



FUNDING AND IMPROVING PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

COMPARING EXISTING PRIVATE TRANSPORT TO
PROPOSED FIREFIGHTER TRANSPORT

NOVEMBER 23, 2011

Pinellas County and many fire departments are currently analyzing critical matters related to Emergency Medical Services. Currently, the core issue is whether the County should change its EMS system from our current private ambulance transport of emergency and non-emergency incidents to allow the fire departments to do all transport exclusively. My staff and I believe that our system should remain unchanged; some firefighters believe that they should take over that responsibility.

In an effort to try to provide clarity on this complex discussion, we've produced this easy-to-read and understand comparative of the two proposed approaches. The plan originating from County staff and our consultant is simply referred to as the "County Plan"; the proposal that firefighters Scott Sanford and Jim Millican have suggested is known as the "S-M Plan." Please know that every effort has been made to present the facts and figures without hyperbole, exaggeration, or inflammatory language.

After reading this summary, if you wish to have further detailed information, you may also refer to any number of documents that are housed on the County's website at www.pinellascounty.org/emsstudy. Those documents that may be most helpful to you as well as the documents that we have based this summary on are the IPS Consultant Report (April 2011), the Sanford –Millican Report,

and the Pinellas County Staff Analysis of the Sanford-Millican Report (September 28, 2011).



Robert LaSala
County Administrator
Pinellas County

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SYSTEM

EMS is provided countywide by the Board of County Commissioners, sitting as the EMS Authority, a special, countywide taxing district. Pinellas uses a dual response system that has 18 fire service agencies that provide medical first response (MFR) to an incident or situation and one private ambulance provider that handles the transporting of emergency and non-emergency patients.

THE COUNTY PLAN AND S-M PLAN BOTH AGREE ON:

- Advanced Life Support (ALS), Paramedic Dual Response System
- Marginal engine funding (County funds by positions)
- Priority dispatch

(See back page for additional information on each of the items.)

BY THE NUMBERS

The County Plan and S-M Plan disagree on 911 and non-emergency transport. Below are side-by-side comparisons of relevant figures and information.

COST ANNUALLY* *(in millions)*

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Medical First Response	\$33.0	\$30.1
Unaccounted for Costs	\$0.0	\$4.3
SUBTOTAL	\$33.0	\$34.4
Ambulance/Transport	\$30.5	\$33.5
Ambulance Program Support	\$11.5	\$16.2
SUBTOTAL	\$42.0	\$49.7
Unaccounted for Costs	\$0.0	\$15.2
SUBTOTAL	\$41.5	\$65.0
GRAND TOTAL	\$75.0	\$99.4

UNITS ON DUTY

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Paramedic Fire Engines	72	60
Paramedic Ambulance	53	51

SALARIES**

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Annual Salaries/Benefits	\$58,000	\$98,000
Pensions	Matching 401K	No match Special Risk

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

	County Plan	S-M Plan
Additional Tax Subsidy Required	No	Yes***
New Cost Shifts to Cities	Yes	Yes
Increase in government employees	No	Yes
Higher Salaries, Pensions, and Benefits	No	Yes
Governance in Place	Yes	No
Liability Costs Plan	Yes	No
Workforce Management	Yes	No
Response Time Accountability	Yes	No
Ambulance Fleet Readiness	Yes	No
Cost Containment/ Financial Stability	Yes	No

LOCAL HOSPITALS

	Supports County Plan	Supports S-M Plan
Morton Plant Mease	Yes	No
Edward White	Yes	No
Northside	Yes	No
Palms of Pasadena	Yes	No
St. Petersburg General	Yes	No

Notes:

* *Figures rounded*

** *Based on average of salaries reported by fire departments in budgets to County.*

*** *Cost of transport under S-M Plan would exceed current user fee revenues by 19% or more.*

LEVEL OF SERVICE

By design, private ambulance transport arrives following fire department because Pinellas is dual response. When the patient is stabilized for transport by the private ambulance, the fire personnel are then free to go back into service and are available for the next emergency call. Both the County Plan and the S-M Plan agree that this approach should remain in place.

MARGINAL ENGINE FUNDING (COUNTY FUNDS BY POSITIONS)

This approach provides for fund of MFR units at the same level for every fire department with one County-funded position per MFR unit. This funding level is based upon the countywide average for annual operating costs. It is not based upon volume or funding level history. This approach is inherently fair to all fire departments and communities while protecting the existing level of service for all citizens of Pinellas County. Both the County and S-M plans support this approach.

PRIORITY DISPATCH

With priority dispatch, unnecessary ambulance and fire/rescue responses may be reduced by 10% and will directly reduce costs associated with fuel and vehicle maintenance. Of course, any life-threatening or otherwise serious medical emergencies will always get a lights-and-siren emergency response from both the fire department and the private ambulance provider; however, lesser emergencies would get a less intense response. Both the County and S-M plans believe that priority dispatch is appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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