Fire District 17
Snohomish County Fire District 19
Snohomish County Fire District 21
Snohomish County Fire District 22
Snohomish County Fire District 23
Snohomish County Fire District 24
Snohomish County Fire District 25
Snohomish County Fire District 26
Snohomish County Fire District 27
Snohomish County Fire District 28
Arlington Fire Department
Snohomish County Airport Paine
Field Fire Department
Everett Fire Department
Fire Marshal
Lake Stevens Fire
Marysville Fire District
Monroe Fire District 3
North County Regional Fire
Authority Stanwood Fire
Department

Attachment D

Work Plan for the Joint Task Force (as approved by SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards, July 2016)

The purpose of the SNOCOM-SNOPAC Consolidation Discussions Project is to develop:

- (1) A 10-year baseline *pro forma* (status quo projection, outlining, services, staffing, cost estimates); *and*
- (2) A preferred plan and approach for consolidating SNOCOM and SNOPAC, including a defined scope of services, projected service levels, governance, funding structure and cost allocation, and consolidation transition plan, and 10-year *pro-forma* statement.

These options should be developed at a sufficient level of detail so as to allow SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards and member agencies to make an informed decision whether to implement the preferred consolidation plan.

Any proposed consolidation plan will include assumptions that:

- Service levels in a consolidated approach should be the same or better than that which can be provided by the two agencies separately.
- Employee layoffs will not be proposed as part of the transition and start-up of the consolidated approach.
- If a decision is made to consolidate SNOCOM and SNOPAC, work will then begin to study whether and how SERS should be consolidated into the new agency. (Note: No assumption is made at this time as to whether to include SERS costs in the “status quo” and “consolidated option” deliverables described above, or the timeline on which SERS consolidation would be implemented if approved.)
- Project progress will be communicated regularly and transparently to all Board members/agencies, client agencies and employees.

The **main deliverables** for the Joint Task Force in support of the Project are anticipated to be as listed below (subject to change).

Phase 1: June - July

Consolidation Project Purpose and Scope Statement
Mission statement for Joint Task Force
Report from Facilitator of Themes from Joint Task Force and Board Interviews
Decision-making process for Task Force & Boards
Statement of Values and Principles for consolidation
Communications Plan
Components of Baseline Scenario
Call transfers— agreement on facts, impacts and options for resolution
Scope of Services options

Phase 2: August - September

Scope of Services – preferred options
Governance Framework—options and key questions

Approved by SNOCOM/SNOPAC Boards

Recommendation for Choice of Legal Entity of a consolidated agency
Assessment Formula components and rationale
Facilities options, including redundancy

Phase 3: –*October-November*

Governance Agreement Outline
Assessment Formula
Proposed Organization Structure & facilities options and cost implications, underlying organizational charts

Phase 4: *December - January*

Pro Forma operating budgets—status quo & preferred consolidation option
Transition plan, timeline and budget
Draft interlocal agreement
Assessment formulas final
Briefing materials for Boards, member agencies

Q1 2017: Board & Member Agency review and decision

Q2 2017: If the Agencies vote to proceed with consolidation, work will begin at this point to discuss SERS consolidation into the Agency (timeline, cost, etc. TBD).

January 2018: Earliest date for operational consolidation of SNOCOM and SNOPAC

SNOCOM-SNOPAC Consolidation Discussion Project

Statement of Shared Values and Principles

Unanimously recommended by the Joint Task Force, June 24, 2016

Approved by SNOCOM Board, July 20, 2016

Approved by SNOPAC Board, July 21, 2016

The SNOCOM and SNOPAC Boards endorse the following statement of shared values and principles for the operation of a public safety communications center—whether in the form of today’s two separate agencies, or with respect to the possibility of a future consolidated, single regional communications center serving all of Snohomish County.

Values and Principals are not presented in rank order of priority.

Our Shared Values Include:

1. **Providing high quality service to citizens and first responders.** We seek to meet all regional and national standards in the delivery of public safety communications services as adopted by the Board of our agency.
2. **Making data-driven decisions.** We take strategic action based on the facts after a thorough and objective analysis of the issues.
3. **Being an effective and efficient steward of public funds.**
4. **Participatory Governance.** All participating agencies should have a meaningful voice in the operating decisions of the Agency. We make decisions by consensus whenever possible.
5. **Promoting interagency collaboration, communication and strong working relationships.** We seek to act in the collective best interests of all our public safety partners, not just those served by our Agency. We are open and honest with each other.
6. **Continuous Improvement.** We are committed to continuously tracking changes in customer and public needs and the public safety environment and finding and implementing ways to better meet those needs.

Our Shared Operating Principles Include:

- A. We strive to operate nimbly, with the ability to make decisions and respond quickly when necessary.

- B. We seek to develop unified public safety communications policies countywide.
- C. We seek to understand and address the unique needs of Police and Fire agencies, as well as the disparate needs of small and large agencies. We strive to address these needs equitably in all operating and financial decisions.
- D. We work to attract and retain high quality staff.
- E. We strive to employ rigorous quality control and reporting practices.
- F. We manage agency budgets to control or reduce costs.
- G. We seek to limit spikes in user fees from year to year, by use of planning capital investments over time, developing reserves and other means.
- H. We adopt policies, fees and charges that encourage effective and efficient use of agency resources by both member agencies and others using our system.
- I. We strive to deploy operating systems and practices that will support interoperability between dispatch operations across the county for the benefit of all public safety agencies.
- J. We seek to ensure each of our call takers is able to handle all types of calls: police, fire, and medical.
- K. We strive to be transparent and accessible to our customer agencies and the public.

Attachment F

Executive Summary of Staff Report on Call Transfers

SNOCOM/SNOPAC Call Transfer Discussion Document

Prepared by: Terry Peterson and Kurt Mills

Date: September 7, 2016

The purpose of this document is to discuss the history of call routing in Snohomish County, define call transfers, identify the scope, magnitude, and impact of the existing number of call transfers, and identify options (and pros and cons) for further reducing call transfers.

With the implementation of a shared New World Systems CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) in October 2015, SNOCOM & SNOPAC implemented a **cross-PSAP call pre-entry policy** (CPP). While still in its early stages this policy lessens the impacts of some 9-1-1 transfers by the receiving PSAP beginning the incident entry before transferring the caller.

It is important to note that addressing call transfers is only one of several issues that need to be addressed in the larger question of whether SNOCOM and SNOPAC should somehow consolidate.

1. Executive Summary

Transfers of 911 calls between bordering 911 centers is common, however it is especially impactful in Snohomish County because SCSO (Snohomish County Sheriff's Office) and Fire District 1 (FD1) are each served by a different Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Roughly a decade ago a decision was made to arbitrarily segment the jointly served area so that 911 calls to the north route to SNOPAC and 911 calls to the south route to SNOCOM.

It is an accepted fact that nationwide the great majority of all 911 calls are requests for law enforcement and Snohomish County follows that pattern: approximately 85% of calls are for law enforcement and 15% are for Fire/EMS. In virtually every community of the U.S., calls route to the law enforcement PSAP first, and calls for Fire/EMS are transferred. While law enforcement represents the large majority of the calls, fire represents the majority of high priority (lights and sirens) calls. Transfers of 911 calls should be avoided because it adds time delays to potential emergency situations, creates inefficiencies in the use of call taking staff, and can frustrate callers. In the southern portion of the jointly served area Snohomish County bucks that national trend, and the impacts are discussed in this report.

As the technology has advanced, both centers are now able to quantify the impacts of the call routing decisions made so long ago. The segmentation of the jointly served area was designed to be somewhat even between the two centers. The higher proportion of law enforcement 911 calls has created an ineffective call routing process in Snohomish County. A report from the E911 Office showed that in 2015, 21% (38,160) of SNOCOM's total 911 calls were transferred to SNOPAC. Conversely SNOPAC transferred 2% (12,381) of their total 911 calls to SNOCOM. In 2015 more than 50,000 calls were transferred between SNOPAC & SNOCOM and we expect 2016 will end with a similar number of transfers.

Technology has also advanced with the implementation of the New World Systems (NWS) shared Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD). The shared NWS CAD system allows the receiving PSAP to begin the call interrogation and in some cases gather enough information to allow first responders to be dispatched to the emergency even before the call is transferred to the other agency. In the cases where the CPP applies, these process improvements have undoubtedly reduced overall dispatch and agency response times.

While NWS and the CPP have made process improvements possible, other problems are created, including the shifting of workload. The answering PSAP is now spending additional time during the initial triage and beginning the CFS entry. This additional time tends to reduce the PSAP's ability to respond to other urgent and critical tasks, including answering their own incoming 911 calls. During the first five months of 2016, the PSAPs have spent approximately 207 hours of doing CPP work on behalf of one another.

In addition to the shift of workload, the CPP has not eliminated the time it takes to physically transfer the calls. In the first five months of 2016 we estimate the PSAPs and 911 callers spent 106 hours (21 seconds per transfer) waiting while calls were transferred back and forth between the two PSAPs. The CPP pre-work and transfer times are both avoidable inefficiencies which carry their own costs. The bottom line is the existing CPP will never do more than lessen the impacts of transfers; the base issues remain unchanged.

Several options exist to resolve the issues, from a full consolidation to the rerouting of phone lines and dispatch responsibilities. While each option is outlined in Section 9, this report does not make a recommendation on which option to follow as this is only one body of information being collected and reviewed by the Joint Task Force.

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Attachment G

