# City of San Antonio

## Legislation Details (With Text)

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| **File #:** | 16-1405 |
| **Type:** | Miscellaneous Item |
| **In control:** | City Council A Session |
| **On agenda:** | 1/28/2016 |
| **Title:** | An Ordinance authorizing an interlocal agreement with the City of Austin to provide for 9-1-1 call continuity during critical incidents that disrupt the capacity to receive emergency calls. [Erik Walsh, Deputy City Manager; William McManus, Chief of Police] |
| **Sponsors:** | |
| **Indexes:** | |
| **Code sections:** | |
| **Attachments:** | 1. COA-SAPD_911-call-continuity interlocal Final Version without SA Notice Info Sept 2015 1 (2).pdf, 2. Draft Ordinance, 3. Ordinance 2016-01-28-0039 |

| Date | Ver. | Action By | Action | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1/28/2016 | 1 | City Council A Session | adopted | Pass |

**DEPARTMENT:** Police

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** William P. McManus, Chief of Police

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:**

**SUBJECT:** 911 Call Service Loss Mitigation

**SUMMARY:**

The proposed Inter Local Agreement (ILA) establishes an arrangement between the Cities of San Antonio and Austin, in which each city will answer the other's 911 calls during an outage at their respective Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). This will greatly improve each entity's disaster recovery plan for answering 911 calls during an emergency. In addition, the technology is in place to transfer calls with little notice, allowing each city to keep pace with an emergency outage and provide better service to the citizens in each city.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The City of San Antonio's PSAP is located at 8039 Challenger Dr., San Antonio, TX 78235, in the southern end of town, and it's where all of the City's 1.4 emergency and 850,000 non-emergency phone calls are answered each year. Should the PSAP lose their ability to operate, a back-up location is available with the Bexar Metro 911 Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC), located at 911 Saddletree Ct., Shavano Park, Texas 78231, approximately 22 miles away from the PSAP (about 45 minutes away in typical traffic). Bexar Metro 911 is constructing a new REOC, located at 4700 Quarry Run, San Antonio 78249, which will have greater capacity to host PSAP staff on an ad hoc and potentially, an ongoing basis. The City is working with Bexar Metro 911fo finalize operational plans to utilize this new facility as a back-up.

Over the past four years, the PSAP has experienced three 911 outages - one due to a gas leak, another involving

a technical problem with the telephone system, and the last outage was due to a software problem that caused intermittent service issues. The outages lasted between three to four hours. During each of these incidents, 911 phone calls went unanswered while the PSAP determined whether to relocate (as in the case with the gas leak) or whether to wait for a fix to the interruption (as in the case with the technical outage). This will likely occur again as the volume of calls is too great to handle while the PSAP recovers from a technical outage or relocates during an environmental emergency. In the event this occurs again, the proposed ILA will provide the City with an additional alternative to answer 911 calls during a severe outage.

Similarly, the City of Austin has experienced eight 911 phone call outages in the recent past, after switching to a new 911-phone system.

The public safety agencies from each city have worked with AT&T, the 911-network vendor, and the respective 911 Districts to test 911 call-routing to each PSAP. The rerouting of 911 calls has been successful. There are some one time and ongoing costs associated with the lines, routing and switching capability. Bexar Metro 911 District and the Austin/Travis County 911 District have agreed to cover all the technology start up and ongoing costs for this process. The Austin City Council will be hearing this item on January 28, 2016.

**ISSUE:**

In today's PSAP environment, if an outage were to occur requiring a delay in answering or an evacuation and relocation to a disaster recovery site, 911 callers would receive a "fast busy" signal with no one to answer the call until PSAP staff arrive at their back up location. This can take a number of hours, depending on the nature of the outage and the ability to get setup on the arriving end.

Approval of this ILA will allow 911 call routing to a large PSAP with staffing levels greater than any other nearby agency, making them better equipped to handle the volume of incoming 911 calls. Dispatch will still be handled by each individual City via cell phone/radio with existing PSAP staff that are either relocating to the REOC or who are waiting in place at the PSAP. Only high priority calls will be dispatched to each sub-station during that time. There will be an impact to the workload for each PSAP that is receiving the calls, as neither are prepared to absorb the other's calls and still function on a sustainable level. However, even with an increase in response times during an emergency event, it is still the best alternative compared to today's current disaster recovery plan, where calls are simply not answered.

Eventually, after Bexar Metro completes its facility, and the San Antonio PSAP can staff full-time call-takers and dispatchers at that location along with the existing PSAP, there may be merits to keeping the agreement with Austin in place. That will be assessed once the plans for the new REOC come to fruition.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact to the City to implement the technology to achieve this capability. Any costs will be borne by the Bexar Metro 911 District. There may be overtime expenses associated with any testing and during any specific outage, which will be funded through the FY2016 General Fund Police and Fire budget and should be minimal.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Continue with the current process of allowing the 911 phone calls to receive a busy signal while the PSAP recovers from the issues causing the 911 outage.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Department recommends Council approve an ILA between the City of San Antonio and the City of Austin, to allow 911-interoperability.