

STATEWIDE AGENCIES RADIO SYSTEM

Annual Status Report

**A Report to the Governor, House Appropriations Committee,
And Senate Finance Committee**



October 2018

**Colonel Gary T. Settle
Superintendent**

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October 1, 2018

TO: The Honorable Ralph Northam, Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Co-Chair of the Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Emmet W. Hanger, Jr.
Co-Chair of the Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable S. Chris Jones
Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee

Pursuant to House Bill 5002 Item 419.C.1 of the 2018 Virginia Acts of Assembly, I am respectfully submitting herewith a report *on the Status of the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) Program*.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary T. Settle".

Superintendent

TAB/LKH/tlt

Enclosure

Executive Summary

Statewide Agencies Radio System 2018 Status Report

Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, State Police Superintendent and Mr. Mark Moon, Vice President and General Manager of Motorola signed a \$329 million contract between Motorola and the Commonwealth of Virginia for the design, construction, and implementation of the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) on July 13, 2004. A ceremonial contract signing was held on July 16, 2004, in conjunction with a press conference.

Effective July 1, 2011, The Virginia State Police Communications Division assumed the engineering, installation, maintenance, and operations of the STARS system. The STARS Network including the backbone microwave network, the land mobile radio network, the five (5) Tidewater tunnels and two (2) Western tunnels, and all vehicle-based hardware and software for all twenty-one State Agencies were operational.

STARS provides a multi-channel trunked digital voice and data wireless communications capability specifically designed to meet APCO Project 25 public safety requirements. The core microwave network consists of Synchronous Optical Network (SONET) ring-protected transmission paths providing the highest quality of service, security, and reliability possible through controlled system access and Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) encryption for law enforcement users when needed. This network supports the 22 participating agencies throughout the Commonwealth and facilitates interoperability with other state, local, and federal agencies.

Initial Bond Funding

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia §2.2-2264, the General Assembly authorized the Virginia Public Building Authority to issue revenue bonds not to exceed \$159,300,000 for the constructing, improving, furnishing, maintaining, acquiring and renovating buildings, facilities, improvements, and land for the STARS project. Chapter 245 approved by the General Assembly session March 30, 2006, authorized additional funding via Bonds issued by the Virginia Public Building Authority in the amount not to exceed \$201,900,000 to complete STARS.

The revised Contract appropriation cost for STARS is	\$361,200,000
Less \$50,000 allocated to Department of Forestry	\$361,150,000
Phase 1 Cost	\$346,186,399
Bond Funds remaining at completion of Phase I	\$14,963,601
New site construction Phase 2	\$3,218,788
New site construction Phase 3	\$1,619,871
New site construction Phase 4	\$4,046,542
Hampton Tower Site, GTR8000 Site Repeater Upgrade, -48VDC Power Upgrade, MDT's, and Telscan Upgrade Phase 5	\$6,000,000
New site construction Phase 6	\$78,400
Projected Funding Balance at Project Completion	\$ - 0 -

STARS Program Management Structure

The STARS participants are composed of the following 22 agencies. Representatives from each agency make up the User Agencies Requirements Committee (UARC):

Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel Police
Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control
Division of Capitol Police
Department of Conservation and Recreation
Department of Corrections
Department of Emergency Management
Department of Environmental Quality
Department of Fire Programs
Department of Forestry
Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Department of Health
Department of Juvenile Justice
Department Military Affairs
Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy
Department of Motor Vehicles
Department of State Police
Department of Transportation
Virginia Information Technologies Agency
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Virginia Port Authority
Buchanan County Sheriff's Department and Grundy PD

The STARS Management Group is a Board established by Executive Order 28 (2002) and composed of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Trade, Finance, Health and Human Resources, Natural Resources, Public Safety, and Transportation. The Secretary of Public Safety serves as the Chairman. The STARS Management Group provides direction and overall governance for the development, implementation, and ongoing operation of STARS. In addition, they review all procurements and contracts, coordinate radio frequency licenses granted by the federal government to agencies of the Commonwealth, and promote interagency cooperation and coordination in the use of communications resources.

The User Agencies Requirements Committee (UARC) consists of two representatives (primary and alternate) from each member agency and institution. The Chairman of the UARC is selected by the STARS Management Group. The UARC shall have two co-chairs. The VSP Communications Officer shall serve as co-chair and the second co-chair shall be recommended by the UARC membership. The UARC meets as necessary, but at least quarterly. The specific duties of UARC are to advise on the needs of member agencies for the planning, design, establishment, and operation of STARS, provide advice on proposals for other federal, state, or local agencies to join STARS and on any proposals for third party use of any STARS infrastructure or component, and assist the STARS Management Team with the development of a comprehensive management plan and procedures for the operation of STARS.

STARS Annual Operating Costs

The STARS Network is a public safety grade wireless communications system that must be maintained in an operational status 24 hours per day, seven days per week. To accomplish this, a well trained staff of engineers and technicians must be available with access to repair parts, test equipment, and vehicles on a 24/7 basis. On July 1, 2011, the Department assumed the responsibility for equipping new vehicles, aircraft, and boats that belong to the 22 STARS agencies, removing equipment from decommissioned or crashed vehicles, and the refurbishment and re-installation of the reconditioned hardware into another vehicle. Per Chapter 836, 2018 Virginia Acts of Assembly, Item 422, and the FY2018 allotted funding for Telecommunications and Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) (30204) is \$27,409,122.

Current Enhancement Projects

Maintaining technology today is a labor intensive and costly proposition. Hardware and software is typically obsolete by the time it is purchased and installed and STARS is no exception. The FY 2018 lifecycle cost to keep the core Motorola portion of the network current is \$1,269,916. This does not include the hardware and software upgrades, repair parts, and labor necessary to keep the transport network at top operational efficiency.

Current enhancement projects include:

- Replacement of Quantar site repeaters with GTR8000 including site router upgrades
- Replacement of all -48VDC power supplies and the retirement of the uninterruptible power supplies
- Upgrading the STARS platform from Release 7.16 to 7.18

By Motorola Release 7.18 currently scheduled for June 2019, all land mobile radio fixed site repeater hardware and software must be replaced and will no longer be supported by Motorola. The projected cost to make this change is \$7.5M. The first expenditure (\$2.1M) for this project is funded through a portion of the remaining STARS bond funds. The remainder is funded through MELP Bond Funding. There are 49 LMR sites remaining to be upgraded. 18 sites have been installed and 8 sites have been provision and programmed for future installation.

Most transmission equipment is powered with -48VDC power plants. These units power the equipment using batteries with the batteries constantly recharged from either commercial power or generator backup power. Other site equipment is powered from commercial power through an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) also equipped with battery backup. The Quantar site repeaters are AC powered requiring the use of UPS. The GTR8000 site repeaters mentioned above can be powered with either source but are being DC powered allowing the retirement of the very expensive end-of-life UPS systems. The remaining AC powered hardware will be supplied power through redundant inverters. The projected cost of the -48VDC power plants and inverters is \$2.4M. The elimination of the UPS's results in a multi-million dollar savings.

The implementation of the FirstNet public safety network required the re-banding of the frequencies used between the STARS Digital Vehicle Repeaters and portable radios that allows a law enforcement officer to communicate on a portable radio while outside his/her vehicle. The FCC allocated FirstNet the frequency band used by STARS DVRS's. FirstNet funded the effort to replace the filters in the units to allow operation in another 700MHz frequency band. This project required the coordination of frequencies with all states bordering Virginia. This project was completed as of August 1, 2018.

The core of the STARS voice and data network operates on Motorola hardware and software. The VSP Communications Division has negotiated a Software Upgrade Agreement II (SUA II) lifecycle contract with Motorola that upgrades the network once every two years. The SUA II annual contractual agreement provides software, hardware, and labor required to implement one system infrastructure upgrade in a two-year period. VSP chose a schedule that keeps STARS one upgrade below the latest to allow other users to identify system bugs and have them corrected before our upgrade. The Release 7.16 upgrade was completed in January of 2018. The SUA II agreement does not cover all hardware and software. This upgrade required the upgrade of all Gold Elite

Dispatch Consoles to be replaced with MCC7500 Consoles. This latter upgrade was performed by VSP engineers and technicians at a cost of \$715K.

The original STARS contract provided mobile data terminals (MDT) for all law enforcement vehicles via laptops installed in the vehicles and the Integrated Voice and Data (IV&D) feature in the network. This capability provided for Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) checks and Division of Motor Vehicle (DMV) license checks through the radio network. The variety and complexity of information technology has changed dramatically as has the data transmission bandwidth requirements since the inception of STARS. The IV&D feature in the STARS network was designed to accommodate short message traffic and cannot accommodate enhancements such as DMV photographs. To accommodate these new bandwidth requirements commercial wireless data cards were added to the laptops.

In addition to the increased bandwidth demands, the FBI and Department of Homeland Security have added new security requirements that require portable computer hard drives to be encrypted to protect sensitive data if stolen, encryption for all transmitted data that traverse unsecured networks such as the Internet, and multi-factor authentication to ensure that the person logging into the network is who they purport to be.

All of these latter requirements add a strain on an already tight budget. Hard drive encryption requires new software. The encryption of transmitted data requires virtual private network (VPN) hardware and software. Depending on the implemented solution for multi-factor authentication, hardware and/or software will be required. All of these capabilities require new administrative procedures.

The original STARS Motorola laptops were out of warranty and have been replaced with the latest Panasonic Tough book laptops. The projected cost to replace the Motorola laptops was projected to be at least \$16M at a rate of \$3.2M per year. The final installment of laptop replacements was funded through STARS bond funds and General Funds. The replacement of the laptops was completed in July of 2017. It is recommended that 100 MDTs be purchased annually for re-fresh.

Interoperability Between STARS and Outside Agencies

Local, state, and federal radio systems operate in a number of specific frequency bands (VHF low-band, VHF high-band, UHF, 700 and 800 MHz). Radios operating in different frequency bands cannot communicate directly. The **Commonwealth Link to Interoperable Communications (COMLINC)** allows dispatchers at the state, federal, county, and city communications centers to establish communications patches between themselves and other agencies regardless of frequency band. For example, a Sheriff's Department can patch to the Fire Department regardless of the frequencies used by each agency. Patches can also be made to phone networks and used to establish dispatcher conferences. By using COMLINC, each dispatcher initiates the patch

themselves at their console in coordination with the participating agency. COMLINC also provides instant recall of recorded audio.

COMLINC was initially implemented in 16 localities in VSP Division 1, and at State Police Divisions 1 and 5 along with STARS Network Operations Center (NOC). Through grants the network has grown to 135 fixed sites and 20 mobile command posts or tactical units providing interoperability between all State Police Divisions, most localities, colleges and universities, and other state and federal agencies.

As the network has grown, the Virginia State Police Communications Division accepted responsibility for engineering, installation, maintenance, and technical support for the entire statewide COMLINC network without an increase of manpower or budget. As with the STARS Network, this network has become outdated with most servers and workstations still operating on the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. The cost of upgrading all existing COMLINC sites to the latest release of software and the Windows 7 or Windows 10 computer operating system is estimated at well over \$3 million. This upgrade will extend interoperability to smart phones allowing radio communications and streaming audio and video. COMLINC does not have a sustaining source of funding.

In 1977, the **Statewide Interdepartmental Radio System (SIRS)** Advisory Board was created to improve coordination between state and local law enforcement agencies. At that time, no direct radio link existed between these agencies. The Advisory Board accepts applications for the use of the selected low-band VHF radio frequency of 39.54 MHz for statewide access for SIRS participating agencies. The FCC had set aside a Very High Frequency (VHF) of 155.475 MHz (wideband) and 155.4825 MHz (narrowband) as VHF interoperability channels to be used by law enforcement statewide. The SIRS advisory board manages the low band and VHF interoperability frequencies.

Currently all STARS law enforcement vehicles are equipped with an independent low band (39.54 MHz) SIRS radio. This radio being independent of the STARS radio is always available to send and receive radio transmissions. STARS mobile radios are programmed to transmit and receive on VHF high-band frequencies.

SIRS radios have been installed in 18 STARS sites throughout the Commonwealth and will appear on all VSP dispatch consoles to improve interoperability with localities and the VSP.

New STARS Site Construction

After the STARS Network was turned over to the Communications Division, users in a number of areas within the Commonwealth began to report radio problems that were identified as areas of very weak or poor coverage. Radio transmissions were garbled or robotic sounding in digital terms or radios were not able to send and receive. STARS Network Operations Center personnel began to gather the locations and opened informational trouble tickets that enabled the

engineers to perform coverage testing to determine the best location for new sites.

During the initial network construction, the VSP Communications Division took over engineering and installation of several subsystems of the STARS network resulting in a cost savings to the Commonwealth. Subsequently, the Communications Division requested permission from the STARS Management Group to use these funds to install additional land mobile radio sites to fill in coverage gaps in the original network. To date 15 sites have been completed with 4 more in various stages of construction.

The additional new sites and their degree of completion are as follows:

- Waverly Complete
- Dumfries Scales Complete
- Rawley Springs Complete
- Potts Mountain Complete
- Bath County Hydro Complete
- Elliott Knob Complete
- Massanutten Complete
- Virginia Beach Complete
- Gordonsville Complete
- Big Walker Mountain Complete
- Lambsburg Complete
- Buck Knob Pending Completion of Environmental
- 1st Division Dispatch Complete
- VSP Driver Training Facility Complete
- Amelia VDOT Complete
- Purgatory Pending lease approval to collocate with
cellular carrier
- Blue Mountain Pending funding approval to collocate
with locality
- West Point Complete
- Columbia Pike Addition of 50 feet to tower pending
construction

Work continues on identifying additional coverage gaps.