

STAFF REPORT

Date: May 7, 2025

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jackie Bryant, City Manager

Subject: Joint presentation by the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, Reno Fire Department, and Sparks Fire Department on current and future regional fire collaboration efforts. (For Discussion Only)

From: Dave Cochran, Fire Chief

Department: Fire Department

Summary:

At the February 6, 2025 special concurrent meeting of all four regional governing bodies, elected officials directed staff to work together on enhanced regional fire service collaboration. The joint directive emphasized the goals of improved coordination, efficiency, and transparency, while exploring the full continuum of regional fire options including greater use of automatic aid and other forms of shared service delivery.

In response, an interagency working group was formed, composed of executive fire staff and city and county leadership. Since its inception, this group has met regularly to assess current conditions, identify opportunities, and chart a practical course forward. A detailed overview of progress to date will be presented, along with a joint update from the three fire departments highlighting key operational, legislative, and policy-related efforts.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Public Safety

Previous Council Action:

February 6, 2025 - Direction from the Washoe County Commissioners, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Board of Fire Commissioners, and Reno City Council Members to the City Managers/County Manager/Truckee Meadows Fire Protection Chief to work together to gather additional information to assess needs, costs, and impacts to help guide the process of determining options for enhanced regional fire services.

Background:

The Washoe County region has long benefited from a collaborative approach to fire and emergency medical services through mutual aid, shared dispatch platforms, and cooperative training programs. However, ongoing gaps in service alignment, dispatch inefficiencies, and staffing inconsistencies have continued to limit the region's ability to fully optimize service delivery.

At the February 6 special concurrent meeting, elected officials called for a coordinated exploration of the full continuum of regionalization options from improved operational coordination to potential full-service consolidation. This initiative builds on existing partnerships and the recognition that a more unified approach can yield faster responses, more cost-effective deployment of resources, and a better experience for constituents.

Discussion:

Since February, the regional working group has advanced several key milestones. The group clarified that regionalization, in this context, is not synonymous with consolidation into a single district. Rather, it refers to the coordination of services among existing departments to achieve shared operational goals while preserving agency flexibility. This shared understanding now guides all planning and communications efforts.

One of the efforts of the group was to form a focused operational chiefs subgroup, composed of fire leadership from each jurisdiction. This subgroup has made notable progress on aligning emergency response models. One of the main focus areas has been how to create an efficient, equitable response model that takes into account the varied staffing levels between the jurisdictions. This approach will balance cost considerations with public safety outcomes and consider flexibility across the region.

In terms of dispatch operations, the chiefs confirmed that technical infrastructure is in place, but operational refinements are needed to eliminate call transfers and ensure that the closest and most appropriate unit is dispatched using AVL (automatic vehicle location) data. These improvements are being integrated into the Hexagon CAD system buildout, with real-time data monitoring being planned to support deployment accuracy. Geofencing has also been identified as a future opportunity to enhance deployment boundaries.

The subgroup placed an emphasis on regional standardization of operating procedures and training protocols. To this end, five of the most common call types are being prioritized for standard operating guidelines (SOG) development. Cross-agency training will follow, requiring executive support for overtime authorization and coordination around labor agreements. Concurrent with operational progress, the group has worked closely to analyze Senate Bill 319 (SB319), which creates a framework for forming a regional fire protection district. While the current collaboration effort is focused on operational alignment, the working group recognized

the value of engaging with SB319 as enabling legislation. Participating jurisdictions collaboratively developed amendment language to preserve local flexibility, address fiscal equity—particularly around inherited debt and asset sharing—and ensure appropriate governance. The bill, if ultimately passed and signed into law, mandates a commissioned study to evaluate the impact of regionalization on cost, response times, readiness, and legal structure, with findings due by December 2026.

A major upcoming priority is the development and release of a request for proposals (RFP) to engage a third-party consultant to conduct a comprehensive feasibility and efficiency business plan/study as supported by SB319. This study will explore governance models, legal structures, fiscal scenarios, and operational readiness across all three agencies. The RFP is being informed by past CAD regionalization procurement documents and will include learnings from peer regions such as Sacramento.

The working group also agreed that labor and public engagement are essential. Work is underway on a presentation to help inform labor groups of the evolving staffing and response model, with the goal of creating shared understanding and minimizing potential friction. Future deliverables of this group include the release of the RFP, convening of labor briefings to discuss staffing models, and refinement of joint public messaging.

Financial Implications:

To date, the financial impact has been limited to staff time for coordination and planning. However, additional costs are expected with the launch of the business plan study, consultant procurement, and regional training implementation. Future phases, particularly those involving dispatch integration or operational expansion, may have associated funding needs. These will be evaluated in the business plan and may present cost-saving opportunities in the long term.

Legal Implications:

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

Recommendation:

This item is for discussion only. Staff recommends that elected officials receive the presentation and provide feedback to inform the working group's continued efforts. Comments received will help guide the scope of the feasibility study, labor engagement strategy, and public communication approach.

Proposed Motion:

No motion required. For discussion only.

Attachments: