

Southwest Interagency Dispatch Optimization Pilot Project



Executive Summary September 2012

Project Overview

In 2011 the Forest Service, Department of Interior, and State Executive Leaderships committed to the Southwest Interagency Dispatch Optimization Pilot Project (IDOPP) under the nationally chartered project (http://www.iio.gov/IDIP/IDOPP/Final_IDOPP_Project_Plan_02-03-11.pdf) and the IDOPP Bridge Team. The Southwest Interagency Dispatch Optimization Pilot Project was directed to evaluate and optimize dispatch operations, including dispatch for fire, law enforcement, and other field going personnel. The pilot project included federal, state, and tribal stakeholders. The Southwest Executive Oversight Group provided within-area leadership support for the project. The Southwest Sub-Team of subject matter experts identified key issues, business needs and user requirements and developed alternatives to optimize dispatch services and operations, and recommendations for dispatch standards in the future as described in the Southwest IDOPP Final Report.

In May through September 2011, 100% of the 15 Coordination Center Managers in the Southwest completed the IDOPP Data Call; 49% of the 76 dispatch center employees responded to the IDOPP survey; and 63% of 185 resource protection/public safety officers responded to the IDOPP Law Enforcement Data Call. The consultant services by Management Analysis, Inc. (MAI) provided the extensive data analysis for the project. The Sub-Team used this analysis in developing alternatives, options, and recommendations for the Southwest IDOPP Final Report.

The Sub-Team had four physical meetings and numerous virtual meetings to accomplish this task. As the Sub-Team engaged the project there were several topics that needed alternatives developed for management decision: Emergency Command/Communications Centers; Federal Law Enforcement Dispatch Services; Radio Communications Infrastructure; and Federal overarching issues that need to be addressed regardless of alternatives selected. Following are the decisions of the Sub-Team and Executive Managers with a more in-depth explanation in the Southwest IDOPP Final Report.

Decisions

Emergency Command/Communications Centers (ECCs): Currently there are eighteen Emergency Communications/Command Centers in the Southwest that are within the scope of this project: twelve fire Centers, one dedicated Law Enforcement Center, one Law Enforcement and Search and Rescue Center (Grand Canyon) and four fourth-tiered fire dispatch Centers. The total annual cost estimate for the various Centers in the Southwest is approximately \$10.5

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million. The Center costs ranged from \$1.5 million to \$300,000 per year. This project gathered as much information as possible to tell the story of the current dispatch/coordination system in Southwest but by no means is it all inclusive. The IDOPP decisions have the potential to be a blueprint for the next ten years or longer for opportunities to consolidate Centers in the Southwest. This initiative gives us the opportunity to “retool” our dispatch centers for the future. Any consolidations need to be monitored for their successes and challenges as lessons learned. Overall, the Alternatives approved will need supportive management and willing partners throughout the Southwest in order for the project to be a success.

Fire/All Hazard Dispatch Centers: Generally in the Southwest local dispatch centers comprise the third tier of the system; the majority are interagency centers and frequently include both federal and state fire representatives. The primary responsibilities of a Tier 3 center are to dispatch resources to incidents within their given area, to order additional resources through the GACC or neighboring centers, to determine local fire danger, and to serve as a communication center for field operations. The Southwest has twelve Tier 3 centers servicing numerous interagency partners.

Alternative 1: Maintain Current Centers

The Southwest sub-team discussed the alternative of leaving the centers as-is in the current locations with the current support boundaries (that is, no consolidation). Although the number and locations of centers would remain unchanged, this alternative would not continue business as usual. Upgrades and improvement to the current centers would be implemented, as needed. The Southwest would also need to standardize procedures, equipment, and systems at the current centers to help increase the efficiency of the dispatch operations within the area.

Alternative 2: Consolidation

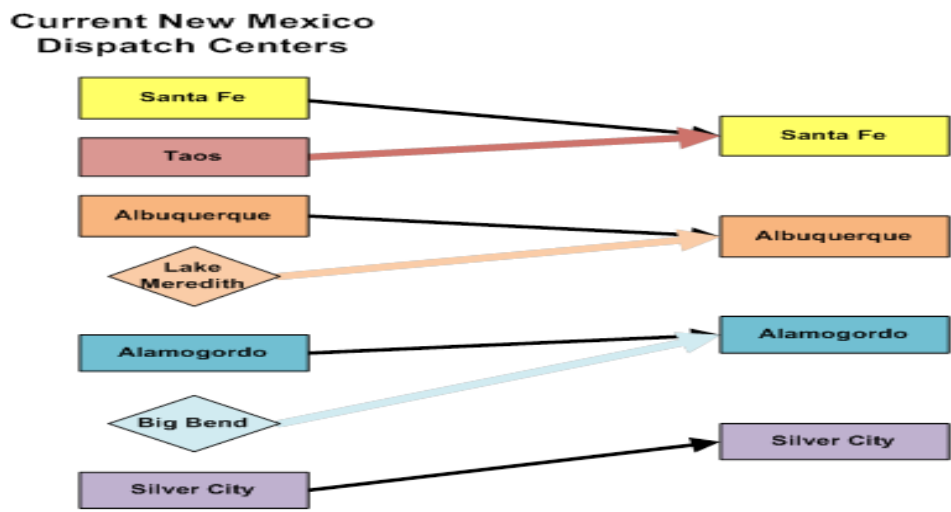
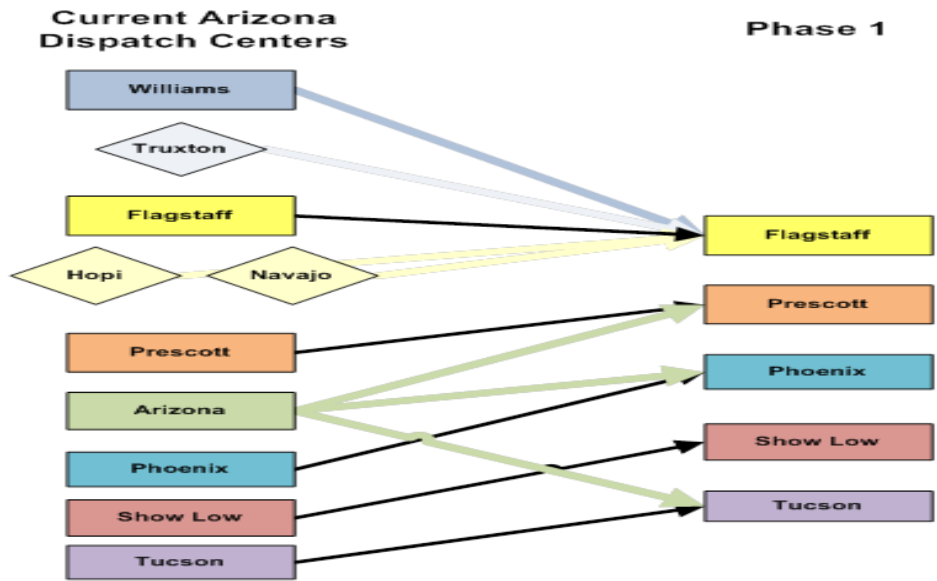
The Alternatives for the Southwest generated from the Sub-Team have the opportunity to address all twelve of the Tier 3 fire centers as well as the four Tier 4 centers. Alternatives 2A and 2B include consolidation of centers to increase efficiencies and interoperability. The alternatives will be implemented through a three phased approach to be completed over several years.

Decision: The decision is to move forward with implementation of Phase 1 of alternative 2A. During implementation of Phase 1, the Sub-Team will continue to analyze Phase 2 and 3 of both alternatives to determine which dispatch consolidations will provide optimal dispatch services for the Southwest.

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The Southwest Sub-Team will continue to work with local units to implement the alternatives, as well as coordinate with the Agency Executives to establish the funding strategies and priorities for consolidation. The Sub-Team will also continue to fine tune the alternatives for consolidation and refine the plan accordingly to meet overall project goals and objectives.



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Federal Law Enforcement Dispatch Services: As reported through the IDOPP Data Call, Law Enforcement (LE) incidents are on an upward trend at 4% per year from 2008-2010, with a total increase of 7% over three years. This workload was reported by the Federal Law Enforcement Communication Center (FLECC) and the fire/all hazard dispatch centers, and does not reflect any after-hours workload through local Sheriff's Offices. There are over 260 resource protection/public safety officers in the Southwest: Bureau of Land Management (BLM); Forest Service (USFS); Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS); National Park Service (NPS); and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

No Action Alternative: No Action Alternative (As-Is)

Not a feasible alternative as the FLECC has begun to provide communication support to additional law enforcement officers in the Southwest and Texas.

Alternative 1: (Preferred) Expand the existing regional Federal Law Enforcement Communication Center with a new location to be determined within the Phoenix metropolitan area. The Southwest Sub-Team is currently analyzing options for location of the regional center in the Phoenix area and will present these options for consideration to the Southwest Executive Oversight Group in early Fall of 2012.

Alternative 2: Maintain the current FLECC operational duties in Arizona and create a new LE center to service New Mexico.

Alternative 3: Collocate LE Communication Operations with a Current Fire Dispatch Center.

Option 1: Collocate dispatch at Phoenix Interagency Dispatch Center.

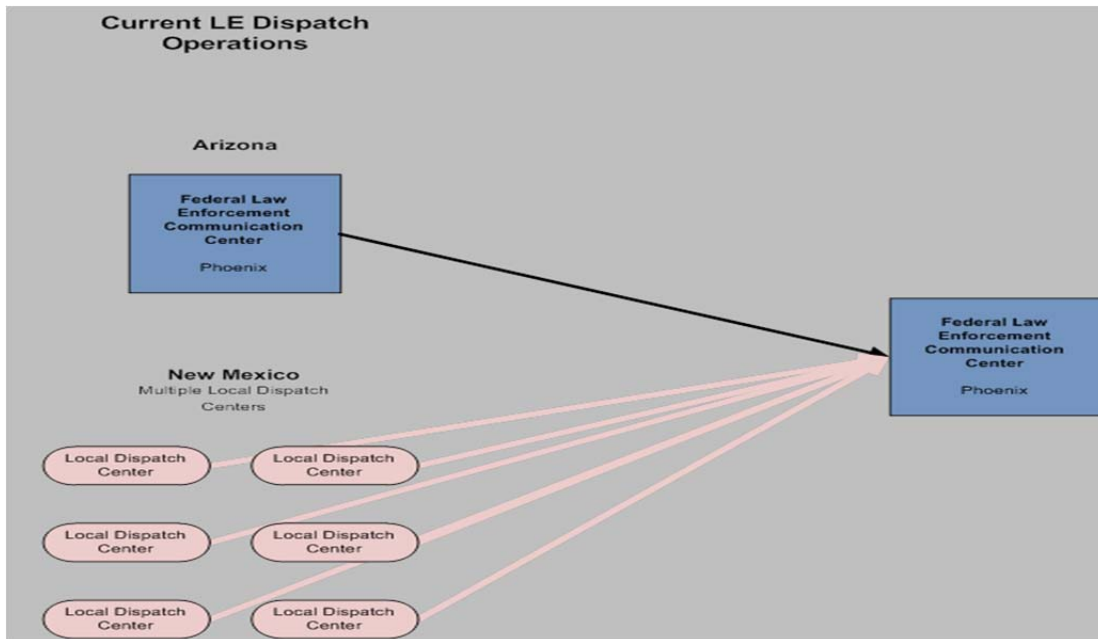
Option 2: Collocate dispatch at Tucson Interagency Dispatch.

Option 3: Collocate dispatch at a new facility to be leased or constructed.

(Average cost of new facility construction plus furnishings is on average \$380 per square foot based on IDOPP national research.)

Decision: Utilize the Sub-Team to fully establish and make fully operational the FLECC in Phoenix, Arizona to become the regional Federal Law Enforcement Communication Center for all Federal land management agencies in the Southwest, excluding the Grand Canyon National Park (Alternative 1-Preferred). Maximize existing LE frequencies and infrastructure currently utilized throughout the Southwest. Continue to develop and implement interagency Standard Operating Procedures for LE Communication Services as well as develop a certified, interagency LE Training program for LE Communication Services.

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Radio Communications Infrastructure: The Southwest has approximately 5,000 various radio/communication devices across the landscape. All of the agencies are facing budget and personnel challenges in maintaining the current system, much less meeting future needs and compliances.

Decision: Dispatch optimization alternatives must consider analyzing further the radio infrastructure in the Southwest. Communications/radio systems are vital to the operations of the dispatch/coordination system. The Southwest commits to utilizing and building upon other studies and initiatives (i.e. Southwest Border Interoperability Study) to find new solutions to infrastructure needs to facilitate future consolidations. The end result is to design, procure and implement technology so that all systems operate for the customer in a seamless fashion.

Conclusion

The Southwest dispatch/coordination system is complex and reasonably efficient. However, in changing times, with rapidly changing technologies, and declining budgets, it is prudent to take a

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fresh look at the current system and potentially “retool” our dispatching system for the next generation. The dispatch/coordination system requires that staffing, infrastructure, and equipment in the future is reliable, adaptable, and sustainable in achieving our stakeholders’ missions. Cost is a concern of all agencies. A mindful approach and a commitment to resilience are necessary in developing a long term strategy toward improving efficiency and effectiveness of the dispatch/coordination system.

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