Task Force on Optimal PSAP Architecture (TFOPA)

Working Group 3 Summary of Report and Recommendations on 911 Fees and Resource Allocation

Overall:

This Report recognizes the great diversity among states and local governments (Public Safety Answering Points, or PSAPs) in their approach to Next-Generation 911 deployment. Some states have authority for decision making for PSAPS within a state, other states delegate authority to regional authorities, some states have home-rule authorities, and some states have a combination of those. Funding also varies from the amounts charged as a 9-1-1 fee on wireline and some wireless customers’ bills. What is done with the 9-1-1 fees collected also varies. Many states designate those fees specifically for 9-1-1, though some states have moved the funds involved to their general treasury to support non-9-1-1 purposes. Change in communication technology has also fostered new services that allow their users to connect to 9-1-1 without contributing fees for 9-1-1 thus forcing a specific customer base to unfairly assume the overall cost of 9-1-1.

This report identifies and analyzes at a high level the priority funding alternatives, in the context of this institutional and statutory framework. Since it operated on a short timeline, meeting in earnest since February of 2015, the Report recognizes that further work needs to be done in more detail to examine these potential options, and recommends to the FCC that it continue to engage on these issues with state and local government, and all actors in the “911 ecosystem.” Some of these recommendations will require further study, especially how to fund new services offered over broadband networks.

Some of these recommendations could be addressed within TFOPA, CSRIC or other established FACA’s, such as a Local State Government Advisory Committee (LSAG). These additional studies can exist concurrently among the groups identified. Regardless of the variations of funding and in technologies available to access 9-1-1, one principle stands out: Funding for 9-1-1 must be predictable, stable and dedicated for the purpose of 9-1-1. Capital expense, as well as, operation expenses much be funded if we will be successful in deploying Next Generation 9-1-1 across the country. To provide consistency for consumers calling 9-1-1 and to mitigate the costs of maintaining both legacy 9-1-1 systems and NG9-1-1 systems, funding to migrate to NG9-1-1 become all the more critical.

Summary of key recommendations:

* There is a need for planning and coordination throughout states to plan for and facilitate the deployment of NG9-1-1.
* The quality and accuracy of reporting 9-1-1 data at all levels of government to better build support for the need of funding, including third party auditing of state and local government data used in the “Net 911 Act Report” that the FCC submits to Congress.
* There is a need for cooperation between federal and state governments to ensure the accelerated deployment of NG911 networks across the country, under the framework of cooperative federalism.
* If diversions from certain states continue, and without a potential new federal grant program, the momentum toward NG911 deployments nationally could slow, and states and PSAPs would be left to maintain dual systems, legacy and IP-based, in a difficult and challenging transition.
* PSAP consolation is occurring in an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary pace. Funding could provide incentives to consolidate or share services in appropriate ways. Working Groups 1 and 2 are working actively on such architectures with shared services.
* Funding is needed and to achieve this it is recommended that all services capable of communicating to PSAPs should contribute to the operations of 9-1-1 services. Also, it is recommended that the FCC work with congress to address the need to help fund NG9-1-1.
* The FCC working with Congress should do what they can to discourage the diversion of 9-1-1 fees and provide FCC auditing authority of 9-1-1 fees.
* The FCC work with other federal agencies and Congress that provide funding for public safety grants to states and local governments under appropriate conditions.
* Federal funds available to provide access to broadband ensure that PSAPs are connected to broadband as a first step for NG9-1-1 deployment, and that the FCC consider using, among others, funds from spectrum auctions to assist states and PSAPs in this effort.
* Greater efforts should be made across the country for education and outreach to key policymakers at state and local government levels about the importance of NG911 deployments, a timely transition, and the deleterious impacts of continued diversions of 911 fees.
* The establishment of a new joint advisory committee for NG911 and other 911 issues among the technical experts at state and local governments, the FCC, and the associations, organizations, carriers, and vendors involved in 911 issues (tentatively called a Local State Government Advisory Committee on 911, or LSAG).