

LORIE TINFOW  
*City Manager*

December 6, 2018

Birgitta Corsello, Chair  
Solano Emergency Medical Services Cooperative  
355 Tuolumne Street, Suite 2400  
Vallejo, CA 94590

Submitted via Email

**RE: EMS System Review and Blueprint Report**

Dear Chair Corsello:

On behalf of the City of Benicia, I am writing to voice concerns associated with the EMS System Review and Blueprint Report (“Blueprint Report”) presented and submitted to the Board of the Solano Emergency Medical Services Cooperative (“SEMSC”) on October 11, 2017. In addition, I just learned that the Draft Request for Proposals document that was designed to follow the Blueprint Report was released last Friday, and that both are scheduled for discussion at your December 13, 2018, meeting.

The City of Benicia supports the objectives of the Blueprint Report to ensure a financially sustainable emergency medical service system that addresses the needs of those who live and work in our community. Since 2000, the City of Benicia has been part of a successful Public-Private-Partnership (“PPP”) with Medic Ambulance through the Solano Emergency Medical Services Cooperative. Under the existing arrangement, despite an increasing number of calls-for-service, the current partnership has consistently provided timely response and high-quality emergency medical and transportation services.

Despite acknowledging the success of the current EMS system, the recently released Blueprint Report proposes significant changes that will impact our community. I understand that the stakeholders who were asked to provide feedback on the Blueprint Report offered comments that have been largely ignored; similarly, the RFP reflects the conclusions included in the Blueprint Report.

What is most concerning to us is that the recommendations signal a **significant policy change** in how emergency response is conducted in our City without actual financial information and patient outcome data for our City and without a robust public engagement process.

In addition to these concerns, the City asks that the SEMSC Board consider the following at its December 13, 2018, Board meeting when it discusses the Draft RFP:

- **Centralized Medical Dispatching.** The City understands that there is a need to work collaboratively with agencies countywide to ensure that resources are dispatched appropriately to address emergencies. The Blueprint Report recommends “converting to central dispatching for emergency medical calls”

without-considering the harmful and dangerous implications of bifurcating EMS dispatch from Police and Fire dispatch. We are concerned about the negative impacts on communication and coordination that could occur with our police and fire units that need to be deployed by adding yet another dispatch center. More analysis and outreach should be performed with Solano County and all of the participating cities to develop a long-term approach to address this issue. That includes retaining the quality of services.

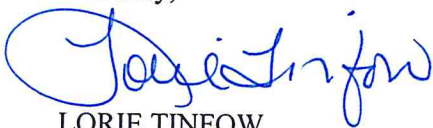
- **Privatized Medical Dispatching.** In addition to centralizing medical dispatch, the Blueprint Report describes a transition to private dispatch services provided by the selected ambulance services provider. This change is a fundamental shift in how services are provided and needs discussion with the affected agencies before moving forward.
- **Response Times.** The Blueprint Report and Draft RFP recommend the implementation of priority dispatching with minimum response times varying (9 minutes to 40 minutes in urban areas) based on the type of call that is received. Under the current system, our Fire Department is required to have Paramedics arrive on-scene to emergency medical calls within 7 minutes 90% of the time. The recommendation in the Blueprint Report is a significant change and one that we cannot support without a better understanding of how this will impact our community.
- **Tiered EMS Response.** The Blueprint Report and Draft RFP recommend the implementation of tiered EMS response such that calls that are initially identified as lower priority would be handled by the ambulance provider rather than the City of Benicia. The report also recommends that certain calls would receive a Basic Life Support (“BLS”) ambulance response rather than an Advanced Life Support (“ALS”) response. Implementing this recommendation would result in a reduction in service to our residents. We are concerned about the degradation in the level of customer service provided in our community and to our public safety staff. Often what is conveyed to a dispatcher is quite different than what is found by emergency responders in the field. Deploying an ALS response to calls ensures that the resources are in place to address circumstances in the field that may be different than what was conveyed to a dispatcher over the phone.
- **Financial impacts.** The City of Benicia currently receives approximately \$186,000 per year from the current Partnership in exchange for providing first responder advanced life support. The Blueprint Report needs to clearly articulate the financial impacts of its recommendations, not only on the City of Benicia, but on all of the member agencies in the PPP. This funding stream is returned directly back to the EMS system and assists in providing excellent emergency medical services to our residents.

Despite the concerns outlined above, there are recommendations in the Blueprint Report that are promising. More specifically, a new approach to liquidated damages based on patient outcomes and other changes that would ensure a greater level of financial transparency and accountability are all items that should continue to be considered.

We appreciate the work of the SEMSC and ask that the Board consider our concerns and allow more time to engage the participating cities such as Benicia in the decision-making around these significant changes.

I can be reached at [ltinfow@ci.benicia.ca.us](mailto:ltinfow@ci.benicia.ca.us) and 707/746-4200.

Sincerely,



LORIE TINFOW  
City Manager

cc: Benicia Mayor and City Council Members  
SEMSC Board  
Ted Selby, Administrator, Solano County Health and Social Services Department