

## STAFF REPORT

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**Date:** October 23, 2024

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**Through:** Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager

**Subject:** Staff Report (For Possible Action): Presentation and discussion on collaborative efforts to improve fire services in the region and potential approval of an interlocal agreement between the City of Reno and the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority (RTAA) for the provision of comprehensive fire protection services at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport.

**From:** Aaron Wike, Administrative Services Manager

**Department:** Fire Department

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### Summary:

Council is being asked to approve an interlocal agreement (ILA) with the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority (RTAA). The proposed ILA will formalize the transfer of fire protection responsibilities from the RTAA Fire Department to the Reno Fire Department (RFD). This agreement represents a significant change in fire services at the airport, including aircraft rescue and Fire fighting (ARFF), structural firefighting, and hazardous materials response. The agreement also includes provisions for inspection and dispatch services, with the providing these services while utilizing the RTAA's existing fire station and equipment.

This partnership enhances fire protection services at the airport and aligns with both parties' operational, organizational, and financial goals while ensuring compliance with Federal Aviation Administration regulations. The agreement outlines a five-year initial term with automatic renewals, subject to cost-reimbursement mechanisms, and was approved by the RTAA at their September 12, 2024, board meeting. Staff recommends Council approve the interlocal agreement.

During this item, staff will also provide an update on ongoing regional efforts to collaboratively improve fire services, including providing information on the recently executed memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) regarding automatic aid. This MOU will help support community safety by improving response times and resource allocation within each jurisdiction, a key focus area regional policy makers have

directed staff to work on.

**Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

Public Safety

**Previous Council Action:**

**July 22, 2022** – Reno City Council, Sparks City Council, and the Washoe County Board of Commissioners directed staff to move forward with efforts to improve the outcome of fire, emergency medical, and dispatch services by adopting a set of principles for regional collaboration.

**August 14, 2024** – Council directed staff to work with regional partners to identify a funding mechanism for the regionalization or consolidation of fire protection services in the Truckee Meadows in advance of the 84<sup>th</sup> (2027) Session of the Nevada Legislature.

**Discussion:**

***Airport Fire Service***

When standalone airport fire services operate independently, coordination within the community can suffer, resulting in slower response times and inadequate resource allocation during critical incidents. The best practice in addressing these issues is to integrate airport fire services with the existing municipal fire department, which can provide a more cohesive and efficient emergency response framework.

The specialization, tailored training and protocols specific to aviation, are often viewed as benefits of having a standalone airport fire service. However, this specialization can also become a challenge, as it may create silos that hinder communication with other emergency services. Alternative approaches, such as a joint services model, could enhance coordination by sharing resources between entities. However, this approach still introduces management complexities and potential delays in response.

***Interlocal Proposal***

The recommended course of action for the RFD to take over airport fire services addresses these challenges directly. By consolidating operations, the RFD can enhance communication and streamline responses, ensuring that all emergency services are working in tandem. This integration not only optimizes resource use but also leverages the broader capabilities of the City's fire department, providing a more robust response to emergencies at the airport. The airport firefighters will be absorbed into the RFD providing a greater depth of resources for the

city and the airport. Ultimately, this approach fosters a safer environment for both airport users and the surrounding community, making it the most effective strategy moving forward.

### ***Transition Plan***

To facilitate the transition of fire services at RTAA to the RFD, a detailed plan of action will be implemented. Staff has conducted a comprehensive assessment of current airport fire operations and has conducted an analysis of the existing protocols, resources, and staffing needs. Through ongoing collaboration with airport personnel and leadership, staff has gained insights into the unique challenges and operational requirements of the airport, instilling confidence in our ability to manage airport fire operations. A phased transition plan is currently being developed outlining specific timelines for merging resources, training personnel, and establishing joint emergency response protocols to ensure operational efficiency and the safety of the community, airport tenants, and its visitors. Training and communication will be critical components to the transition's success and the airport's ongoing operations. Staff will develop specialized programs designed to equip RFD personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge related to ARFF and other airport-specific emergencies. Concurrently, airport personnel will receive training necessary to operate safely within the framework of the existing RFD and RTAA Airport protocols, policies, and procedures. Jointly, the prescribed trainings will allow for the combined resources to operate as a single unit under the RFD.

Additionally, staff will work with Reno Dispatch and the City's Department of Information Technology to upgrade airport communication systems, ensuring seamless information sharing between City of Reno Dispatch, Reno Fire Department, and airport operations.

Stakeholder engagement will be prioritized through ongoing discussions with airport tenants, local agencies, and community members to address concerns and gather input. Performance metrics will be established to evaluate the effectiveness of the integration over time, allowing for continuous improvement in service delivery. This comprehensive plan aims to ensure a smooth transition that enhances safety and efficiency for both airport users and the Reno community.

### ***Other Regional Collaboration***

In addition to this agreement, the Reno Fire Department recently entered into a MOU for auto aid with the TMFPD. The MOU expands auto-aid coverage for all call types to high-risk areas, sharing resources and personnel at emergency scenes based on real-time demands, and establishing standardized response protocols to improve communication during joint operations. Both the agreements with RTAA and TMFPD are guided by the principles adopted by the Council on July 22, 2022, during the concurrent meeting with regional partners.

The agreements take steps to ensure the right resources are dispatched to the right calls at the right time.

Additionally, staff is also working with regional partners and a consulting firm (BRK Nevada) to identify funding mechanisms and opportunities for advancing regionalization and consolidation efforts ahead of the 84<sup>th</sup> Session of the Nevada Legislature in 2027. Council directed staff to begin exploring options during legislative discussions in August 2024. A special meeting with regional partners on fire regionalization opportunities is being planned for early 2025 to discuss potential next steps in more detail and seek direction from all policy bodies together.

**Financial Implications:**

All costs associated with airport operations and personnel will be charged to RFD's operating budget (General Fund) using a project code and sub-department GL approved by the City Finance Department. An additional 12 percent administrative fee will be applied to all incurred costs and billed monthly to the RTAA.

**Legal Implications:**

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends Council approve the Interlocal Agreement for Fire Services Between the City of Reno on behalf of the Reno Fire Department and the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority.

**Proposed Motion:**

I move to approve staff recommendation.

**Attachments:**

Interlocal Agreement