Austin

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Ramón Batista, Assistant City Manager
Ed Van Eenoo, Chief Financial Officer

Date: September 15, 2026

Subject: **Final Report of the Joint Emergency Communications Organizational Assessment (Resolution 20250813-018)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Mayor and City Council with the final report from Mission Critical Partners (MCP) regarding the operational feasibility assessment, cost analysis, and implementation timeline for establishing a Joint Emergency Call Center (JEC), as directed by Resolution No. 20250813-018. The recommendations in the final report are closely aligned with the preliminary findings reported to City Council in a July 29, 2026 memorandum.

Importantly, the study identified numerous legal, civil-service, and collective-bargaining requirements that significantly constrain the City's ability to establish a truly consolidated JEC with fully integrated call-taking, call processing, and dispatching across regional public safety functions. As a result, the primary focus of MCP's analysis is on the efficacy of creating a standalone city department for civilian 911 call-taking only—dispatching would remain within the respective public safety departments—versus enhancing the current organizational model through the additions of professional civilian leadership, targeted technology improvements, and a dedicated quality assurance team.

The study identified many opportunities for call center improvement that should be implemented regardless of the organizational location of civilian 911 call takers. These include:

- Reducing duplicate call transfers and triage questions;
- Strengthening quality assurance;
- Adding a civilian leader to supplement current sworn leadership;
- Improving coordination between 911 and 311;
- Modernizing technology;
- Expanding performance measurement, and
- Enhancing public education about emergency communications.

Of note, the final report reemphasizes from the initial findings that the organizational independence of civilian 911 call takers "does not inherently improve call-taking performance, specialized expertise, technology, training, or customer experience and would introduce greater implementation complexity, cost, and transition risk." Therefore, MCP's concluding recommendation is to retain civilian 911 call-taking

within APD but with the addition of a dedicated civilian emergency communications leadership position, targeted technology improvements, and a dedicated quality assurance team.

As a reminder, with the adoption of the FY 2026-27 budget, City Council approved nine new positions and $1.4 million to create a standalone Office of Joint Emergency Communications within the General Fund. This amount included funding for:

- Emergency Communications Executive (1 FTE)
- Emergency Communications Assistant Executive (1 FTE)
- Executive Assistant (1FTE)
- Operations Manager (2 FTE)
- Quality Assurance Unit and Software (4 FTE)
- Project Management Costs

MCP will provide an in-depth briefing to City Council at your September 22 work session summarizing the report's findings and recommendations. Should you have any questions or require additional information prior to the briefing, please contact Assistant City Manager Ramón Batista at ramon.batista@austintexas.gov or Deputy Chief Information Officer, James Stoner, at james.stoner@austintexas.gov.

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Joint Emergency Communications Call Center Feasibility Study

Final Report

September 2026

City of Austin, Texas

MissionCriticalPartners

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Executive Summary

The City of Austin engaged Mission Critical Partners® (MCP) to evaluate the feasibility and relative value of establishing an independent Joint Emergency Communications Department (JEC). The study considered whether changing the organizational placement of civilian 911 call-taking would materially improve emergency communications outcomes and evaluated alternatives for strengthening Austin's existing model. The assessment addressed organizational, workforce, technology, financial, legal, and implementation considerations that influence 911 call-taking and the broader emergency response environment.

Stakeholder Alignment and Strategic Themes

Stakeholder engagement identified broad alignment around the outcomes Austin should pursue, even where operational and policy stakeholders differed in how they framed the need for change. Across perspectives, consistent themes included preserving recent operational and workforce gains while strengthening governance, accountability, technology, quality assurance (QA), customer experience, and long-term resiliency. These themes informed the evaluation of organizational options and the targeted modernization priorities developed through the assessment.

The assessment found an emergency communications operation that has made meaningful progress and is performing well in several critical areas. Recent investments in staffing, recruitment, retention, leadership, and operational practices have strengthened workforce stability and call-processing performance. The existing model also benefits from established relationships among the Austin Police Department (APD), Austin Fire Department (AFD), Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (ATCEMS), Integral Care Crisis Center Counselor (C3), and other service partners, as well as direct alignment between civilian 911 call-taking and discipline-specific expertise and service delivery requirements associated with other

Recent investments in staffing, recruitment, retention, leadership, and operational improvement have strengthened workforce stability and call-processing performance.

public safety services for which Austin 911 call takers provide services. Operational stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of preserving these strengths while continuing to modernize the broader emergency communications environment.

Stakeholder engagement also demonstrated broad agreement that organizational structure is only one component of emergency communications performance. Call-taking represents the beginning of a larger response continuum that includes discipline-specific call processing, dispatch, alternative response, field-resource availability, deployment, and response-agency practices. Operational stakeholders generally emphasized preserving and modernizing a functioning system, while City Council stakeholders placed greater emphasis on governance, accountability, customer experience, transparency, and leadership. Despite these differing perspectives, stakeholders were broadly aligned around the desired outcomes: reliable service, clear accountability, measurable performance, workforce stability, effective coordination, improved customer experience, and an emergency communications environment prepared for changing workload, technology, and service demands.

Drivers for Change

Stakeholder engagement identified several recurring concerns and opportunities driving the initiative. Importantly, these drivers extend beyond the current organizational placement of the 911 function.

Drivers	Concerns and Opportunities for Improvement
Response Times and Service Outcomes	• Field responder response times, particularly for lower priority police calls, mental health incidents and alternative response services • Distinguishing field response delays from 911 call-processing performance, particularly given recent measurable improvements in call-answer performance
Governance and Accountability	• Interest in stronger communications-focused leadership, clearer accountability, improved transparency, and more consistent strategic coordination across APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, 311, and other response partners • Opportunities to strengthen coordination and decision-making, particularly for technology, quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI), performance management, and cross-agency workflow changes • A recurring concern was less about who answers the phone and more about who is responsible for continuously improving the emergency communications system

Customer Experience and Access	• Opportunities to improve the caller experience by reducing avoidable transfers, repeated greetings, duplicate questioning, and uncertainty regarding whether to call 911, 311, or another service • Opportunities to improve call flow, scripting, customer communications, public education, and coordination between emergency and non-emergency service pathways
Technology, Data, And Performance Visibility	• Current reporting, analytics, QA/QI, interoperability, and workflow tools do not consistently provide the information needed to identify delays, evaluate outcomes, or support cross-agency and executive decision-making • Limited reporting capabilities, reliance on manual processes, inconsistent QA/QI practices, and cross-agency dependence can complicate technology and process changes • Modernizing these capabilities emerged as one of the strongest opportunities for measurable improvement
Evolving Response Models	• Continued evolution of mental health services, clinical triage, community paramedicine, alternative response, online reporting, and other service pathways • Increasing range of services available to address different types of requests for assistance • Increasing call-routing and coordination complexity as service pathways evolve, creating greater need for clear service criteria, information sharing, consistent triage practices, and outcome tracking across participating organizations
Organizational Perception and Political Context	• Interest among some stakeholders in removing the 911 function from APD based on concerns regarding police-centered governance, public perception, and prior efforts to reallocate police funding • Lack of consistent stakeholder identification of 911's placement within APD as the source of operational issues identified through the study
Significant Organizational Considerations	• Potential risk to recent improvements in Austin's 911 staffing, operations, and performance associated with organizational transition • Differing expectations regarding whether organizational restructuring would address field-response delays, call routing issues, and other concerns extending beyond the civilian 911 call-taking function, influenced in part by differences in terminology and understanding of emergency communications workflows

Many of the concerns identified through stakeholder engagement extend beyond the civilian 911 call-taking function. Field response times, for example, are influenced by resource availability, call priority, deployment, jurisdictional transfers, and the availability of specialized or alternative responders. Similarly, technology, QA/QI, routing, and customer experience opportunities depend on operational processes, resources, coordination, and capabilities that are not determined solely by where civilian 911 call takers report.

Changing the reporting relationship of civilian 911 call takers would not, by itself, address response times, technology limitations, QA/QI, alternative response capacity, or customer experience concerns. These outcomes depend on broader operational, workforce, technology, and coordination factors.

Key Insights

The feasibility assessment identified several key insights that informed the comparative evaluation and recommended approach. Collectively, these findings distinguish opportunities that are directly influenced by organizational structure from those that depend more heavily on leadership, operations, workforce, technology, coordination, and performance-management practices.

Leadership, Governance, and Accountability

- Dedicated emergency communications leadership and accountability represent meaningful opportunities for strengthening the 911 function.
- Professional civilian leadership can provide dedicated emergency communications expertise and accountability within APD, while more formal cross-agency coordination can address shared issues without changing discipline-specific authority.

Discipline-Specific Expertise

- Austin's current model preserves specialized police, fire, EMS, and mental-health expertise and discipline-specific operational practices.
- A standalone department would create a new organizational boundary between civilian police call-taking and APD dispatch and operational authority, while AFD and ATCEMS would retain discipline-specific call processing and dispatch within their respective agencies.

QA/QI and Performance Management

- Austin has an established training foundation, while dedicated QA/QI capacity and systematic performance review remain significant modernization opportunities.
- Comprehensive QA/QI, consistent performance measures, systematic call review, analytics, and formal feedback to training, coaching, policy, and operations can be advanced under either organizational structure.

Technology and Analytics

- Austin has a strong technology foundation with identified modernization opportunities in analytics, automation, interoperability, reporting, and workflow support.
- These capabilities can support operational efficiency, performance visibility, information sharing, and decision-making and are not dependent on organizational restructuring.

Workforce Stability

- Recent improvements in recruitment, retention, staffing, morale, and organizational culture have made workforce stability a demonstrated strength.
- Any organizational transition should be evaluated carefully against potential effects on workforce stability, identity, morale, and continuity of operations.

Customer Experience

- Customer experience extends beyond organizational placement and includes how callers access services, move through call-processing and transfer pathways, understand what happens next, and experience the broader response system.
- Identified customer experience opportunities depend primarily on workflow, communication, technology, service coordination, and downstream response factors rather than the department to which civilian 911 call takers report.

The study compared three approaches based on their relative advantages, tradeoffs, costs, and implementation considerations:

A. Maintain current organizational placement with targeted modernization efforts
B. Maintain current structure / no changes
C. Create standalone public safety answering point (PSAP) / independent department

Organizational independence does not inherently improve call-taking performance, specialized expertise, technology, training, or customer experience and would introduce greater implementation complexity, cost, and transition risk.

Recommendations

MCP recommends that civilian 911 call-taking remain within APD under professional civilian emergency communications leadership, supported by targeted modernization.

The recommended approach provides the strongest overall balance between preserving Austin's demonstrated operational and workforce strengths and addressing the modernization opportunities identified through the assessment. It introduces dedicated professional civilian leadership for the 911 call-taking function while retaining its direct organizational relationship with APD and preserving existing discipline-specific responsibilities.

The recommendation is not to maintain the status quo. Targeted modernization should focus on the areas where the assessment identified meaningful opportunities to strengthen performance, coordination, service delivery, and long-term planning:

Professional Civilian Emergency Communications Leadership
- Dedicated professional leadership and accountability for civilian 911 call-taking within APD.

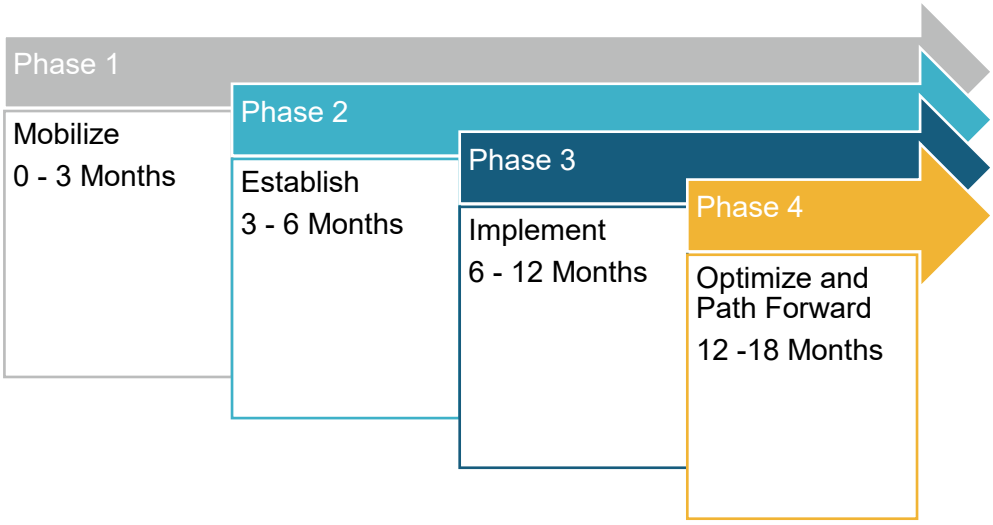
Operations and Cross-Agency Coordination
- More formal coordination, refined call flows, and stronger 911/311 and service-pathway interfaces.

QA/QI, Performance Management, and Analytics
- Dedicated QA/QI, defined performance measures, systematic review, analytics, and feedback to training and operations.

Technology Modernization
- Prioritized technology, automation, information sharing, reporting, and analytics aligned with operational needs.

Customer Experience and Long-Term Planning
- Public engagement, clearer service pathways, customer feedback, and coordinated workforce, facility, technology, and capacity planning.

Implementation should follow the phased roadmap presented in Section 7, progressing from mobilization and establishment of core capabilities through implementation, evaluation, and long-term planning. Early actions should define and initiate establishment of the professional civilian emergency communications leadership role, establish implementation ownership and cross-agency coordination, confirm performance baselines and resource requirements, and prepare priority modernization efforts for implementation.



Project management, risk management, change management, stakeholder engagement, and performance monitoring should support the roadmap. Readiness gates should be used to assess progress, address dependencies and risks, and inform advancement through the implementation phases. Results should be evaluated against established baselines so that modernization efforts can be refined based on observed performance and implementation experience.

The assessment finds that Austin's strongest path forward is to pair professional civilian emergency communications leadership with targeted modernization while retaining civilian 911 call-taking within APD.

1 Background

This section provides the context for the study, including the City Council Resolution that initiated the effort, the study objectives and scope, the methodology used to conduct the assessment, and the stakeholder engagement process. Together, these elements establish the framework for evaluating potential changes to Austin's emergency communications organizational model.

On August 13, 2025, the Austin City Council adopted Resolution No. 20250813-018 directing the City Manager to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Joint Emergency Communications Department (JEC). The resolution recognizes that Austin's emergency communications system operates within a complex environment requiring coordination among multiple governmental entities, jurisdictions, and public safety agencies. It also references findings from the 2019 Dispatch Equity and Optimization Study, including opportunities to strengthen interagency coordination, modernize technology, reduce operational inefficiencies, and improve service delivery.

The resolution directs the City Manager to develop a strategic plan addressing the technical and operational feasibility of organizational change, associated costs and implementation considerations, and opportunities to integrate emergency communications functions while maintaining discipline-specific operational responsibilities. It also calls for evaluation of non-emergency call-taking and reporting pathways and engagement with employee organizations, intergovernmental partners, licensing agencies, and community stakeholders.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the operational, organizational, technical, financial, workforce, legal, and implementation feasibility of alternative organizational models for Austin's 911 call-taking function. The assessment considers whether changes to the current structure could improve customer experience, operational effectiveness, governance, accountability, workforce development, technology management, and the long-term sustainability of emergency communications services.

The study evaluates the current emergency communications environment, including call-taking processes, governance, staffing, technology, quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI), training, budgeting, and operational workflows. It also considers the benefits, limitations, costs, and implementation risks associated with maintaining the current structure, enhancing the existing 911 division within the Austin Police Department (APD), or establishing a standalone 911 department.

The study does not evaluate the consolidation of police, fire, or emergency medical services (EMS) dispatch functions, changes to field operations, or modifications to response agency command structures. Those functions remain discipline-specific and are outside the scope of the organizational options evaluated in this report.

This study is intended to provide City leadership with an objective, evidence-based assessment of the available organizational options and the operational, governance, workforce, technology, financial, and implementation considerations associated with each. The findings are intended to support future decision-making while identifying opportunities to strengthen Austin's emergency communications system regardless of the organizational model selected.

1.2 Methodology

Mission Critical Partners (MCP) used a data-driven approach that combined document review, operational observations, stakeholder interviews, organizational analysis, and industry standards and best practices. The project team reviewed existing policies, strategic planning documents, organizational structures, staffing and budget information, technology inventories, and previous studies to establish a baseline understanding of Austin's emergency communications environment.

Operational workflows were evaluated to identify strengths, constraints, and opportunities related to customer experience, operational efficiency, governance, and systemwide coordination. The assessment also considered national standards and guidance published by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International, as applicable to organizational functions, QA/QI programs, workforce development, and emergency communications operations.

Information gathered through these activities was evaluated collectively rather than relying on any single source or stakeholder perspective. The resulting evidence informed the evaluation criteria and comparative assessment of the organizational options presented later in this report.

1.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was an important component of the assessment. MCP conducted two days of onsite activities that included interviews with stakeholders representing multiple disciplines and organizational levels, as well as direct observation of day-to-day communications center operations, workflows, and interagency interactions. These observations provided operational context for information gathered through interviews and helped the project team assess how policies, processes, technology, staffing, and organizational relationships function in practice.

MCP supplemented the onsite activities with virtual meetings to clarify operational processes, explore issues identified during the assessment, and obtain additional perspectives on current strengths, challenges, and future needs. Participants included communications personnel, operational managers, executive leadership, technology staff, public safety representatives, elected officials, and regional partners.

Stakeholder perspectives were considered alongside operational observations, available data, project documentation, industry standards, and other evidence developed through the assessment. Recurring themes included preserving existing operational strengths while identifying coordination, accountability, QA/QI, technology, workforce development, customer experience, and long-term organizational effectiveness. Areas of stakeholder alignment and divergence are discussed in Section 3.

1.4 Evaluation Framework

MCP developed an evaluation framework to assess the organizational options consistently against the objectives of the study. The framework considers whether, and to what extent, each option could improve emergency communications performance while preserving existing operational strengths and managing the risks and costs associated with organizational change.

The evaluation criteria address operational effectiveness, interagency coordination, governance and decision-making, discipline-specific expertise, customer experience and public confidence, accountability and quality management, workforce sustainability and professional development, training, technology and innovation, financial sustainability, future growth and scalability, implementation risk and operational continuity, and legal and regulatory considerations.

Figure 1: Evaluation Criteria

The criteria provide a consistent basis for comparing the options rather than treating organizational structure as an outcome in itself. Evidence developed through stakeholder engagement, operational observations, document and data review, and consideration of applicable industry standards and practices was assessed against these criteria. The results of that assessment are presented in Sections 4 and 5 and inform the organizational options and recommendations that follow.

2 Current State

Austin's emergency communications system operates as a multi-agency public safety communications environment that combines centralized 911 call answering with dispatch-specific call processing and dispatch. APD serves as the public safety answering point (PSAP) for the City of Austin and is responsible for answering incoming 911 calls.

Within APD, the Emergency Communications Division (ECD) includes civilian call takers, police dispatchers, supervisors, and management personnel responsible for police communications operations. The Austin Fire Department (AFD), Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (ATCEMS), and Integral Care Crisis Center Counselor (C3) services maintain separate communications operations for discipline-specific call processing and dispatch. Under the current model, APD provides the initial point of entry for 911 calls, while each response agency retains responsibility for its own dispatch operations, field communications, supervision, policies, and operational command.

These functions are co-located within the Combined Transportation, Emergency, and Communications Center (CTECC), a shared regional facility that also supports Travis County, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro) operations. Co-location, shared technology, and established working relationships support real-time information exchange and coordination across participating agencies while allowing each organization to maintain its own operational authority and command structure.

The following sections describe the governance, call-intake processes, technology, staffing, funding, and performance characteristics that define the current operating environment and establish the baseline for evaluating future organizational options.

2.1 Current Governance Model

Governance of Austin's emergency communications system is distributed across the City, individual public safety agencies, and regional organizations responsible for 911 infrastructure and interoperability. This structure combines agency-level operational authority with City oversight and regional coordination.

The City of Austin provides administrative oversight, funding, and policy direction through its established governance and budget processes. Within that structure, APD, AFD, ATCEMS, and Integral Care retain responsibility for their respective communications personnel, policies, operational performance, and day-to-day service delivery.

At the regional level, the Capital Area Emergency Communications District (CAECD) administers regional 911 services and supports the planning, funding, implementation, maintenance, and modernization of 911 infrastructure and services, including Next Generation 911 (NG911) capabilities and the regional emergency communications network.

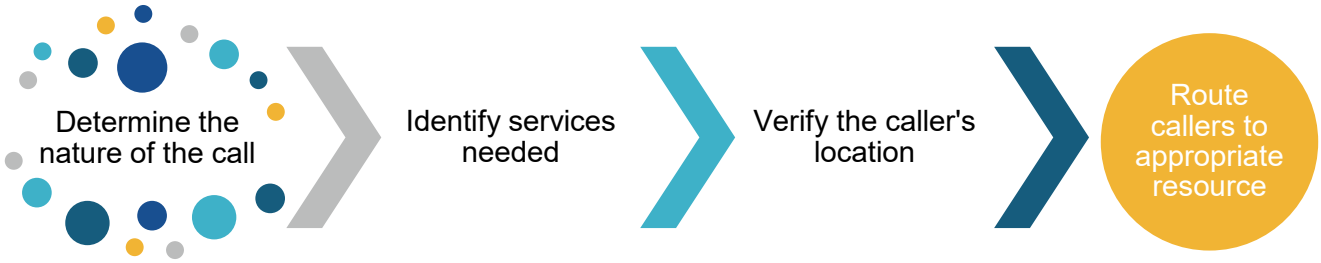
The Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) supports regional collaboration among local governments and public safety agencies through interoperability planning, regional initiatives, grant administration, training, and coordination. Its committees and stakeholder processes provide a forum for participating agencies to address shared operational and interoperability priorities.

Under the current model, operational authority remains with the individual public safety agencies, while regional organizations provide infrastructure, coordination, and other supporting functions within their respective areas of responsibility. This distribution of responsibilities establishes the governance environment within which Austin's 911 call-taking function currently operates.

2.2 Call Intake

APD serves as the primary PSAP for the City of Austin and provides the initial point of entry for 911 calls. APD call takers answer incoming calls, verify location and callback information, identify the nature of the request, and

either process the call within APD or route it to the appropriate discipline for additional call processing and dispatch.



911 Greeting

APD call takers currently answer 911 calls with the following greeting:

"Austin 911, do you need Police, Fire, EMS, or Mental Health Services?"

The greeting is intended to quickly identify the type of assistance the caller believes is needed and initiate the appropriate call-handling pathway.

Location Validation

Call takers verify the location of the incident and callback information at the beginning of the call, including when location information is available through the 911 system. Verification remains necessary because callers may be mobile, may be reporting an incident at a different location, or may be calling on behalf of another person.

Call Triage

Once the type of assistance needed is identified, the call follows the applicable discipline-specific process. Police calls remain within APD for call processing and are subsequently routed to Police dispatch. Fire calls are transferred to AFD communications personnel and medical calls are transferred to ATCEMS for discipline-specific call processing and dispatch. Calls involving mental health needs are routed to the Integral Care C3.

Calls requiring more than one public safety discipline may involve continued participation by the initial APD call taker while additional information is gathered and the appropriate resources are identified. This process supports information sharing across disciplines but can also result in multiple call-processing steps depending on the nature of the incident.

Police Call Processing

For police incidents, APD call takers gather incident information and classify the call according to established priority levels. Once sufficient information is collected to identify the location and nature of the incident, the call is entered into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system and routed to Police dispatch. Dispatchers then assign available resources based on incident priority and operational requirements and update the incident as additional information becomes available.

This intake and routing model establishes the operational baseline for evaluating potential changes to call processing, transfers, customer experience, and coordination among response disciplines later in this report.

2.3 Technology Environment

Austin's emergency communications system operates within a shared technology environment that facilitates coordinated public safety operations. Core technologies include CAD, 911 call-handling technology, integrated radio communications, geographic information systems (GIS), and shared communications infrastructure within CTECC. Together, these systems enable the exchange of caller location information, incident data, radio communications, and call transfers among participating agencies while facilitating regional interoperability.

The technology environment also enables the electronic transfer of emergency calls and associated data between jurisdictions, helping maintain continuity of information as calls move between emergency communications centers (ECCs).

Shared systems, including CAD, location tools, call-handling equipment (CHE), and regional services, facilitate efficient operations and information sharing across the current environment. These integrations provide an established technology foundation for Austin’s multi-agency emergency communications operations.

2.4 Staffing and Workforce

The APD ECD includes 104 call takers, 89 dispatchers, 12 supervisors, and management and support personnel responsible for operations, QA/QI, training, and administration. The workforce is predominantly civilian, with civilian personnel performing 911 call-taking, radio dispatch, supervision, training, QA/QI, and administrative functions. Sworn APD leadership provides departmental command and policy direction and coordinates the relationship among 911 call-taking, Police dispatch, and field response operations. Following significant staffing shortages in 2022, APD implemented recruitment, retention, compensation, career progression, and cross-training initiatives that improved staffing levels and workforce stability. These efforts contributed to the recovery in 911 call-answer performance discussed in Section 2.6.

2.5 Funding Structure

Austin’s emergency communications operations are funded through a combination of City and regional resources. The City’s annual operating budget funds personnel, day-to-day operations, and agency-specific systems and technology. Shared 911 infrastructure and services, including the Emergency Services Internet Protocol (IP) network (ESInet), NG911 capabilities, and other managed communications technologies, are funded through CAECD using state-authorized 911 funding mechanisms.

Major capital investments, including CAD, radio, telephony, recording systems, cybersecurity, facilities, and other technology platforms, are funded through a combination of City and regional capital resources, state and federal grants, and other available funding sources. This combination of operating, capital, and regional funding supports both agency-specific operations and shared emergency communications infrastructure.

2.6 Performance Attributes

Multiple departments within the City of Austin monitor emergency communications performance through measures that include 911 call answer times, call processing and dispatch performance, staffing levels, workload, and response times. These measures provide visibility into different stages of the emergency response process and establish a baseline for evaluating operational performance.

APD reports answering approximately 97% of 911 calls within 15 seconds, exceeding the NENA benchmark of answering 90% of emergency calls within 15 seconds. This performance represents a significant improvement from the staffing and call answer challenges experienced in 2022 and coincides with the recruitment, retention, compensation, and workforce initiatives implemented since that time.

Regional interoperability also allows emergency calls and associated information to move between jurisdictions when a call is received by a PSAP that does not serve the incident location. During the first four months of 2026, APD reported transferring approximately 570 calls between Austin and Williamson County with an average transfer time of approximately three seconds.

Collectively, current call answer performance, established call processing practices, shared technology, and regional interoperability provide a strong baseline for evaluating future organizational options. The feasibility assessment considers whether and to what extent each option could improve performance while preserving these existing capabilities.

3 Drivers for Change

Austin's emergency communications system has evolved significantly in response to population growth, changing service demands, advances in technology, and evolving community expectations. At the same time, recent improvements in staffing, recruitment, retention and call answering performance have strengthened the current operating model. The question facing the City is therefore not simply whether organizational change is possible, but whether it would produce measurable improvements beyond those achievable within the existing structure.

The evaluation of Austin's emergency communications model is driven by opportunities to strengthen governance, accountability, customer experience, technology, and coordination while preparing the system for future growth. Emergency communications increasingly extend beyond traditional police, fire, and EMS to include mental health response, alternative service delivery models, NG911 capabilities, non-emergency service pathways, and regional collaboration. These changes increase the need for clear leadership, effective cross-agency coordination, and an organizational model capable of adapting as service demands evolve.

Stakeholder engagement reflected both the strengths of the current system and opportunities for continued improvement. Participants identified recurring needs related to leadership, performance management, technology modernization, QA/QI, customer experience, and coordination across agencies. They also recognized that many challenges discussed during the assessment extend beyond the organizational placement of the 911 call-taking function.

The following sections examine the areas of stakeholder alignment and divergence and the strategic themes that emerged from the assessment. These findings provide context for evaluating whether organizational change would materially advance the City's objectives or whether identified improvements can be achieved through changes in leadership, governance, technology, processes, and other organizational capabilities.

3.1 Operational Stakeholder Alignment

3.1.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- The current CTECC operating environment is widely viewed by operational stakeholders as mature, collaborative, and effective.
- Specialized expertise, workforce identity, established interagency relationships, and leadership connectivity are considered strengths that should be preserved.
- Operational stakeholders identified technology, QA/QI, workflow modernization, analytics, and governance as greater opportunities for improvement than organizational restructuring alone.
- Stakeholders generally supported continuous improvement when changes could demonstrate measurable operational, customer, or organizational benefits.

3.1.2 Current Operations

Operational stakeholders consistently described Austin's emergency communications system as significantly improved from the staffing and operational challenges experienced during 2021 and 2022. Participants cited improvements in recruitment, retention, staffing stability, leadership engagement, training, and operational coordination as evidence of a more stable operating environment.

Across police, fire, EMS, and communications leadership interviews, stakeholders generally characterized the current model as collaborative and operationally effective. Discussions focused less on correcting systemic operational deficiencies and more on preserving recent gains while identifying opportunities for continued improvement.

3.1.3 Operational Strengths

Stakeholders consistently identified discipline-specific expertise as a defining strength of Austin’s emergency communications system. Police, fire, and EMS operate under different protocols, training requirements, information needs, and operational practices. Participants emphasized that this specialized knowledge contributes to effective call processing and response and should be preserved under any future organizational model.

Established working relationships were also identified as an important operational strength. Stakeholders described strong coordination among agencies and supervisors during routine operations and major incidents. Leadership accessibility, workforce identity, peer support, and professional recognition were also identified as factors contributing to employee engagement and organizational stability.

MCP found the integration between 911 and mental health services to be an operational strength. Austin’s approach represents an emerging model for integrating mental health services into 911 call-taking and dispatch workflows and reflects a practice MCP supports for broader adoption.

3.1.4 Technology and Continuous Improvement

Operational stakeholders identified technology modernization as a significant opportunity for improvement, particularly in reporting, analytics, QA/QI, workflow automation, interoperability, and information sharing. Participants also identified opportunities to reduce unnecessary call transfers, strengthen coordination between

emergency and non-emergency services, and formalize processes that currently rely on institutional knowledge or informal practices.

Governance and decision-making were also identified as areas for improvement. Stakeholders noted that a multi-agency operating environment requires coordination across organizations and can complicate or delay technology implementation, operational changes, and strategic decision-making. Participants generally supported stronger coordination and cross-functional decision-making while preserving discipline-specific operational authority and expertise.

3.1.5 Future Direction

Operational stakeholders generally favored continued modernization and incremental improvement. Participants emphasized customer service, operational performance, organizational resiliency, and the ability to support Austin's continued growth while preserving workforce stability, specialized expertise, and established interagency relationships.

Organizational structure was generally viewed as one factor in achieving these objectives rather than as the objective itself. Operational stakeholders placed greater emphasis on whether proposed changes would produce measurable improvements in system performance than on where the 911 call-taking function is organizationally located.

3.2 Policy Stakeholder Alignment

3.2.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- Policy stakeholders emphasized governance, accountability, and long-term organizational effectiveness.
- Participants emphasized measurable data, transparency, and demonstrated outcomes as important considerations in future organizational decisions.
- Many participants expressed interest in evaluating whether an independent emergency communications department could better support cross-functional objectives.
- Response performance, customer experience, and public confidence consistently emerged as important measures of success.

3.2.2 Governance and Strategic Leadership

Policy stakeholders approached the study primarily from a strategic perspective, focusing on how Austin's emergency communications system should be governed, managed, and positioned to support the City's long-term public safety objectives. Discussions frequently addressed organizational accountability, leadership, strategic planning, and the need for sustained executive attention to emergency communications as a mission-critical City service.

Many participants questioned whether the current organizational structure provides the most effective framework for coordinating emergency communications across police, fire, EMS, mental health, and other City partners. These discussions generally focused less on dissatisfaction with current operations and more on whether an alternative governance model could strengthen cross-agency coordination, accountability, and the system's ability to adapt to future operational demands.

3.2.3 Customer Experience and Public Expectations

Policy stakeholders consistently considered emergency communications from the perspective of residents and the overall experience of seeking assistance. Participants described an expectation that emergency services should be accessible, responsive, and capable of connecting callers with the appropriate assistance regardless of which agency ultimately responds. They also distinguished between 911 call-answer performance, which many acknowledged has improved significantly, and the broader response experience that residents associate with public safety services. Stakeholders consistently identified the integration of mental health services with 911 as important to the caller experience and an important component of Austin's emergency response model.

Participants identified recurring concerns related to public understanding of 911 and 311, awareness of alternative response options, expectations regarding response, and the ability to understand what happens after assistance is requested. These considerations were consistently identified as opportunities for improving the overall customer experience.

3.2.4 Accountability, Technology, and Continuous Improvement

Policy stakeholders emphasized objective performance measurement and evidence-based decision-making. Participants expressed interest in stronger operational reporting, reliable performance measures, executive-level visibility into system performance, and analytics that can support future investments and policy decisions.

Technology modernization was frequently discussed in connection with these objectives. Participants identified opportunities to improve interoperability, reporting, information sharing, customer communications, and performance visibility. Collectively, these perspectives reflected an interest in ensuring that Austin's emergency communications system remains accountable, adaptable, and capable of supporting changing service demands and continued growth.

3.3 Community and Workforce Considerations

3.3.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- Stakeholder interviews identified recurring community considerations that warrant additional validation through direct engagement.
- Participants described limited public understanding of 911 and 311, alternative response options, and how emergency communications services are accessed and delivered.
- Workforce considerations centered on employee morale, organizational identity, recruitment, retention, and preserving recent gains in staffing and stability.
- Continued community and workforce engagement will be important in refining implementation strategies associated with any future organizational change.

3.3.2 Public Understanding and Customer Expectations

This study did not include direct community engagement. The observations in this section therefore reflect the perspectives of Council members, executive leadership, and operational stakeholders regarding how residents experience Austin's emergency communications system.

Across stakeholder groups, participants described limited public understanding of how emergency calls are processed, the distinction between 911 and 311, and the availability of mental health and alternative response

options. Participants also identified potential confusion related to jurisdictional boundaries, call transfers, and expectations for emergency and non-emergency response.

Stakeholders indicated that the customer experience is influenced not only by how quickly a call is answered, but also by how clearly the process and available response options are communicated. Participants identified opportunities to improve public education, clarify what callers should expect after requesting assistance, and increase awareness of the range of services accessible through the emergency communications system. These observations should be validated through direct community engagement before being treated as representative of resident experience or expectations.

3.3.3 Workforce Stability and Organizational Identity

Operational leaders described substantial improvement in staffing, recruitment, retention, compensation, leadership engagement, peer support, and employee wellness over the past several years. These improvements were consistently associated with greater workforce stability and were identified as gains that should be protected as the City considers future organizational changes.

Stakeholders also described concern among communications personnel regarding the potential effects of organizational change on agency affiliation, leadership relationships, career progression, and professional identity. These considerations are particularly relevant because organizational transition can affect workforce stability even when employees' job functions remain substantially unchanged.

Future planning should therefore include direct and sustained workforce engagement, clear communication regarding proposed changes, and deliberate consideration of employee retention, organizational identity, and career development throughout implementation.

3.4 Areas of Alignment

3.4.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- Stakeholders broadly recognized the significant improvements made in Austin's emergency communications system in recent years.
- Organizational change should be supported by measurable operational or customer benefits.
- Technology modernization, analytics, and QA/QI represent significant opportunities for improvement.
- Governance, accountability, customer experience, and alternative response remain shared priorities.
- Recent workforce gains should be protected as the City considers future organizational changes.
- Long-term success will require sustainable funding, organizational resiliency, and strategic planning.

3.4.2 Shared Recognition of Current Successes

Stakeholders across operational, policy, and executive leadership groups broadly acknowledged the progress made in stabilizing staffing, improving recruitment and retention, strengthening operational performance, and enhancing collaboration across public safety agencies. The recovery from the staffing and call-answer

challenges experienced in 2021 and 2022 was consistently identified as an important accomplishment and a strength of the current operating environment.

Stakeholders also consistently recognized the experience and professionalism of emergency communications personnel and their ability to operate within an increasingly complex public safety environment. Across stakeholder groups, there was broad agreement that current operational strengths should provide the foundation for future improvements and should not be unnecessarily disrupted by organizational change.

3.4.3 Shared Priorities for Improvement

Although perspectives differed regarding organizational structure, stakeholders demonstrated substantial alignment on the areas where future improvement efforts should be focused. Technology modernization, governance, QA/QI, operational analytics, customer experience, workflow refinement, and alternative response were recurring priorities across stakeholder groups.

There was also broad agreement that future decisions should be supported by reliable performance data and measurable outcomes. Stakeholders emphasized improved reporting, meaningful analytics, and transparent evaluation as necessary to assess investments, monitor performance, and determine whether proposed changes are producing the intended results.

3.4.4 Shared Vision for the Future

Stakeholders were generally consistent in describing the characteristics of a successful future emergency communications system. Participants emphasized a system that is customer-focused, operationally effective, technologically capable, accountable, resilient, and able to adapt to Austin's continued growth and evolving service demands.

Achieving that future state will require continued investment in the workforce, technology, leadership, and cross-agency coordination while preserving discipline-specific expertise and established operational relationships. Stakeholder alignment was strongest around these desired outcomes; perspectives differed more significantly on the organizational structure best suited to achieve them.

3.5 Areas of Divergence

3.5.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- Operational stakeholders generally prioritized preserving established organizational relationships, leadership connectivity, and discipline-specific expertise.
- Policy stakeholders demonstrated greater openness to organizational change as a means of strengthening governance, accountability, and strategic leadership.
- Stakeholders differed primarily on the role organizational structure should play in achieving improvement rather than on the desired outcomes.
- Operational stakeholders generally emphasized technology, processes, QA/QI, and governance improvements within the existing structure, while policy stakeholders were more open to structural change as a mechanism for advancing broader City objectives.

3.5.2 Preserving Operations While Strengthening Governance

Stakeholders generally agreed on the desired outcomes for Austin's emergency communications system but differed on how those outcomes should be achieved. Operational stakeholders emphasized preserving established organizational relationships, discipline-specific expertise, and leadership connectivity. Participants expressed concern that significant organizational change could disrupt recent operational and workforce gains or affect working relationships that support day-to-day operations.

Policy stakeholders demonstrated greater openness to alternative organizational models if a different structure could strengthen governance, accountability, leadership, or long-term strategic planning. Discussions focused on whether organizational change could improve coordination across agencies, provide greater organizational focus, and better support future investments and operational improvements. These perspectives generally reflected an interest in evaluating the potential benefits of structural change rather than support for a predetermined organizational outcome.

3.5.3 Different Paths Toward Improvement

Operational stakeholders generally identified technology modernization, workflow improvement, QA/QI, performance analytics, and stronger governance as the areas most likely to improve operational effectiveness. Many participants believed these improvements could be pursued within the existing organizational structure and questioned whether restructuring, by itself, would materially improve emergency communications performance.

Policy stakeholders placed greater emphasis on the potential relationship between organizational structure and long-term governance. Participants expressed interest in whether a different structure could provide clearer accountability, stronger cross-agency coordination, and greater strategic focus while recognizing that organizational change alone would not resolve the operational issues identified during the assessment.

The principal divergence was therefore not whether Austin's emergency communications system should continue to improve, but the extent to which organizational restructuring is necessary to achieve those improvements.

3.5.4 Different Perspectives, Common Outcomes

Despite these differences, stakeholders described a broadly consistent desired future state: an emergency communications system that is customer-focused, operationally effective, technologically capable, accountable, resilient, and prepared to support Austin's continued growth.

The differences among stakeholder groups largely reflected their respective roles and priorities. Operational stakeholders focused more heavily on service continuity, workforce stability, discipline-specific expertise, and established working relationships. Policy stakeholders placed greater emphasis on governance, accountability, transparency, and long-term strategic management. Taken together, these perspectives identify the competing considerations that the organizational options must balance.

3.6 Emerging Strategic Themes

3.6.1 Key Insights Summary

Key Insights

- Customer experience improvements should focus on reducing unnecessary transfers, duplicate questioning, and confusion regarding access to services.
- Stronger governance, accountability, and leadership emerged as priorities across the emergency communications system.
- Technology modernization, analytics, QA/QI, and performance management represent significant opportunities for improvement.
- Operational strengths, workforce stability, and established interagency relationships should be preserved as improvements are pursued.
- Mental health and alternative response capabilities will continue to influence how callers are connected with appropriate services.
- Future growth will require scalable governance, technology, workforce development, and continuous improvement.
- Organizational structure should enable, rather than substitute for, operational and strategic improvement.

3.6.2 Continuous Improvement Rather Than Organizational Change

Across stakeholder groups, discussions consistently emphasized the experience of residents seeking assistance through Austin's emergency communications system. Participants identified opportunities to reduce unnecessary transfers and duplicate questioning, improve coordination between 911 and 311, clarify response expectations, and increase awareness of mental health and alternative response options.

These findings point toward a more service-oriented intake model in which callers can access the appropriate resource with as little unnecessary complexity as possible. Improving the customer experience will depend on call-processing practices, training, technology, public information, and coordination among service providers—not organizational structure alone.

3.6.3 Governance as the Foundation for System Performance

Governance emerged as a recurring theme across stakeholder groups. Participants identified opportunities to strengthen leadership, accountability, cross-agency coordination, strategic planning, and decision-making while maintaining appropriate operational authority within the individual response agencies.

The governance question is therefore broader than where the 911 call-taking function is organizationally located. Any future model will need clear leadership, defined decision rights, structured cross-agency participation, and effective mechanisms for resolving issues that span organizational boundaries.

3.6.4 Technology, Data, and Performance Management

Technology modernization was consistently identified as an opportunity to strengthen emergency communications. Stakeholders identified needs related to operational reporting, QA/QI, analytics, interoperability, workflow automation, CAD functionality, data sharing, customer communications, and emerging technologies.

These capabilities are closely connected to accountability and continuous improvement. Reliable data and effective performance management tools allow operational leaders and decision-makers to identify problems, evaluate outcomes, prioritize investments, and determine whether changes are producing measurable benefits.

3.6.5 Preserving Operational Strengths While Preparing for Future Growth

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of preserving discipline-specific expertise, established working relationships, workforce stability, leadership engagement, and operational resiliency. These strengths provide the foundation from which future improvements should be pursued.

At the same time, Austin's emergency communications system must be able to adapt to population growth, changing service demands, new technologies, and an increasingly complex public safety environment. Future changes should therefore strengthen organizational capacity without unnecessarily disrupting capabilities that are currently contributing to effective service delivery.

3.6.6 Expanding Alternative Response and Community-Based Services

Mental health, alternative response, and community-based services were recurring topics throughout stakeholder engagement. As these service pathways continue to evolve, the emergency communications system will need effective processes for identifying caller needs, routing calls, sharing information, and coordinating among traditional and alternative response resources.

The organizational model should support this evolving service environment while maintaining responder safety, discipline-specific operational requirements, and clear accountability for service delivery.

3.6.7 Preparing the Communications System for Austin's Future

Austin's emergency communications system will need to continue adapting to population growth, increasing service demands, technology changes, workforce needs, and evolving community expectations. Long-term readiness will require scalable governance, resilient technology, workforce development, sustainable funding, strategic planning, and organizational adaptability.

These themes establish the strategic context for the feasibility assessment that follows. The relevant question is not simply whether Austin can change the organizational placement of civilian 911 call-taking, but whether and to what extent organizational change would advance these objectives while preserving existing operational strengths and managing the costs and risks of change. Section 4 evaluates that question across the operational, organizational, workforce, technology, financial, legal, and implementation criteria established for this assessment.

4 Assessment and Feasibility of a Joint Emergency Communications Department

MCP evaluated the feasibility and relative value of the organizational model proposed in the 2025 Council resolution, which called for studying the manner in which the City could establish a JEC combining the functions of 911 and emergency dispatch through APD, AFD, and ATCEMS. The evaluation criteria were developed from the objectives of the City Council resolution, stakeholder engagement, operational observations, available data, project documentation, and applicable industry standards and practices.

While the Council resolution refers to the potential creation of a JEC and stakeholders continue to use that term, organizational and operating models within the emergency communications profession differ based on the

functions included.[1] A change in organizational oversight of 911 call-taking is not equivalent to universal call-taking or full consolidation of multidisciplinary call processing and dispatch associated with the definition of a joint emergency communications center. These distinctions are important because the operational benefits, implementation requirements, and risks associated with each model are different.

For purposes of this assessment, four operating models must be distinguished:

Current Colocation Structure	Civilian 911 call-taking remains within APD. Police calls are processed by Austin 911 and routed to Police dispatch; Fire and EMS calls are transferred for discipline-specific processing and dispatch.
Independent PSAP / Standalone Model	Civilian 911 call-taking moves to an independent City department. Existing discipline-specific call-processing and dispatch responsibilities remain substantially unchanged.
Universal Call-Taking Model	The initial 911 call taker assumes broader responsibility for processing calls across multiple public safety disciplines, reducing transfers and handoffs before calls move to discipline-specific dispatch.
Fully Consolidated JEC/ECC	Multidisciplinary call-taking, call processing, and dispatch are integrated within a unified emergency communications organization.

The distinctions among these models are material to the feasibility assessment. Establishing an independent PSAP changes organizational oversight of civilian 911 call-taking but does not, by itself, eliminate discipline-specific transfers, consolidate call processing, or change dispatch operations. Universal call-taking could reduce some handoffs by expanding the responsibilities of the initial call taker, while a fully consolidated JEC could provide additional integration by combining multidisciplinary call processing and dispatch. The North Texas Emergency Communications Center (NTECC) provides an example of a fully consolidated JEC/ECC model. NTECC Emergency Communications Specialists provide centralized call intake across police, fire, and EMS and enter incidents directly into CAD for the appropriate discipline, creating a unified front-end call-taking function. Call takers and dispatchers operate within the same organizational structure.

The organizational options evaluated in this study focus primarily on the current structure and an independent PSAP model. The independent model in this context refers to assessing the move of Austin's civilian 911 call-taking function to an independent, civilian-led department that is not linked to police, fire, or EMS. Universal call-

[1] APCO uses the term ECC, while NENA maintains distinctions among emergency communications functions. Both recognize that an ECC extends beyond answering emergency calls to include coordination and dispatch of response resources and expands requests beyond device-based calls to include next-generation call methods. https://kb.nena.org/wiki/ECC_(Emergency_Communications_Center) and https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11171-2019-kpi-comm-center/?layout=file

taking and full consolidation are discussed where they help distinguish benefits that result from changes to the operating model from those attributable to organizational structure alone.

Operational, organizational, workforce, technology, financial, legal, and implementation considerations were evaluated to determine whether the options can reasonably advance the City's objectives while preserving existing operational strengths and managing the risks and costs associated with change.

Evaluation Framework

The feasibility assessment applies 12 criteria addressing service delivery, organizational capability, workforce and resources, future readiness, legal feasibility, and implementation risk. Each criterion considers both the potential benefits of organizational change and the extent to which the identified improvement depends on organizational structure rather than changes to operations, governance, technology, staffing, or other capabilities.

Table 1: JEC Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation Question
Legal and Regulatory Considerations	What legal, regulatory, labor, licensing, and compliance requirements affect restructuring?
Discipline-Specific Expertise and Service Delivery	Would restructuring preserve or improve discipline-specific expertise and service quality?
Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration	Would organizational change improve coordination among APD, AFD, ATCEMS, mental health, and other response partners?
Operational Effectiveness	Would a different organizational structure improve emergency communications performance?
Workforce Sustainability and Professional Development	Would restructuring improve the ability to recruit, retain, develop, and support emergency communications personnel?
Governance	How would an independent structure affect authority, accountability, decision-making, and cross-agency governance?
Training and QA/QI	Would organizational change improve training consistency, quality measurement, and performance management?
Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity	What risks are associated with changing a functioning emergency communications model, and how would continuity be protected?
Customer Experience and Public Confidence	Would organizational change improve residents' experience and confidence in accessing emergency services?

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation Question
Technology and Innovation	Would organizational change improve technology modernization, analytics, or operational capability?
Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation	What financial advantages, costs, and resource implications would result from restructuring?
Future Growth and Scalability	Would the organizational model support future workload, service expansion, and operational demands?

Decision Evidence Matrix

A decision evidence matrix, included in Appendix A, synthesizes evidence developed through stakeholder engagement, operational and executive interviews, elected-official interviews, site observations, available data, and project background materials. The matrix provides traceability between the evidence developed during the assessment and the feasibility findings presented in the following sections.

4.1 Legal and Regulatory Considerations

Austin's emergency communications system operates within a legal and labor framework that includes state statutes, civil service requirements, collective bargaining and meet-and-confer agreements, interlocal agreements, licensing requirements, criminal justice information requirements, and discipline-specific operational responsibilities. These requirements affect both the City's ability to reorganize emergency communications functions and the scope of consolidation that can be achieved under the current framework.

The implications differ significantly by function. While both Austin's 911 call takers and dispatchers are civilian employees and require specific state licensing and credentialing due to specialized functions (e.g., access to criminal justice information), Fire communications and EMS communications operate under different employment, civil service, licensing, credentialing, and operational requirements. Moving civilian 911 call-taking to a standalone department is therefore materially different from consolidating multiple emergency communications functions within a single civilian organization.

Civilian 911 Call-Taking

The assessment did not identify a statutory or labor requirement that requires Austin's existing civilian 911 call takers to remain organizationally within APD. The City's Labor Relations analysis indicates that the current Police Meet and Confer Agreement does not address the use of civilians. Based on the information reviewed, transferring the civilian call-taking function to a standalone department appears achievable within the City's existing organizational authority, provided the licensing, security, employment, and other requirements applicable to the function are maintained.

Organizational transfer would not eliminate the regulatory requirements associated with the work. Texas law and Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) requirements establish appointment, licensing, training, reporting, and recordkeeping obligations for dispatchers. A standalone department would need an appropriate structure for administering these responsibilities. The specific appointing agency and chief administrator

requirements applicable to a standalone organization should be confirmed with TCOLE as part of implementation planning.

Fire and EMS Communications

Broader consolidation presents substantially greater legal, labor, and operational complexity. Fire and EMS communications operate within frameworks that differ from the civilian 911 call-taking function and include civil service, collective bargaining or meet-and-confer, credentialing, contractual, and discipline-specific requirements.

The City's legal and labor analysis identifies Fire Communications as subject to Chapter 143 civil service requirements. The 2026 Fire Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) also provides that Fire communications duties are performed by firefighters and limits the use of civilian employees in dispatch positions. In addition, the City's interlocal agreement with participating Travis County Emergency Services Districts establishes staffing requirements for the AFD Dispatch Center. Together, these requirements create substantial constraints on transferring AFD communications into a civilian standalone department.

ATCEMS Communications likewise operates as a sworn, civil service function and includes medically credentialed personnel performing clinical responsibilities within the call-processing and response system. Although the applicable EMS labor framework differs from Fire, moving EMS communications into a civilian department would require additional civil service, labor, credentialing, and operational analysis.

Broader consolidation of Fire or EMS communications would therefore require substantially more analysis and potentially more significant legal, labor, contractual, and operational changes than transferring the existing civilian 911 call-taking function. The requirements would depend on the specific functions and personnel proposed for transfer.

Criminal Justice Information and Security Requirements

A standalone department would need to maintain applicable Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS), Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC), and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) requirements because civilian 911 call takers would continue to process police calls and access information and systems supporting police operations.

These requirements are tied to access and use of criminal justice information rather than organizational reporting structure alone. Restructuring would therefore not eliminate the underlying compliance obligations, but it could change which organization is responsible for administering access, security, training, audits, and related requirements. Those responsibilities and any necessary agreements would need to be established before the function transfers from APD.

Organizational Feasibility

The legal and labor framework is a fundamental factor in determining which organizational changes are feasible. Based on the information reviewed, transferring Austin's existing civilian 911 call-taking function to a standalone department appears achievable, subject to establishing the necessary licensing, security, employment, administrative, and regulatory structures.

Broader consolidation presents substantially greater constraints. Fire communications are subject to specific civil service, collective bargaining, and interlocal requirements, while EMS communications operates as a sworn, medically credentialed civil service function. An independent department could therefore provide an organizational home for civilian 911 call-taking while Police dispatch, Fire communications, and EMS communications remain within their respective agencies.

Independence does not, however, remove the legal and labor requirements associated with broader consolidation. If Austin later considers transferring additional emergency communications functions, the applicable statutory, civil service, labor, contractual, credentialing, and operational requirements would need to be evaluated based on the specific future model.

Legal and Regulatory Considerations Comparison

Table 2: Legal and Regulatory Considerations Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Civilian 911 call-taking	Established and compliant: Civilian call takers operate within APD	Appears feasible based on the requirements identified in this assessment
TCOLE	Existing APD processes support telecommunicator licensing and administration	Administrative requirement: Standalone must establish an appropriate TCOLE appointing agency and compliance structure
Police requirements	Civilian call-taking and Police dispatch remain within APD	Limited legal impact: Civilian call-taking can move while Police dispatch remains within APD
Fire communications	Consistent with current requirements: Staffed within AFD by firefighters	Significant constraint on consolidation: Chapter 143, the Fire CBA, and interlocal requirements limit transfer to a civilian department
EMS communications	Consistent with current model: Sworn, medically credentialed civil service function	Significant complexity for consolidation: Would require additional civil service, labor, credentialing, and operational analysis
CJIS / TCIC / NCIC	Existing compliance processes support access and security	Requirements continue: Appropriate administrative responsibility, access, and security controls must be established
Broader communications consolidation	Existing discipline-specific structures operate within current statutory, civil service, labor, interlocal, and credentialing requirements	Significant legal complexity: Independence does not remove existing constraints; broader consolidation could require statutory, contractual, civil service, interlocal, or other changes depending on the functions transferred

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Overall feasibility	**Current strength:** Operates within established legal, labor, licensing, and regulatory structures	**Appears feasible with additional requirements:** Transferring civilian 911 call-taking appears achievable based on the requirements identified in the assessment; broader fire and EMS consolidation would remain subject to separate legal, labor, civil service, credentialing, and operational requirements

Measures of Success

Legal and regulatory feasibility depends on maintaining the requirements attached to each function rather than assuming those requirements change with organizational placement. Any restructuring should preserve uninterrupted compliance while clearly assigning responsibility for licensing, labor, security, civil service, contractual, and other obligations before operational responsibilities transfer.

Table 3: Legal and Regulatory Considerations Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Legal authority	The organizational model complies with applicable statutes, City authority, and civil service requirements
Labor compliance	Applicable collective bargaining, meet-and-confer, and interlocal obligations are satisfied
Licensing	TCOLE appointment, licensing, training, reporting, and recordkeeping requirements continue without interruption
Criminal justice information	CJIS, TCIC, and NCIC access and security requirements remain fully supported
Organizational transfer	Required legal, regulatory, and administrative structures are established before affected responsibilities transfer
Future consolidation	Any broader consolidation is pursued only after applicable statutory, civil service, labor, contractual, credentialing, and operational requirements are identified and addressed

4.2 Discipline-Specific Expertise and Service Delivery

Austin's current emergency communications structure allows APD, AFD, and ATCEMS to maintain the specialized knowledge, protocols, training, supervision, and operational practices required for their respective missions. Stakeholders consistently identified this discipline-specific expertise as a strength that should be preserved under any future organizational model.

Organizational responsibility for employees, however, is distinct from authority over discipline-specific operational requirements. Under a standalone model, an independent 911 department could assume responsibility for hiring, supervision, employee performance, and management of the civilian call-taking workforce while the response agencies retain authority over the legitimate operational requirements applicable to their respective disciplines.

A universal call-taking model would present a different consideration. If civilian 911 call takers assumed broader responsibility for processing police, fire, and EMS calls, the organization would also need to develop and sustain the multidisciplinary expertise necessary to support those expanded responsibilities. That requirement results from changing the operating model rather than from organizational independence alone.

Discipline-Specific Impact of Restructuring

The principal discipline-specific consideration associated with restructuring is the relationship between civilian police call-taking and APD. Today, civilian 911 call takers fully process police calls within APD before transferring incidents to Police dispatch. The employees performing that work, the dispatchers receiving it, and the organization responsible for Police policy and operational requirements (i.e., APD) therefore operate within the same departmental structure.

Under a standalone model, those responsibilities would span two departments. The independent 911 department would employ, supervise, and evaluate civilian call takers, while APD would retain responsibility for Police dispatch and continue to define legitimate police protocols, information requirements, incident classifications, officer-safety requirements, and other discipline-specific operational standards.

This distinction is less significant for AFD and ATCEMS because those agencies would continue to perform their own discipline-specific call processing and dispatch after calls are transferred, similarly Integral Care C3 transfers would not change. The contemplated restructuring therefore creates a new organizational interface within the Police communications process that it does not create to the same extent for AFD, ATCEMS, or Integral Care C3.

That interface does not require civilian call takers to remain organizationally within APD, but it would require deliberate mechanisms for maintaining operational alignment. APD requirements and subsequent changes would need to be communicated reliably and incorporated into 911 policies, training, supervision, QA/QI, and call-processing practices. The independent 911 department would remain responsible for managing and evaluating its employees against those established requirements.

From a discipline-specific expertise perspective, organizational independence provides limited direct benefit. The current structure already provides close alignment between civilian police call processing and APD. A standalone structure can preserve the expertise supporting that function, but doing so requires formal mechanisms to maintain an alignment that currently occurs within one department. The relevant measure of success is therefore not whether expertise changes organizational ownership, but whether the specialized knowledge and operational requirements supporting effective service delivery are preserved.

Discipline-Specific Expertise Comparison

Table 4: Discipline-Specific Expertise Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Specialized expertise	Current strength: Each discipline maintains specialized knowledge, protocols, and operational practices	No material change if discipline-specific authority and requirements are preserved
Police expertise	Current advantage: Civilian call-taking, Police dispatch, and authority over Police operational requirements reside within APD	Added coordination requirement: Employee oversight would move to 911 while Police operational authority and dispatch remain with APD, requiring a currently aligned communications process to operate across two departments
Fire and EMS expertise	Fire and EMS retain control of discipline-specific processing	No material change: Existing Fire and EMS responsibilities remain
Access to mental health service	Calls identified as having a mental health component can be routed from the primary call-taking point to Integral Care C3 for appropriate support	No material change: Access to Integral Care C3 would remain available; effective identification and routing of mental health calls depend on call taker training, triage protocols, and operational coordination rather than organizational structure
Operational authority	Discipline-specific requirements reside within response agencies; Police call-taking also resides within APD	Mixed: 911 manages employees while response agencies retain appropriate authority over discipline-specific requirements
Universal call-taking	Discipline-specific processing remains distributed among agencies	Adds expertise requirements if adopted: 911 would need to develop and sustain broader multidisciplinary capability
Overall capability	**Current strength:** Specialized expertise is embedded in the existing model, with direct alignment between civilian call takers and discipline-specific requirements	**Added coordination requirement:** Police expertise and operational authority would remain with APD, requiring police requirements, policy changes, and operational information to be communicated and maintained across organizational boundaries

Measures of Success

Regardless of organizational structure, discipline-specific expertise should be evaluated by whether each response discipline retains the knowledge, authority, and operational alignment necessary to support effective call processing and response. Under a standalone model, particular attention should be given to maintaining the connection between civilian police call-taking and APD requirements as those functions move across an organizational boundary.

Table 5: Discipline-Specific Expertise Measure of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Expertise preservation	APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care 3, and Austin 911 maintain the specialized knowledge and competencies required for their functions
Police call processing	Police calls are accurately assessed, prioritized, documented, and provided to dispatch with the information necessary for safe and effective response
Discipline alignment	Discipline-specific requirements are incorporated into 911 policies, training, QA/QI, and call-processing standards
Access to Integral Care C3 resources	Calls appropriate for mental health response are consistently identified and routed to Integral Care C3 in accordance with established criteria
Operational knowledge	Changes in response-agency policy and requirements are communicated and incorporated into call-taking practices
Service continuity	Organizational change does not diminish the specialized capability currently supporting emergency call processing

4.3 Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration

Austin 911's operational coordination is supported by shared technology, co-location, and established working relationships among participating agencies. Moving civilian 911 call takers to an independent PSAP would not materially improve these existing capabilities. Greater coordination benefits could result from universal call-taking or broader consolidation, but those benefits depend on cross-discipline training, shared workflows and policies, and changes to existing call-processing responsibilities.

Operational coordination considers how agencies work together to resolve an incident: what information is captured, how it moves through the system, and how participating agencies act on it. Coordination is therefore a function of the system as a whole rather than of any single position or organizational reporting relationship. The initial call taker establishes information needed for classification and routing, while subsequent coordination occurs through discipline-specific call processing and dispatch functions responsible for resource allocation and response decisions.

Under a universal call-taking model, broader initial call processing could reduce some handoffs and improve continuity during multidiscipline incidents. Under the standalone model evaluated here, however, Fire and EMS

would continue to process and dispatch transferred calls, while Police dispatch would remain within APD. The principal operational interfaces would therefore remain.

Existing Coordination and Interoperability

Austin currently benefits from shared CAD, co-location, and established processes that enable agencies to exchange information and re-engage as incident needs change. Discipline-specific dispatchers continue to coordinate resources after calls are classified. These capabilities would remain largely unchanged if civilian 911 call-taking moved to an independent department.

For police calls, independence would create a new organizational boundary between civilian call-taking and Police dispatch. Civilian 911 call takers would continue to fully process police calls while APD retains responsibility for Police dispatch and discipline-specific operational requirements. Maintaining clear procedures, information requirements, and communication between these functions would therefore become more important under a standalone model.

Regional EMS operations present a different coordination consideration. ATCEMS provides emergency medical call processing and dispatch beyond Austin's boundaries through existing operations and interlocal agreements. Those arrangements would remain under the contemplated standalone model because changing the organizational placement of Austin 911 call takers does not alter ATCEMS's regional service responsibilities.

311 and Other Service Pathways

The relationship between 311 and 911 presents an identified opportunity for improvement. Stakeholders described callers being transferred between the two services and limited visibility into request status as sources of inefficiency. These issues are driven primarily by routing policies, information sharing, workflows, and technology rather than the organizational placement of civilian 911 call takers.

Moving 911 call takers out of APD would therefore not, by itself, change how calls move between 911 and 311. Organizational structure becomes more consequential only if the City considers broader integration of emergency and non-emergency call-taking functions.

More broadly, the principal coordination opportunities identified through the assessment—including formalized workflows, shared operational policies, improved 911/311 routing, and stronger cross-agency information sharing—can be pursued under either organizational model. Universal call-taking could reduce some handoffs, but improved coordination ultimately depends on deliberate system-level integration rather than organizational placement alone.

Operational Coordination Comparison

Table 6: Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Call taker-dispatch alignment	Close alignment between civilian call-taking and APD dispatch; Fire and EMS maintain discipline-specific processing	Mixed: Police call-taking and dispatch become organizationally separated; Fire and EMS relationships remain largely unchanged

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Interoperability	Shared CAD, co-location, and established processes support information exchange and re-engagement	No material change: Existing technical and physical interoperability remains
Multidiscipline coordination	Coordination occurs across discipline-specific call-taking and dispatch functions	No inherent improvement: Greater gains would require universal call-taking, shared workflows, or broader consolidation
Regional coordination	Existing EMS and other cross-jurisdictional arrangements operate through established agreements and procedures	No material change: Existing regional arrangements remain
911-311 coordination	Transfers and limited request-status visibility create identified friction	No material change: Improvement depends primarily on routing policy, information sharing workflows, and technology
Mental health response	Mental health is available as a distinct response option through the current 911 intake process	No material change: Access and coordination remain available; improvement depends on response policy, routing, and operational integration rather than organizational placement
Overall coordination	**Current strength with identified opportunity:** Established relationships, co-location, and shared technology support coordination; the identified 911/311 coordination gap can be addressed within the current structure	**Limited direct benefit with added coordination requirements:** Independence does not inherently address the identified 911/311 gap or improve existing coordination and would create a new organizational boundary between civilian police call-taking and APD dispatch

Measures of Success

The comparison indicates that organizational independence would have limited direct effect on Austin's existing coordination capabilities. Success under either structure will depend on preserving current interoperability while strengthening the workflows, information-sharing practices, and cross-agency mechanisms that govern how calls and information move through the system.

Table 7: Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Information sharing	Information captured at intake reaches the appropriate discipline completely and accurately
Handoffs	Cross-discipline handoffs occur without information loss or unnecessary duplication
Shared workflows	Multidiscipline incidents and service pathways follow documented cross-agency procedures
Dispatch alignment	Call-taking requirements remain aligned with the operational needs of discipline-specific dispatch
Regional coordination	Cross-jurisdictional service obligations continue without degradation

4.4 Operational Effectiveness

Operational effectiveness is a central consideration in evaluating changes to Austin's 911 organizational structure. Because overall public safety performance includes functions that would not be affected by restructuring civilian 911 call-taking, this assessment focuses on measures that Austin 911 directly controls or materially influences, including call-answer time, call processing, classification accuracy, information quality, transfers, and send-to-queue time.

The analysis indicates that creating an independent PSAP would not, by itself, materially change these functions or overall response time. Greater operational change would require changes to the operating model, such as universal call-taking, or targeted improvements to governance, staffing, training, QA/QI, technology, workflows, and other factors that influence call-processing performance.

Call Processing and Response Time

Call-processing standards provide a useful framework for distinguishing the portions of the emergency response continuum that Austin 911 directly controls from those it influences and those that occur downstream. Measures identified in applicable NENA and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards[2] include:

- *Time to answer*, from presentation of the call to agent answer
- *Time to transfer* to the appropriate authority having jurisdiction (if applicable)
- *Call-processing* time for information gathering
- Call *classification* or coding
- *Send-to-queue* time
- Time in the *dispatch queue* to notification
- *Unit response time*

[2] NENA STA-019, NENA STA-020, and NFPA 1225

Austin 911 has its greatest influence over the earliest portions of this sequence. For fire- and EMS-only calls, that influence is generally concentrated to time to answer and time to transfer. For police calls, civilian call-taking also includes call processing, classification, and sending the incident to the dispatch queue.

Time in dispatch queue and unit response time occur downstream of 911 call-taking. Although these measures are important to the overall response time experienced by the public, they are influenced primarily by discipline-specific dispatch operations, incident priority, resource availability, deployment practices, field conditions, and response-agency policies. Creating an independent PSAP separate from APD would not, by itself, change these factors.

This distinction is particularly important because response time was a significant concern raised during stakeholder engagement and Council meetings. Improvements in call-answering, processing, or transfer performance, as sequenced above, can reduce the portion of elapsed time attributable to 911 call processing but restructuring civilian call-taking should not be expected to resolve delays driven primarily by field-resource availability or other downstream conditions.

Performance Measures

Objective performance measures provide the starting point for evaluating operational effectiveness and establishing whether material opportunities for improvement exist. These measures should also distinguish between performance that can reasonably be affected by organizational structure and performance related to the 911 function driven primarily by governance, staffing, training, protocols, technology, workflows, or downstream response operations.

Performance measures are currently maintained across multiple City departments, including APD, AFD, and ATCEMS, without a single end-to-end view from initial call intake through field response. A more comprehensive performance framework would establish common key performance indicators and a method for compiling relevant data across the departments and service providers involved in the call process, including APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, and 311. Several applicable national standards can help inform the development of this framework.

Table 8: Austin 911 Current Operational Performance

Performance Measure	Current Austin Performance	Applicable Benchmark / Reference	Relevance to Restructuring
Time to answer	97.46%	90% of all emergency calls answered in under 15 seconds 95% of all emergency calls answered in under 20 seconds[3]	Primarily influenced by staffing, workload, scheduling, supervision, and call distribution practices; organizational structure is not the primary driver Aligns with higher percentage of call answer times because of automatic call distribution (ACD) technology[4]

[3] Benchmarks found in NENA STA 020.2-2026 and NFPA 1225 Section 15.4.1
[4] ACD technology automatically routes incoming calls to available call takers based on configured routing rules, helping distribute workload and reduce the time callers wait for an available call taker.

Performance Measure	Current Austin Performance	Applicable Benchmark / Reference	Relevance to Restructuring
Time to transfer	Average point of transfer during call intake: • AFD to APD 135 seconds • ATCEMS to APD 221 seconds • TCSO[5] to APD 57 seconds • APD to AFD 21 seconds • APD to ATCEMS 25 seconds • APD to TCSO 79 seconds • APD to Integral Care (C3) 147 seconds	≤30 seconds for 90% of incoming calls/incidents[6] MCP estimates a range of 41 seconds to 86 seconds per call that results in additional call processing time due to workflows involving transfers.[7]	Could improve with changes to transfer workflow, including repetitive ACD greetings; not inherently improved through organizational restructuring
Transfer volume to 911	• 13,787 to 911 from: – AFD: 636 – ATCEMS: 2,443 – TCSO: 5,835 – Other: 4,873	No established national benchmark identified; track and trend internally.	Little direct effect from a standalone organizational structure, as calls would still require a transfer.
Transfer volume from 911	• 117,779 from 911 to:[8] – AFD: 29,373 – ATCEMS: 82,467 – TCSO: 3,363 – C3: 2364[9] – Other: 2,576		

[5] Travis County Sheriff's Office
[6] NFPA 1225 section, Figure A.15.4.1 (b). Incidents are defined as an emergency or other situation that requires action by an emergency
[7] Prehospital Emergency Care (Moeller et al., 2023)
[8] Transfers predominately to AFD, ATCEMS, and TCSO.
[9] This number may not reflect all calls processed by C3 as many are handled as callbacks at the request of patrol or the control center and do not involve a direct transfer from 911 to C3.

Performance Measure	Current Austin Performance	Applicable Benchmark / Reference	Relevance to Restructuring
Abandoned call rate	2.01%	No formal national benchmark identified; establish an internal baseline and monitor trends[10]	Primarily influenced by workload, staffing, and queue management
Average call-processing time[11]	137.32 seconds	No directly comparable universal benchmark; NFPA 1225 establishes call-processing benchmarks for high priority fire/EMS incidents[12]; performance should also be benchmarked and trended by discipline, call type, and priority[13]	Primarily influenced by call-taking responsibilities, protocols, workflows, and call type; could change if the operating model or scope of call-taking responsibilities changes, but not inherently affected by organizational restructuring
Call classification accuracy	Not available	No universal benchmark; establish agency-defined QA/QI targets and monitor trends	Primarily influenced by training, protocols, supervision, and QA/QI rather than organizational placement

[10] No formal benchmark was identified. Abandonment should be tracked and trended as an indicator of service demand and queue performance. Sustained increases may indicate a need to evaluate staffing, workload, or call management practices.
[11] Time considers call answer through first unit notification.
[12] NFPA 1225 Section 15.4 Operating Procedures provides incident time benchmarks (<60 seconds 90% of the time) for the highest priority fire/EMS calls only. Call processing times largely depend on protocol-use/policy directives, call discipline, and priority.
[13] Speed alone is not the primary measure for performance accuracy, completeness, and sound decision-making, which are equally critical to appropriate public safety response.

Performance Measure	Current Austin Performance	Applicable Benchmark / Reference	Relevance to Restructuring
Send-to-queue time[14]	• Average: 00:01:44 – P0 (Hot Shot Calls): 00:01:16 – P1: 1 minute 35 seconds – P2: 1 minute 33 seconds – P3: 2 minutes 36 seconds[15]	Track and trend as a component of call-processing performance	Relevant primarily to police calls processed by Austin 911; influenced by call-processing workflows rather than organizational placement alone
Time in dispatch queue[16]	• Average: 27 minutes 8 seconds – P0 (Hot Shot Calls): 1 minute 46 seconds – P1: 3 minutes 26 seconds – P2: 24 minutes 6 seconds – P3: 1 hour, 8 minutes, 3 seconds[17]	Track and trend; applicable benchmarks vary by incident type and priority	Occurs downstream of civilian call-taking and is driven primarily by dispatch operations, incident priority, and resource availability
Unit response time	• Average: 8 minutes 53 seconds – P0 (Hot Shot Calls): 6 minutes 2 seconds – P1: 7 minutes 25 seconds – P2: 9 minutes 23 seconds – P3: 10 minutes 47 seconds	NFPA benchmark for fire/EMS only APD aims for a response time of 10 minutes and 44 seconds	Largely outside the direct control of Austin 911; organizational restructuring would not materially change field resource availability, deployment, travel time, or response policy

[14] Send-to-queue time represents the point at which sufficient call information has been collected and the incident becomes available to dispatch personnel.
[15] This time denotes the point in call processing when the call is available to dispatch personnel
[16] Dispatch queue time represents the interval from when an incident becomes available to dispatch until the first unit is notified. Applicable NFPA benchmarks vary by incident type and priority.
[17] This time denotes the period from when the call is available to dispatch to the time that the first unit was notified. NFPA 1225 provides benchmarks for specific call types and priorities only.

An industry resource available to PSAP management is *Public Safety Communications Center Key Performance Indicators* (APCO ANS 1.117.1-2019).[18]

> *The goal of this standard is to provide fundamental key performance indicators (KPIs) inherent in all ECC work, regardless of size, services, or location. It also provides a list of conditions that allow agencies to further refine performance analysis and management, if applicable to its needs. The standard approaches this topic by:*
>
> - *Designating mandatory KPIs applicable to all ECC environments;*
> - *Documenting conditional measures that allow for more detailed root-cause analysis; and*
> - *Identifying data elements necessary to complete the KPI.*[19]

Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety Communications Personnel (APCO ANS 1.118.1-2020)[20] focuses more on establishing KPIs for PSAP personnel than the agency. The KPI standards can be aligned with two other national standards that include metrics:

- *NENA Standard for 9-1-1 Call Processing* (NENA-STA-020.2-2026)
- *Standard for Emergency Services Communications* (NFPA 1225)

Collectively, these standards can be used to establish benchmarks that the City may leverage to expand its existing performance framework, track progress, and support continuous improvement. Establishing KPIs should be a collaborative effort across participating departments and service providers.

Quality and Effectiveness

Operational effectiveness cannot be evaluated through time-based measures alone. Faster processing does not represent improved performance if calls are misclassified, routed incorrectly, require unnecessary repeated information gathering, or fail to provide responders with the information needed to act.

Qualitative effectiveness should therefore consider:

- Classification accuracy and first-contact effectiveness: Calls are correctly classified and routed to the resource or agency best positioned to address the incident.
- Consistency and reliability: Calls are handled to consistent standards across shifts, call types, and operating conditions.
- Alignment with response-agency requirements: Call-taking captures and communicates the information necessary to support discipline-specific response decisions.
- Information sufficiency and continuity: Information gathered at first contact is complete, accurate, and available downstream without unnecessary duplication or loss.

These measures are influenced primarily by training, protocols, supervision, QA/QI, technology, and alignment with response agencies. A universal call-taking model could change some of these processes by expanding the responsibilities of the initial call taker, but improved performance should not be assumed solely because the organizational reporting structure changes.

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[18] https://www.apcointl.org/~documents/standard/11171-2019-kpi-comm-center/?layout=file
[19] 11171-2019_KPICommCenter2.pdf (apcointl.org)
[20] 11181-2020-Key Performance Indicators for Public Safety Communications Personnel.pdf (apcointl.org)

Transfers and Handoffs

Transfers are inherent in Austin's current discipline-specific operating model. Fire and EMS calls are transferred for discipline-specific processing, and creating an independent PSAP would not eliminate those transfers. A universal call-taking model could reduce some handoffs if appropriately trained call takers assume broader responsibility for initial information gathering and classification.

Not all transfer-related improvements require a different operating model. Transfers resulting from incorrect classification or routing, unnecessary repetition, or inefficient workflows may also be addressed through training, protocols, supervision, technology, QA/QI, and process improvement.

Transfers involving other PSAPs present a different issue. Calls may move between jurisdictions because of network routing, jurisdictional boundaries, or regional service arrangements. These transfers can create delay, repetition, and frustration for callers, but changing Austin 911's organizational placement would have little direct effect on their occurrence.

Calls initially routed to another PSAP because of technology or jurisdictional boundaries may require changes to routing, regional arrangements, or participating PSAP responsibilities. Those issues should be evaluated separately from the organizational placement of Austin's civilian 911 call-taking function.

Operational Effectiveness Comparison

Table 9: Operational Effectiveness Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Time to answer	Established civilian call-taking function	No material change: Same core responsibility
Call processing and classification	Police calls fully processed; fire/EMS routed for discipline-specific processing	No material change: Existing responsibilities remain unless the operating model changes
Internal transfers and handoffs	AFD, ATCEMS, and Integral Care C3 calls require discipline-specific transfers	No material change: Independence does not eliminate these transfers; universal call-taking could reduce some
Interjurisdictional transfers	Calls may transfer between PSAPs because of routing, jurisdictional boundaries, or regional service arrangements	No material change: Driven by technology, jurisdiction, and regional arrangements—not Austin 911's reporting structure
Information quality	Depends on protocols, training, supervision, and alignment with response agencies	Mixed: Information quality can be maintained, but alignment with APD requirements would need to be managed across a new organizational boundary
Time in dispatch queue	Controlled primarily by discipline-specific dispatch operations	No material change

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Unit response time	Driven primarily by resource availability, deployment, travel, incident conditions, and response policy	No material change
Overall operational effectiveness	**Current strength with improvement opportunities:** The existing structure supports effective performance of Austin 911's core functions; identified opportunities for improvement can be addressed within the current model	**Limited direct benefit with added coordination requirements:** Independence does not inherently improve core call-taking functions or downstream response factors and would require additional coordination between APD and the civilian call-taking function to maintain law-enforcement requirements, training, and operational alignment

Measures of Success

Regardless of organizational structure, operational effectiveness should be evaluated against consistent measures that reflect both the timeliness and quality of call processing. These measures provide a baseline for monitoring performance and determining whether future operational or organizational changes produce measurable improvement.

Table 10: Operational Effectiveness Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Time to answer	Calls are answered within established performance benchmarks
Call processing	Calls move from answer through classification and queueing without unnecessary delay
Call classification and information quality	Calls are correctly classified and dispatch receives complete and accurate information
Time to transfer	Avoidable transfers and repeated information gathering are minimized
Performance	Call-processing quality is consistent across shifts, call types, and operating conditions
Response time contribution	Measurable improvement in the portion of total response time controlled or influenced by Austin 911

4.5 Workforce Sustainability and Professional Development

Austin's emergency communications workforce is one of the clearest strengths of the current system and one of the more consequential considerations in evaluating restructuring. In 2022, call-taker vacancies reached approximately 45% and the 911 answer rate fell to approximately 80%. Following investments in compensation, career progression, hiring, training, and cross-training, the division now reports an overall vacancy rate of approximately 7% and a 911 answer rate above 97%. This represents a significant recovery in both staffing stability and service performance.

Table 11: Workforce Measurements

Workforce Measure	Current Condition
Call takers	~104[21]
Dispatchers	~89
Supervisors	~12
Overall vacancy rate	~7%
911 answer rate	>97%

The strategies associated with this improvement—compensation, career pathways, hiring, training, and cross-training—can continue under either organizational model. Organizational identity and established leadership relationships, however, may be more affected by restructuring.

Stakeholder engagement indicated that dispatchers identify closely with APD, its public safety mission, and current leadership. Participants also described APD leadership as engaged in the success of the communications division and willing to rely on communications personnel for subject-matter expertise. These findings suggest that effective leadership is influenced less by whether leaders are sworn or civilian than by their understanding of emergency communications, engagement with the workforce, and credibility with employees.

Organizational research provides additional context for the potential workforce effects of restructuring. Employees may derive professional identity and a sense of belonging from their organizational affiliation, and changes to that affiliation can affect employee attachment during a transition.[22] Austin stakeholder engagement similarly indicated that organizational identity and relationships with current leadership are important to communications personnel. A new organizational identity can be developed, but doing so would require deliberate communication, employee engagement, leadership continuity, and culture-building throughout the transition.[23]

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[21] MCP independently validated that the current authorized call taker strength is sufficient to meet the current 911 call volume.
[22] Blake E. Ashforth and Fred Mael, "Social Identity Theory and the Organization," *Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 1 (1989): 20–39. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4278999
[23] [6] Wookje Sung et al., "Employees' Responses to an Organizational Merger: Intraindividual Change in Organizational Identification, Attachment, and Turnover," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 102, no. 6 (2017): 910–934. doi:10.1037/apl0000197.

The potential workforce effect is particularly important given Austin's current staffing position. The available staffing analysis estimates a minimum requirement of approximately 95 call takers to support current call-answer performance, with additional staffing needed to provide greater resilience for turnover, leave, training, and coverage. With approximately 104 call takers currently reported, even a modest loss of experienced personnel could reduce available staffing capacity and place recent performance gains at risk.

Professional Development

A standalone organization could provide a meaningful professional development advantage by creating the opportunity for career progression that extends from entry-level positions through communications-specific executive leadership. Career progression exists within the current structure, but advancement at higher organizational levels is more limited because senior leadership positions above the communications function are generally part of APD's sworn command structure.

An independent department could create additional communications-specific leadership and succession opportunities and potentially provide greater continuity in executive leadership. These benefits are not inherent to organizational independence; however, they would depend on organizational design, investment, leadership selection, and the development of meaningful career pathways.

These longer-term opportunities must be weighed against the near-term risk of disrupting a recently stabilized workforce. Independence could create greater professional development capacity and a distinct emergency communications identity, but it does not inherently improve recruitment, retention, or staffing adequacy. From a workforce perspective, the central tradeoff is between preserving demonstrated near-term stability and creating additional opportunities for communications-specific career and leadership development.

Workforce Sustainability Comparison

Table 12: Workforce Sustainability Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Workforce stability	Current strength: Vacancies have fallen from 45% in 2022 to approximately 7%	Adds near-term risk: Changes the organizational environment of a recently stabilized workforce
Staffing adequacy	Above the estimated minimum, but below a more resilient staffing level	No inherent improvement: Organizational independence does not create additional staffing capacity
Recruitment	Recent compensation and hiring efforts have materially improved staffing	No demonstrated structural advantage: Recruitment outcomes would continue to depend primarily on compensation, working conditions, hiring practices, career opportunities, and organizational reputation

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Retention and organizational identity	Current strength: Employees demonstrated strong identification with APD, its mission, and current leadership	Adds near-term risk: Existing organizational identity and attachment must be sustained or rebuilt within a new organization
Career development	Progression exists but is comparatively constrained at higher levels	Improves opportunity: Can create a purpose-built communications career path through executive leadership
Leadership development and continuity	Current leadership is viewed positively; senior advancement and continuity operate within a sworn command structure	Potential improvement: Communications-specific leadership, succession, and continuity can be purpose-built
Overall workforce sustainability	**Current strength with identified limitation:** Recent investments have produced significant staffing and performance gains; communications-specific advancement remains more limited at senior leadership levels	**Mixed**: Could expand communications-specific career and leadership opportunities, but does not inherently improve staffing or recruitment and introduces near-term retention and organizational-identity risk

Measures of Success

Workforce sustainability should ultimately be evaluated by the organization's ability to maintain sufficient staffing, retain experienced personnel, support employee engagement, and provide meaningful career and leadership opportunities without degrading service performance. Under either organizational model, preserving Austin's recent staffing gains while continuing to strengthen professional development should remain a priority.

Table 13: Workforce Sustainability Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Staffing stability	Vacancy and attrition remain at sustainable levels without degrading service
Recruitment and retention	The organization attracts and retains enough qualified personnel to meet current and projected workforce needs
Employee engagement	Employees maintain confidence in leadership, connection to the public safety mission, and a clear organizational identity
Career progression	Employees have meaningful opportunities for advancement and specialization within emergency communications
Leadership development	Qualified communications leaders can progress through defined succession and executive pathways

4.6 Governance

Establishing a standalone 911 department would change more than the reporting structure of civilian call takers. Governance, as evaluated here, considers where authority and accountability reside, how decisions are made, and how responsibilities are coordinated when functions cross organizational boundaries.

Under the current model, 911 operates within APD's established chain of command, providing clear authority and close alignment with Police operations. Interagency coordination is supported by positive working relationships among APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care, and other partners. MCP observed, however, that much of this coordination relies on relationships and informal practices rather than durable governance structures. Formal governance could document shared expectations, provide consistent mechanisms for resolving cross-agency issues, and preserve effective coordination as leadership changes over time.

The current placement of civilian call takers within APD also has an operational rationale. Austin 911 fully processes police calls before transferring incidents to Police dispatch while serving as the City's initial access point for fire, EMS, mental health, and other services. Organizational proximity to Police policy, operational requirements, and decision-making therefore supports a significant portion of the call takers' current responsibilities.

The governance tradeoff is that a citywide access function resides organizationally within one of the response agencies it serves. A standalone department would provide greater structural neutrality by positioning 911 as an organizational peer to APD, AFD, ATCEMS, and other partners. It would also add another department to an already multi-agency environment, increasing the need for clear decision rights, formal interfaces, and durable cross-agency governance.

Accountability and Decision Rights

Accountability for civilian 911 call-taking exists today through APD's established chain of command. The issue identified through this assessment is therefore not the absence of accountability, but its visibility, focus, and relationship to the broader emergency communications system.

A standalone department would change the point of accountability by establishing a department head with dedicated executive responsibility for the civilian 911 function, its workforce, performance, and strategic direction. Independence would not, however, transfer discipline-specific operational authority from the response agencies to the new department.

APD would retain authority over legitimate police requirements, including protocols, incident classifications, priority definitions, minimum information requirements, officer-safety requirements, and other operational standards applicable to police calls. AFD and ATCEMS would likewise retain authority over their discipline-specific call processing, dispatch, and operational requirements.

What changes is the relationship between that discipline-specific authority and management of the civilian workforce. Today, APD establishes police requirements and manages the call takers responsible for applying them. Under a standalone model, APD would retain authority over Police operational requirements and dispatch, while the 911 department would manage the civilian employees responsible for applying those requirements. The governance structure would therefore need to define how requirements are communicated, incorporated into policy and training, implemented, monitored, and addressed when operational or performance issues arise.

Formal Interagency Governance

A standalone model would require a durable mechanism for decisions and issues that cross agency boundaries. An executive-level public safety communications committee could provide that structure, with representation from 911, APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care, alternative response, and other appropriate City partners.

The committee would not manage daily operations or supersede discipline-specific authority. Its role would be to address matters requiring coordinated action, including:

- Cross-agency policies and procedures
- Call-routing and transfer requirements
- Multidiscipline incidents and service pathways
- Shared technology and workflow issues
- Shared strategic priorities
- Other decisions affecting multiple disciplines

Supporting working groups could address operational, training, quality, and technology matters. The 911 department head would have authority over the civilian workforce, call-taking operations, training, QA/QI, performance management, and strategic planning, while response agencies retain authority over their discipline-specific operational requirements, dispatch, and field operations.

The purpose of formal governance is to make these boundaries explicit rather than blur them. For decisions crossing organizational boundaries, the governance structure should identify who owns the underlying requirement, who is responsible for implementation, who must be consulted, and how issues are escalated and resolved.

Accountability should therefore operate at four levels:

- **Discipline-specific authority:** APD, AFD, and ATCEMS retain authority over legitimate operational requirements within their respective disciplines.
- **Departmental accountability:** Each department head is accountable for the functions and employees within that department's control. Under a standalone model, the 911 director would be accountable for the civilian call-taking workforce and its performance.
- **Interface governance:** Processes crossing organizational boundaries have defined mechanisms for communicating requirements, implementing changes, addressing performance concerns, and resolving issues.
- **Systemwide visibility:** City leadership maintains visibility into performance across the emergency communications and response continuum while preserving individual departmental accountability.

The distinction between departmental accountability and systemwide performance is important. A 911 department could meet its performance targets while downstream police response remains delayed. Conversely, Police dispatch could perform well after receiving an incident while delays occur earlier in call processing. Departmental measures should therefore be evaluated within the context of end-to-end system performance.

Independent Performance Oversight

Formal interagency governance can establish how participating agencies make decisions and resolve issues, but it does not necessarily provide independent visibility into performance across the emergency

communications system. Individual departments may have detailed information about their own performance without any one entity having an objective, end-to-end view.

The City could address this through an independent performance oversight function with appropriate access to data across participating agencies and sufficient emergency communications expertise to interpret system performance. The function would not manage daily operations or replace departmental accountability. Its purpose would be to provide objective systemwide analysis, identify issues that cross organizational boundaries, and support informed executive and policy decisions.

This need exists under either organizational model and would not be resolved simply by moving 911 out of APD. A standalone department would remain an operational participant in the system rather than an independent evaluator of end-to-end performance.

Overall, the governance benefit of independence would come from greater organizational neutrality, dedicated executive focus on 911, and more explicit cross-agency participation—not from creating accountability where none exists today or transferring discipline-specific authority to the new department. Those benefits must be weighed against the additional organizational interface and governance requirements created by independence. Under either model, Austin would benefit from more durable cross-agency governance, clear decision rights, systemwide performance visibility, and a multiyear 911 strategy aligned with broader City and public safety priorities.

Governance Comparison

Table 14: Governance Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Executive authority	Current strength: Clear authority through APD's established chain of command	Changes structure: Creates dedicated executive authority over civilian 911 while discipline-specific authority remains with response agencies
Accountability	Current strength: Clear accountability for civilian 911 through APD	Changes point of accountability: Creates a dedicated 911 executive; does not create accountability where none exists today
Discipline-specific authority	APD owns Police operational requirements and manages the civilian employees applying them	No change in operational ownership: APD retains Police requirements while 911 assumes management of the civilian workforce
Interagency governance	Positive relationships support collaboration, but governance is largely informal and relationship-dependent	Mixed: Improves structural neutrality but adds another department, increasing the need for formal cross-agency governance

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Decision rights	Clear within APD for Police matters; less formal for issues crossing agencies	Requires greater formality: Organizational and discipline-specific authority must be clearly distinguished and cross-agency interfaces documented
Organizational neutrality	911 resides within one response agency; significant interagency concerns regarding operational bias were not identified during stakeholder engagement	Greater structural neutrality: Positions 911 as an organizational peer to participating response agencies
Governance durability	Effective collaboration is supported by established leadership relationships; formal governance could provide greater continuity as leadership changes	Greater requirement for formalization: New organizational interfaces increase the need for standing forums, documented responsibilities, and durable governance mechanisms
Governance complexity	Fewer organizational participants; some relationships occur within APD's existing structure	Adds complexity: Introduces another department and additional organizational interfaces requiring governance
Strategic focus	911 priorities are developed within APD's broader organizational structure	Potential advantage: Provides dedicated strategic focus on 911, while requiring continued alignment with City and response-agency priorities
Overall governance	**Current strength with opportunity:** Governance and accountability within 911 are established; interagency governance is effective but remains largely informal	**Mixed:** Changes the focus of authority and accountability and provides greater structural neutrality and dedicated 911 focus, but adds another department and increases the need for formal governance of organizational interfaces

Measures of Success

Effective governance should provide clear authority and accountability while also supporting decisions and performance management across organizational boundaries. Regardless of where civilian 911 call-taking is located, success will depend on durable governance mechanisms that preserve discipline-specific authority, clarify organizational responsibilities, provide systemwide visibility, and resolve cross-agency issues efficiently.

Table 15: Governance Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Clear authority	Organizational and discipline-specific authority are clearly distinguished and documented
Departmental accountability	Each department head is accountable for the functions and employees within that department's control
Cross-agency governance	Standing mechanisms address decisions and issues that legitimately cross organizational boundaries
Interface governance	Requirements, changes, performance concerns, and escalation processes move reliably across organizational boundaries
Issue resolution	Cross-agency issues have defined ownership and are resolved without obscuring discipline-specific authority
Systemwide visibility	Leadership can assess end-to-end performance while preserving departmental accountability
Strategic alignment	911 strategy remains aligned with broader City and response-agency priorities

4.7 Training and QA/QI

Austin's existing 911 training program provides an established foundation aligned with industry practices and applicable licensing and certification requirements. These requirements would remain regardless of whether civilian call takers remain within APD or move to a standalone department. The primary organizational consideration is therefore not whether training would continue, but how training standards, curricula, resources, and responsibilities would be managed under a different structure. A standalone department would also require dedicated training and QA/QI capacity, which could result in additional staffing and associated costs depending on how existing resources are transferred or shared.

Training

A standalone department would assume responsibility for managing the training program for the civilian 911 workforce while continuing to incorporate discipline-specific requirements from APD and other response partners. APD participation would remain particularly important because civilian 911 call takers fully process police calls before transferring incidents to Police dispatch. Training would need to remain aligned with current APD procedures, information requirements, officer-safety considerations, and changes in operational policy.

Under the current structure, training benefits from the civilian call-taking function's direct organizational connection to APD. A standalone department could provide more dedicated ownership of 911 training but would need to maintain that discipline-specific connection deliberately while managing its own curricula, communications training officers (CTOs), instructional materials, continuing education, and training administration.

A standalone organization would also need sufficient trainer and CTO capacity to support initial and continuing education without unnecessarily reducing operational staffing. Training resources would need to address not only new-hire qualification but continuing education and the development needs of supervisory, support, administrative, and leadership personnel.

Training should continue to evolve as policies, service options, technology, and operational requirements change. QA/QI findings, performance trends, policy changes, and after-action reviews should routinely inform continuing education so that training functions as an ongoing performance-improvement mechanism rather than primarily an initial qualification process.

Organizational independence could provide greater dedicated ownership of 911 training, but it would not inherently improve training quality. Success under either model depends on preserving existing competencies, maintaining appropriate participation from response agencies, and providing the staffing, funding, and infrastructure necessary to sustain the program.

Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement

QA/QI presents a more significant opportunity for improvement. Within the current structure, dedicated QA/QI resources are limited, resulting in greater reliance on supervisory review, individual coaching, accreditation activities, and manual performance monitoring.

A formal QA/QI program for civilian 911 call-taking should be established regardless of organizational structure. Consistent performance measures, systematic call review, integrated reporting, and defined quality metrics would provide greater visibility into call-processing quality, transfer efficiency, protocol compliance, and performance trends. This capability is necessary to distinguish recurring performance issues from isolated incidents and identify where operational improvements are needed.

QA/QI findings should routinely inform employee development, coaching, corrective action, policy, training, and operational improvement. The program should provide consistent measurement of call classification, information quality, routing, protocol compliance, and other aspects of call-taking performance. As alternative response programs and service pathways evolve, quality measures should also consider whether callers are connected to the appropriate resource rather than focusing solely on whether a call was routed correctly to a particular agency.

QA/QI is therefore a substantive improvement opportunity, but the improvement is not dependent on restructuring. A standalone department could provide greater organizational focus on QA/QI, but the same capability can be established within the current structure. The determining factors are dedicated resources, meaningful performance measures, systematic review, reliable reporting, and an effective feedback loop between QA/QI, training, policy, and operations.

Training and Quality Assurance Comparison

Table 16: Training and QA/QI Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Training foundation	Current strength: Established program aligned with industry practices and applicable licensing and certification requirements	No inherent improvement: Existing competencies and requirements must be preserved
Training ownership	Established within APD with direct access to police operational expertise	Mixed: Provides dedicated 911 ownership but creates a greater need to deliberately maintain discipline-specific alignment
Trainer and CTO capacity	Existing resources support qualification and continuing development	Requires dedicated capacity: Standalone must sustain sufficient training capacity for operational and organizational needs
Discipline-specific alignment	Police requirements are incorporated through direct organizational proximity to APD	Adds coordination requirement: APD participation remains necessary while employee management moves to 911
QA/QI	Improvement opportunity: Limited dedicated QA/QI resources and reliance on supervisory/manual review	Potential improvement: Dedicated QA/QI may be easier to prioritize, but the improvement is not structure-dependent
QA/QI-to-training feedback	Coaching occurs, but a more formal performance feedback loop would strengthen the program	Potential improvement: Dedicated organizational focus could strengthen the connection among QA/QI, training, policy, and employee development; achievable under either model
Overall training and QA/QI	**Current strength with identified opportunity:** Training is well established; dedicated QA/QI capacity and formal performance feedback loops remain opportunities for improvement	**Mixed:** Could provide greater dedicated focus on training and QA/QI, but would require additional organizational capacity and discipline-specific coordination; QA/QI improvement is achievable under either model

Measures of Success

Training and QA/QI should ultimately be evaluated by whether personnel are prepared to perform their responsibilities consistently and whether the organization can reliably measure, identify, and correct performance issues. Regardless of organizational structure, success will depend on maintaining discipline-specific alignment while creating a systematic connection among training, QA/QI, employee development, policy, and operational improvement.

Table 17: Training and QA/QI Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Training standards	Defined competencies and curricula are consistently applied across the civilian 911 workforce
Discipline alignment	Training remains aligned with legitimate APD and other response-partner operational requirements
Continuing education	Personnel receive ongoing training as policies, procedures, technology, and service requirements change
Quality measurement	Calls are systematically reviewed for classification, information quality, protocol compliance, routing, and connection to the appropriate service
QA/QI integration	QA/QI findings and performance trends routinely inform training, coaching, policy, and corrective action
Performance transparency	Leadership can reliably measure and report call-handling quality and performance trends

4.8 Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity

Implementation risk is an important consideration when evaluating organizational options for Austin's emergency communications environment. Austin is not restructuring in response to a failing operation. Recent investments in staffing, recruitment, retention, leadership, and operational improvement have produced measurable gains in workforce stability and 911 call-answer performance.

The principal implementation risk is therefore not the technical ability to establish a new organizational structure, but the potential for unintended consequences during transition. Organizational change could affect workforce stability, established interagency relationships, governance responsibilities, technology dependencies, financial requirements, and day-to-day operational coordination. Individually, these risks are addressed throughout the feasibility assessment; collectively, they increase the complexity of changing a functioning emergency communications operation while maintaining uninterrupted service.

Many of the improvement opportunities identified through this assessment can be pursued within the current organizational structure, while a standalone model provides other potential advantages described elsewhere in this report. Where an improvement does not depend on restructuring, the potential benefits of organizational change should be weighed against the additional transition risk it creates. The feasibility question is therefore not simply whether a new organization can be established, but whether the transition can preserve current strengths while creating the conditions necessary to realize the anticipated benefits.

Operational Continuity During Transition

Austin's emergency communications system depends on established relationships, shared facilities, integrated technology, and operating practices. Any transition should preserve the communication pathways, operational

interfaces, and working relationships necessary to maintain uninterrupted service while new organizational responsibilities are established.

Workforce stability is particularly important because organizational change would follow significant improvements in recruitment, retention, staffing, and employee engagement. Even a modest loss of experienced personnel could reduce available staffing capacity and place recent call-answer performance at risk. Implementation planning should therefore include sustained workforce communication and engagement and ongoing monitoring of staffing, turnover, and service performance.

The technology supporting emergency communications would remain highly integrated and shared across City and regional entities. Implementation planning should identify required changes to system access, administrative permissions, security, licensing, network relationships, and support responsibilities and confirm that changes are completed and tested before organizational responsibilities transfer.

The same principle applies to governance and operational relationships. APD would continue to define legitimate police operational requirements while the standalone department would become responsible for managing the civilian employees who apply them. Decision rights, communication mechanisms, escalation processes, and operating interfaces should therefore be established before the new organizational boundary takes effect.

Implementation Readiness

Establishing a new organizational structure is substantially different from safely transferring responsibility for a 24-hour emergency communications function. Organizational milestones and implementation schedules should therefore be based on demonstrated readiness rather than the completion of administrative steps alone.

Before operational responsibility transfers, the required leadership, staffing, funding, administrative support, policies, governance mechanisms, legal and labor requirements, system access, and continuity safeguards should be in place. Dependencies should be identified and sequenced so that the operation is not required to absorb multiple avoidable risks simultaneously.

If organizational restructuring is pursued, a phased implementation supported by executive leadership, stakeholder engagement, performance monitoring, and clearly defined success measures would reduce implementation risk. Baseline measures should be established before transition so that changes in workforce stability, call-taking performance, and service continuity can be identified quickly. Subsequent implementation steps should proceed only when the conditions necessary to support them are in place and preceding changes have not resulted in unacceptable degradation.

The ability to establish a standalone department should not be treated as evidence that transition can occur without consequence. Austin would be changing an operation that has recently demonstrated measurable improvement. If structural change is pursued, operational continuity should remain the controlling implementation requirement: existing strengths should be protected, organizational and operational dependencies should be resolved before transfer, and implementation should proceed at a pace the City can effectively support.

Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity Comparison

Table 18: Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Operational disruption	Current advantage: No organizational transition required	Adds risk: Responsibility must transfer while maintaining uninterrupted 24-hour service
Workforce stability	Current strength: Recently stabilized workforce and established organizational identity	Adds near-term risk: Organizational change may affect retention, engagement, and staffing stability
Interagency interfaces	Established relationships and operating practices	Adds transition requirements: New organizational interfaces must be established without disrupting existing operations
Systems and administration	Existing access, security, support, and administrative structures are in place	Adds transition requirements: Required organizational, system access, security, and support changes must be completed and tested
Implementation complexity	Current advantage: No structural implementation required	Higher: Leadership, funding, governance, legal, workforce, administrative, and systems dependencies must be coordinated
Overall implementation risk	**Lower risk:** Preserves the functioning organizational structure	**Higher risk:** Transition introduces additional dependencies and risks that must be managed while preserving current strengths and service continuity

Measures of Success

Implementation success should be measured not only by completion of the organizational transition, but by the City's readiness to assume new responsibilities without degrading service. If restructuring is pursued, transition should occur only when the workforce, governance, systems, funding, legal requirements, and operational interfaces necessary to support the new structure are demonstrably in place.

Table 19: Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity Measures of Success

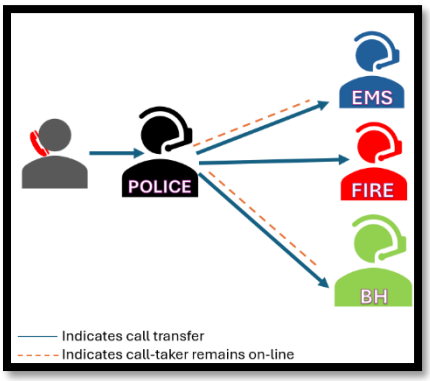
Measure	Success Looks Like
Operational continuity	Emergency communications services remain uninterrupted and baseline call-taking performance is protected
Organizational readiness	Leadership, staffing, administrative support, policies, funding, and infrastructure are established before operational responsibility transfers
Workforce readiness	Employees receive timely, clear information and staffing stability is monitored throughout transition
Interagency readiness	Discipline-specific authority, operating interfaces, communication mechanisms, and escalation paths are documented before transition
Systems readiness	Required access, security, licensing, network, administrative, and support changes are tested and operational
Legal and labor readiness	Applicable legal, civil service, labor, certification, and regulatory requirements are identified, addressed, and confirmed before affected responsibilities transfer
Implementation sequencing	Dependencies are completed in a deliberate sequence rather than introducing multiple avoidable changes simultaneously
Performance safeguards	Baseline measures and defined transition thresholds allow performance degradation to be identified quickly and corrective action to occur before subsequent implementation steps proceed

4.9 Customer Experience and Public Confidence

People who call 911 are often experiencing stressful, uncertain, or traumatic circumstances and expect the emergency communications professional who answers to understand the situation and connect them with the appropriate resources, including police, fire, EMS, or mental health services. Poor communication, confusion, unnecessary transfers, or duplicate questioning can compound an already difficult experience.

Operational effectiveness, coordination, and discipline-specific expertise all contribute to the caller experience but are evaluated separately in this report. For this criterion, customer experience focuses on the caller's point of access to the system: whether callers can readily reach the appropriate service, whether transfers create unnecessary repetition or confusion, whether residents understand the services available through 911, and whether the overall experience supports public confidence.

Call Intake and the Caller Experience



Callers reaching a co-located environment should not be required to repeat information unnecessarily or experience avoidable handoffs. Austin generally performs well in this regard. During onsite observations, MCP found that call takers typically avoided unnecessary questioning and routed callers promptly to the agency responsible for further processing or response.

The current intake process often requires callers to identify whether they need police, fire, EMS, or mental health services. Some callers observed by MCP were uncertain which service was appropriate, particularly when circumstances crossed multiple disciplines. From a customer experience perspective, this places some responsibility for initial routing on the caller.

Within Austin's current discipline-specific operating model, however, this approach also serves an operational purpose. Asking callers to identify the general type of assistance needed allows the call to reach the responsible discipline without requiring the initial call taker to conduct broader questioning that may then be repeated by the receiving agency.

A universal or fully consolidated call-taking model could change this experience by allowing one call taker to assess and process a broader range of incidents across disciplines. Under the current operating model, eliminating caller-directed routing would not necessarily reduce repetition and could instead add another layer of questioning before the caller reaches the discipline responsible for processing the incident.

MCP also observed calls in which the nature of the incident changed or additional discipline-specific needs emerged, requiring rerouting or continued participation by the original call taker. These circumstances can make the caller experience less seamless, but they arise primarily from the underlying operating model rather than the organizational placement of civilian 911 call takers. Moving 911 to a standalone department would not, by itself, eliminate them.

Some significant customer experience concerns also occur outside Austin 911's direct control. These include field-response delays and transfers involving other PSAPs, particularly when calls are affected by jurisdictional boundaries or routing. From the caller's perspective, these situations may still be experienced as part of "911," but changing the organizational placement of Austin's civilian call takers would not directly address the underlying causes.

Public Understanding and Confidence

Austin's emergency communications system has expanded beyond a traditional police, fire, and EMS response model to include mental health and other service pathways. Stakeholder interviews suggest that public understanding may not fully reflect this broader range of response options and that some callers continue to associate 911 primarily with police.

A specific consideration identified during the assessment is Austin 911's initial greeting:

"Austin 911, do you need Police, Fire, EMS, or Mental Health services?"

The greeting is intended to identify the type of assistance needed quickly. From a customer experience perspective, however, it may reinforce the expectation that callers must determine which service is appropriate before describing their circumstances. Any change to the greeting should preserve the efficiency of the existing routing process and avoid introducing additional questioning or duplication.

911 is also presented in some public-facing contexts as Austin PD 911, accurately reflecting its current organizational placement. That presentation may reinforce an association between 911 and police for some residents. A standalone department could provide a more organizationally neutral identity, but the effect of that change on public confidence is uncertain and should not be assumed.

Austin currently lacks systematic customer-satisfaction data sufficient to establish how residents perceive the emergency and non-emergency public safety access system. Direct customer feedback would provide a stronger basis for evaluating public perception, accessibility, satisfaction, and understanding of available services than stakeholder or anecdotal information alone.

Public confidence is likely to be influenced more directly by the experience residents have when accessing the system, their understanding of available services, and whether they believe they will be connected with appropriate assistance. Improvements in public communication, service awareness, and customer feedback can be pursued under either organizational model.

Overall, the current model provides a generally strong caller experience within the portion of the system controlled by Austin 911. A standalone structure would not inherently improve that experience. Its principal customer-facing advantage is the potential for a more neutral organizational identity, while more substantial improvements would depend on changes to the operating model, technology, regional arrangements, workflows, or public communication.

Customer Experience Comparison

Table 20: Customer Experience Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Caller access and routing	Caller identifies police, fire, EMS, or mental health, supporting rapid routing but creating uncertainty for some	No material improvement: Same routing need remains unless the operating model changes
Duplicate questioning	Current strength: Austin generally limits unnecessary repetition within its co-located model	No material improvement: Independence alone does not reduce duplication
Internal rerouting	Some calls require rerouting as incident needs become clearer	No material change: Driven primarily by discipline-specific processing
External PSAP transfers	Can create delay, repetition, and frustration for callers	No material change: Driven by jurisdiction, routing, and regional arrangements
Field response experience	Residents may experience downstream response delays as part of their overall 911 experience	No material change: Independence does not change field resource availability or deployment

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Public identity and understanding	APD placement may reinforce an association between 911 and police for some residents despite broader service options	Potential improvement: More neutral identity, but effect on public awareness or confidence is uncertain
Overall customer experience	**Mixed:** Generally strong within Austin 911's direct control; some caller experience concerns originate outside the call-taking function	**Potential limited benefit:** A more neutral organizational identity could support public understanding or confidence, but the effect is uncertain; independence does not inherently address the operational factors affecting the caller experience

Measures of Success

Customer experience should ultimately be evaluated through the caller's ability to access appropriate assistance with minimal unnecessary complexity, repetition, or confusion. Because several factors affecting the overall 911 experience extend beyond the organizational placement of call takers, success should be measured through both operational performance and direct customer feedback.

Table 21: Customer Experience Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Ease of access	Callers can readily reach and understand how to access appropriate emergency and crisis services
Caller continuity	Avoidable transfers, repetition, and confusion are minimized
Service understanding	Residents understand that 911 can connect them with Police, Fire, EMS, mental health, and other available response options
Customer satisfaction	Systematic feedback demonstrates that callers view the service as accessible, responsive, compassionate, and effective
Public confidence	Residents have confidence that contacting 911 will connect them with appropriate assistance

4.10 Technology and Innovation

Austin's current technology environment includes effective CAD integration, shared communications infrastructure, single-button call transfers, and CAD capabilities that allow another agency to re-engage when a

second discipline is needed during a call. These capabilities are strengths of the current operating environment and should be preserved under either organizational model.

Mission-critical technology is shared across agencies, with ownership and authority distributed among multiple City and regional entities. This environment would remain largely unchanged if civilian 911 call-taking moved to a standalone department. Organizational independence would not transfer ownership or control of the core systems to 911.

A standalone department could provide greater organizational focus and a stronger voice in prioritizing investments specific to the 911 operation. Implementation of those priorities, however, would continue to depend on coordination with the City and regional entities that own, manage, fund, or support the underlying systems. The principal technology-related distinction between the models is therefore one of organizational focus and advocacy rather than technology authority.

Modernization opportunities include technologies that could reduce workload, improve call processing, strengthen QA/QI, and increase access to operational information. Potential capabilities include artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools, transcription and translation, automated QA/QI and call review, workflow automation, and improved system integration. These opportunities can be pursued under either organizational model.

Location and Geographic Routing

Location and geographic routing illustrate the limited effect organizational restructuring would have on some technology-related concerns. GIS data, location information, and routing configurations can affect how wireless calls are routed in an NG911 environment and may contribute to transfers between jurisdictions.

Some of these functions are managed through regional systems and are not under Austin 911's direct authority today; moving civilian call takers to a standalone department would not change that relationship. A review of location and geographic routing could identify opportunities for improvement, but organizational restructuring would not independently resolve interjurisdictional routing or transfer issues.

Operational Analytics

Operational analytics and systemwide reporting represent a significant modernization opportunity. Austin's current environment does not provide a single end-to-end management view of performance across the systems and agencies involved in emergency communications and response. Relevant data reside across multiple systems and organizations, limiting the ability of leadership and policymakers to readily assess systemwide performance from a consistent source.

Cross-functional analytics could integrate relevant telephony, CAD, staffing, transfer, QA/QI, and response information to provide a more complete view of performance. This capability can be developed under either organizational model. The separate question of who should have access to and independently interpret systemwide performance information is a governance consideration addressed elsewhere in this report.

Technology Modernization Roadmap

Potential modernization priorities include cross-functional reporting and analytics, automated QA/QI and call review, workforce management and scheduling, workflow automation, CAD and service integration, enhanced GIS and location intelligence, continued NG911 capabilities, multimedia and incident-data integration, interoperability with 311 and alternative response programs, cybersecurity, and technology resiliency supporting CTECC and the planned CTECC II facility.

A multiyear technology roadmap could establish priorities, replacement cycles, implementation sequencing, system dependencies, cybersecurity requirements, and anticipated operational benefits. Connecting these priorities to operating and capital planning would support a more coordinated approach to technology lifecycle management.

The modernization opportunities identified through this assessment do not depend on moving the civilian call-taking function. Their implementation depends primarily on investment, prioritization, integration, governance, and clear responsibility for technology planning. A standalone department could provide greater focus on 911-specific priorities, but shared-system dependencies and distributed technology authority would remain.

Technology and Innovation Comparison

Table 22: Technology and Innovation Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Core technology	Current strength: Effective CAD integration, shared infrastructure, transfers, and cross-agency re-engagement	No material change: Existing capabilities and system ownership remain
Technology authority	Core systems are distributed across City and regional entities	No material change: Independence does not transfer ownership or control to 911
911 technology prioritization	911 needs compete with broader departmental priorities	Potential improvement: Greater dedicated advocacy and visibility, but not sole implementation authority
Automation and workload-reducing tools	AI, automated QA/QI, workflow automation, and integration are available modernization opportunities	Potential improvement in prioritization: Capabilities are available under either model
GIS and geographic routing	Dependent in part on regional systems and governance	No material change: Independence does not bring routing functions under 911 control
Operational analytics	Significant improvement opportunity: No true end-to-end reporting capability	No inherent structural advantage: Improvement depends on investment, integration, and data access
Modernization planning	Opportunity for more coordinated lifecycle planning	Potential modest improvement: Dedicated 911 focus, but shared-system dependencies remain

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Overall technology capability	**Current strength with identified opportunity:** Core technology is effective; opportunities remain to strengthen modernization planning, prioritization, and end-to-end performance visibility	**Limited direct benefit:** Could provide greater visibility and advocacy for 911-specific technology priorities, but would not change authority over shared City and regional systems or inherently improve modernization capability

Measures of Success

Technology success should be evaluated by whether existing capabilities remain reliable and integrated while modernization investments improve performance, reduce workload, strengthen decision-making, and prepare the system for future requirements. Because core technology is shared across organizational boundaries, success under either model will depend on coordinated planning, clear priorities, system integration, and sustained investment rather than organizational placement alone.

Table 23: Technology and Innovation Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Preserved capabilities	Existing CAD integration, shared infrastructure, transfer, and re-engagement capabilities continue without disruption
Reporting and analytics	Leadership can obtain trusted, integrated performance information across relevant systems
Workload reduction	Technology investments measurably reduce manual work, repetitive tasks, or call-processing burden
Modernization planning	Technology priorities, dependencies, replacement cycles, and operational benefits are managed through a multiyear roadmap
System integration	New capabilities integrate with shared City and regional systems without unnecessary duplication
Resiliency and security	Technology modernization maintains cybersecurity, reliability, and continuity requirements

4.11 Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation

Costs are an important factor in evaluating Austin's future emergency communications model. The current APD structure may provide financial efficiencies by leveraging established leadership, administrative infrastructure, and shared resources. Emergency communications funding also extends beyond APD: City operating funds support personnel, daily operations, and agency-specific systems, while regional resources support shared 911

infrastructure and technology. Major technology and infrastructure investments may also draw from City capital funding, grants, regional partnerships, and other available sources.

Current Financial Environment

Based on the budget information available for this assessment, identified personnel expenditures associated with the 911 function total approximately $8.03 million. Because 911 personnel and supporting resources are embedded within the broader APD budget, the available financial information does not provide a complete accounting of all costs attributable to the function. The personnel estimate therefore represents the best available approximation based on the information reviewed.

These figures do not represent the full cost of Austin's emergency communications environment. Technology, infrastructure, regional 911 services, administrative support, and other costs are funded through multiple City and regional resources.

Table 24: Current 911 Personnel Costs

Current Personnel Measure	Approximate Amount
Regular full-time wages	$6,007,988
Health, life, and dental insurance	$1,705,184
Retirement contributions	$576,780
Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) tax	$376,192
Medicare tax	$87,969
Overtime	$310,410
Educational incentive pay	$211,209
Shift differential	$50,000
Stability pay	$34,400
Bilingual pay	$25,200
Personnel savings incorporated in budget	($1,352,245)
Estimated personnel budget reviewed	**$8,033,087**

Recent workforce investments have coincided with improvements in staffing stability and call-answer performance. Under the current structure, however, 911 staffing, service, and long-term investment needs are considered within the broader APD budget and do not have the same financial visibility they would have as a standalone function. Developing a comprehensive view of current costs and future investment requirements also requires coordination across the multiple budgets and funding sources that support emergency communications.

Standalone Department Cost

A standalone 911 department may provide more budget transparency, dedicated financial planning, and clearer visibility into the cost of delivering 911 services. It would also require dedicated leadership, administrative, specialist, and support capacity and could require functions or resources that are currently shared or absorbed within APD.

MCP developed a rough order of magnitude (ROM) cost estimate for a standalone emergency communications department based on 129 full-time employees: 104 call takers, 12 supervisors, and 13 managers, specialists, and administrative personnel. The estimate also includes identified operating and support requirements[24] necessary to establish and sustain a separate organization.

Table 25: Standalone Department Planning-Level ROM

	Low	High
Personnel wages	$8,669,905	$8,669,905
Benefits	$2,609,389	$2,609,389
Identified recurring operating/support costs	$359,695	$604,695
Combined recurring operating budget	$11,638,989	$11,883,989
One-time setup costs	$191,350	$372,850
Approximate Year 1 combined costs	**$11,830,339**	**$12,256,839**

The most significant structural cost difference is the additional leadership, administrative, specialist, and support capacity associated with an independent department. The ROM therefore includes 13 positions in these functions in addition to the 104 call takers and 12 supervisors.

The estimate also identifies operating and support requirements associated with establishing a purpose-built department.

Table 26: Standalone Operating and Support Requirements

Standalone Operating/Support Requirement	Year 1 Setup	Recurring Annual
QA/QI software	$5,000–$10,000	$35,000–$45,000
Workforce management/scheduling	$20,000–$40,000	$25,000–$45,000
Learning management	$1,500–$3,000	$8,000–$12,000
Document management	$2,000–$5,000	$17,000–$22,000

[24] 36 operational call-taking consoles, 12 office workstations, and a path toward Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) Communications accreditation

Standalone Operating/Support Requirement	Year 1 Setup	Recurring Annual
Professional development	—	$129,000–$258,000[25]
Accreditation fees/audits	$12,850–$14,850	$3,695
Office operations/supplies	—	$45,000–$65,000
Equipment replacement fund	—	$13,000–$15,000
Professional services	$150,000–$300,000	$75,000–$125,000
Onboarding/pre-employment[26]	—	$9,000–$14,000
Approximate Costs	**$191,350–$372,850**	**$359,695–$604,695**

These figures are planning-level estimates rather than a final departmental budget. Most operating and support estimates are based on published fee schedules, executed contracts, approved budgets, or other documented sources; identified assumptions requiring additional validation should be confirmed during implementation planning. Actual costs could also change if existing City systems, contracts, or services can be retained or shared.

The current personnel estimate and standalone ROM should not be treated as a direct, like-for-like cost comparison. The current estimate reflects personnel costs identifiable within the broader APD budget and does not capture the full cost of the existing 911 function. The standalone ROM reflects a defined organizational structure and includes identified operating and support requirements. The analysis nevertheless demonstrates that organizational independence creates additional startup requirements and dedicated leadership, administrative, specialist, and support costs.

Shared-Service Funding and Cost Allocation

A standalone department would also change how the City accounts for the cost of civilian 911 call-taking. Under the current model, the function is funded within APD while serving as the City's initial access point for police, fire, EMS, mental health, alternative response, and other services.

If 911 becomes independent, the City would need to determine how the new department is funded and how the cost of the shared function is reflected across the City's financial structure. Transferring the existing APD allocation could provide base funding, but it would not address the additional costs associated with establishing and operating an independent department.

[25] $1,000 – $2,000 per full-time equivalent (FTE). Professional development investments support continuing education, certifications, specialized training, leadership development to preserve workforce competency, build leadership capacity, and maintain career development opportunities during organizational transition.
[26] Psychological evaluations are not included in the onboarding estimate and could add approximately $6,000–$14,000 annually.

Table 27: Shared Service Funding Approaches

Potential Funding Approach	Consideration
Transfer existing APD 911 funding	Provides base funding but does not address added standalone costs or shared-service allocation
Reallocate among benefiting agencies	Makes participating departments' share of 911 costs explicit
Central City funding	Treats 911 as a Citywide shared service
Combined approach	Uses transferred APD funding, agency allocations, central funding, and other eligible sources

Reallocating costs among departments would not create savings for the City; it would make the cost of the shared service more visible and redistribute that cost across the City's financial structure. Greater transparency should therefore not be confused with greater financial efficiency.

Financial sustainability under a standalone model would require sustainable funding for both the transferred 911 function and the additional leadership, administrative, support, and operating requirements created by independence.

Multiyear Financial Planning

Under either organizational structure, Austin would benefit from a multiyear financial strategy for emergency communications that integrates operating and capital requirements and provides a long-range view of workforce costs, technology investments, maintenance, licensing, cybersecurity, system replacement, resiliency, and emerging service requirements.

A funded multiyear technology roadmap should connect modernization priorities with operating and capital planning and account for implementation costs, recurring licensing and maintenance, lifecycle replacement, and responsible funding sources. Available regional funding, grants, partnerships, cost-sharing arrangements, and other eligible sources should continue to be evaluated where they align with City and regional priorities.

Because many core systems and services are shared across City and regional entities, restructuring would not eliminate these financial dependencies. A standalone department could provide greater visibility and advocacy for 911-specific investments, but shared-system costs and joint funding responsibilities would remain.

The available analysis does not identify restructuring as a cost-saving strategy. The current APD model provides economies of scale and established administrative infrastructure. A standalone department would provide greater financial transparency and dedicated resource planning but would also create additional startup and recurring costs. The financial question is therefore whether the organizational and service benefits of independence identified elsewhere in this assessment justify those additional costs.

Financial Comparison

Table 28: Financial Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Administrative efficiency	Current advantage: Leverages existing APD leadership, support, and infrastructure	Higher cost: Requires dedicated leadership, administrative, specialist, and support capacity
Startup costs	Current advantage: No organizational establishment costs	Higher cost: ROM identifies approximately $191,000–$373,000 in setup costs, once ROM is validated
Recurring costs	Costs are embedded across APD and other resources and cannot be fully isolated	Higher identifiable cost: ROM estimates approximately $11.64–$11.88 million recurring; not directly comparable to current $8.03 million personnel estimate
Budget prioritization	911 needs compete within the broader Police budget	Potential improvement: Dedicated budget consideration, at higher administrative cost
Cost transparency	Full 911 cost is difficult to isolate	Improves: Dedicated budget makes costs more visible; visibility does not create savings
Shared-service allocation	Civilian 911 call-taking is budgeted within APD while serving multiple City response functions	Changes allocation: Requires an explicit City decision about how the shared service is funded
Long-term planning	Incorporated into broader APD financial planning	Potential improvement: Dedicated planning, although achievable under either model
Technology/capital funding	City and regional funding relationships	No material change: Shared-system dependencies remain
Overall financial impact	**Current financial advantage with identified limitation:** Leverages existing administrative infrastructure and shared resources, although the full cost and financial requirements of the 911 function are less readily isolated	**Higher estimated cost with greater visibility:** Provides more transparent 911-specific budgeting and dedicated financial planning, but introduces additional startup and recurring costs; no structural cost savings were identified through this assessment

Measures of Success

Financial sustainability should be evaluated not only by the cost of the organizational structure, but by whether the City can identify, plan for, and sustainably fund the resources necessary to maintain and improve emergency communications over time. Any additional investment associated with organizational change should be supported by measurable operational, workforce, customer, resiliency, or strategic benefits.

Table 29: Financial Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Sustainable operating budget	Ongoing personnel, administrative, technology, and support costs can be funded without recurring shortfalls
Cost transparency	The City can identify the full cost of providing 911 services and how those costs are allocated
Return on investment	Additional expenditures produce measurable operational, workforce, customer, resiliency, or service benefits
Predictable long-term costs	Staffing, technology, facility, maintenance, and lifecycle obligations are incorporated into long-range planning
Funding strategy	Implementation and ongoing operations have clearly identified, sustainable funding sources
Capital and technology planning	Multiyear investment plans align capital and recurring costs with operational priorities and lifecycle requirements

4.12 Future Growth and Scalability

Austin's population grew approximately 4.06% from 2020 to 2025, increasing from an estimated 961,855 residents to more than 1 million.[27] Population growth provides important context for long-term planning but should not be treated as a direct predictor of 911 call volume. Emergency communications demand is influenced by demographic, social, behavioral, and service-delivery factors and may change independently of population growth.

The relevant scalability question is therefore whether the organizational model can accommodate changing demand, workload, staffing, technology, and operational requirements while maintaining service performance. Austin's existing discipline-specific operating model is assumed to remain in place: civilian 911 call takers serve as the primary intake point, fully process Police-related calls, and transfer fire, EMS, and appropriate mental-health calls to Integral Care C3 or other responsible agency for discipline-specific processing.

The current placement of civilian 911 call-taking within APD does not prevent the function from adding staffing, supervision, or operational capacity as demand changes. A standalone department would have the same ability

[27] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/texascitycitytexas,austincitytexas/LND110210

to add capacity. Organizational independence provides no inherent advantage for accommodating additional workload within the existing operating model.

Facility Capacity

Physical capacity presents a more immediate constraint on future growth. CTECC is currently at or near available capacity, limiting meaningful expansion regardless of whether civilian 911 call-taking remains within APD or moves to a standalone department. Organizational restructuring would not resolve this constraint.

The planned CTECC II facility is intended to provide additional capacity and strengthen continuity of operations. That investment is therefore important to Austin's ability to accommodate future staffing and operational needs under either organizational model. Physical scalability depends more directly on available facility capacity than on the organizational placement of civilian 911 call-taking.

Long-Term Capacity and Adaptability

Long-term scalability also depends on the City's ability to anticipate and respond to changes in call volume, workload, staffing requirements, technology, service demand, and continuity needs. These factors can be addressed through workforce planning, technology modernization, facility planning, performance monitoring, and multiyear financial and strategic planning under either organizational model.

Organizational structure may affect how priorities are established and resources are planned, but neither model inherently creates additional operational capacity. The current structure has not been shown to prevent Austin 911 from adapting to changing workload or service demands, while a standalone department would remain dependent on many of the same City and regional technology, facility, funding, and operational relationships.

The organizational model should also retain sufficient flexibility to evaluate potential future requests from other public entities for call-taking support. Any such arrangement would require separate evaluation of operational, staffing, technology, financial, governance, and service-level requirements and is not assumed to be part of this assessment.

From a future-growth perspective, organizational independence is not necessary to accommodate anticipated changes in workload or capacity. Under either model, scalability will depend primarily on effective planning and sustained investment in the workforce, facilities, technology, and operational capabilities required to support Austin 911's call-taking responsibilities.

Future Growth and Scalability Comparison

Table 30: Future Growth and Scalability Comparison

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Future demand and workload	Capable of scaling: Existing structure can add staffing and operational capacity as workload changes	No inherent advantage: Can also add capacity, but independence does not increase capacity for the existing call-taking responsibilities

Factor	Current Structure	Independent PSAP / Standalone
Facility capacity	Current constraint: CTECC limits meaningful physical expansion; CTECC II is intended to provide additional capacity	No material change: Facility capacity and the role of CTECC II remain substantially the same
Planning and adaptability	Capable with identified opportunity: Can respond to changing workload and operational needs; more formal long-term planning could strengthen preparedness	Limited direct benefit: Could provide dedicated organizational focus on 911 planning, but remains dependent on shared City and regional resources and relationships
Overall scalability	**Current capacity with planning opportunity**: Existing structure can accommodate changing workload and capacity needs; continued workforce, facility, technology, and financial planning will be required	**Limited direct benefit:** Independence does not inherently increase operational or physical capacity; scalability would continue to depend primarily on planning, resources, facilities, and technology

Measures of Success

Scalability should be evaluated by the organization's ability to accommodate changing call volume, workload, staffing, technology, and facility needs while maintaining service performance. Under either organizational model, success depends on anticipating capacity requirements and aligning workforce, infrastructure, technology, and financial planning with changing operational demands.

Table 31: Future Growth and Scalability Measures of Success

Measure	Success Looks Like
Workload scalability	Staffing and operational capacity can adjust to changing call volume and workload without requiring organizational restructuring
Facility capacity	CTECC II or other planned capacity supports future staffing, operations, resiliency, and continuity needs
Workforce capacity	Staffing plans account for changing workload, coverage, training, leave, turnover, and other operational requirements
Technology capacity	Technology and supporting infrastructure can accommodate changing workload and operational requirements without degrading service
Long-term planning	Workforce, facility, technology, operating, and financial needs are evaluated through coordinated multiyear planning

4.13 Feasibility Assessment Summary

The feasibility assessment indicates that Austin's current emergency communications structure provides a strong foundation for continued improvement. The existing model preserves established operational relationships, discipline-specific alignment, workforce stability, shared technology, and administrative efficiencies that support the current emergency communications environment.

The assessment also identified potential advantages associated with an independent PSAP, including greater structural neutrality, dedicated organizational focus, and increased visibility of 911-specific priorities. These potential advantages must be considered alongside the additional organizational interfaces, administrative requirements, costs, governance needs, and transition risks associated with establishing a separate department.

Importantly, organizational independence does not inherently change the operating model. Moving civilian 911 call-taking to a standalone department would not, by itself, change call-processing responsibilities, eliminate discipline-specific transfers, change dispatch responsibilities, consolidate technology authority, address field response factors, or resolve regional routing and coordination issues. Improvements in these areas depend more directly on changes to governance, operations, technology, staffing, workflows, and interagency coordination.

The assessment identified several opportunities for improvement that can be pursued without changing the organizational placement of civilian 911 call-taking. These include professional civilian emergency communications leadership, stronger leadership and cross-agency coordination, comprehensive QA/QI, end-to-end analytics and performance visibility, technology modernization, improved call flows, stronger 911/311 coordination, public engagement, and long-term planning for changing workload and capacity needs.

The findings therefore support consideration of an approach that combines targeted organizational change and modernization efforts while preserving Austin's existing discipline-specific operating model. Section 5 describes this alternative approach, and Section 6 compares the organizational options and presents MCP's recommendation.

5 Alternative Organizational Approach

The feasibility assessment identified opportunities to strengthen Austin's emergency communications environment without establishing a separate 911 department. Based on these findings, MCP developed an alternative organizational approach that combines professional civilian emergency communications leadership with targeted modernization efforts while retaining civilian 911 call-taking within APD.

The approach is intended to preserve demonstrated operational and workforce strengths while addressing identified opportunities in leadership, cross-agency coordination, QA/QI, performance management, operations, technology, and long-term planning. The following sections describe the professional civilian leadership model, targeted modernization efforts, and associated planning-level costs.

5.1 Professional Civilian Emergency Communications Leadership

A central element of the alternative approach is placing Austin's 911 call-taking function under professional civilian emergency communications leadership within APD. The role would report directly to the chief of police and operate alongside existing APD leadership, providing dedicated emergency communications expertise, organizational focus, and continuity for the 911 call-taking function.

The civilian emergency communications leader would be responsible for the management and strategic direction of civilian 911 call-taking, including workforce management, training, QA/QI, performance management, operational planning, and coordination of technology and process improvements affecting the function. The role would also provide a consistent point of coordination for issues involving 911 and its relationship with APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, 311, and other City partners.

The recommended scope does not change existing discipline-specific operational responsibilities. Civilian call takers would continue to answer incoming 911 calls, fully process police-related calls, and transfer fire, EMS, and appropriate mental health calls to the responsible agency for discipline-specific processing. Police dispatch would remain under its current leadership, while AFD, ATCEMS, and Integral Care C3 would retain their existing communications responsibilities.

This structure is intended to strengthen professional leadership of the civilian 911 function while maintaining its direct organizational relationship with APD. With clearly defined authority, appropriate resources, and support from the chief of police, the civilian emergency communications leader could also facilitate cross-agency initiatives and provide a broader emergency communications perspective without assuming operational authority over participating agencies.

The recommended scope is limited to civilian 911 call-taking. Any future expansion of the role's responsibilities, including potential oversight of Police dispatch, would require separate evaluation and City decision-making and is not part of the organizational approach recommended in this report.

5.2 Targeted Modernization Efforts

The professional civilian leadership model would be supported by targeted modernization efforts focused on the operational and system-level opportunities identified through the feasibility assessment. These efforts do not change Austin's discipline-specific operating model or transfer responsibilities among participating agencies. Rather, they focus on strengthening the processes, capabilities, and coordination that support the existing emergency communications environment.

Modernization efforts span governance and cross-agency coordination, operations and call flow, analytics and performance visibility, QA/QI, technology, 911/311 coordination, public engagement, and long-term planning. Some initiatives can be advanced through policy, workflow, coordination, or use of existing resources, while others may require additional staffing, technology investment, procurement, or funding.

Table 32: Current Structure with Targeted Modernization Efforts

Enhancement	Proposed Approach	Intended Outcome
Cross-Agency Coordination	Formalize cross-agency coordination for issues, initiatives, and workflows affecting multiple CTECC agencies **Actions:** Establish a regular coordination forum with appropriate representatives from participating agencies; define its purpose and scope; document shared issues, decisions, action items, and escalation needs; and use the forum to coordinate initiatives affecting multiple agencies	Supports more consistent cross-agency coordination, clearer responsibility for shared initiatives, continuity as leadership changes, and timely resolution of issues affecting multiple agencies

Enhancement	Proposed Approach	Intended Outcome
Operations and Call Flow	Refine call-intake, transfer, and multidiscipline workflows within the existing discipline-specific operating model **Actions:** Evaluate and, where appropriate, eliminate successive ACD greetings; review the initial 911 greeting; refine transfer language; clarify workflows and continued engagement on multidiscipline calls	Supports more efficient call flow and reduced unnecessary duplication Provide opportunities for a more seamless caller experience and more discipline-neutral intake May allow call takers to disengage earlier when their role in an incident is complete
Analytics and Performance Visibility	Develop end-to-end operational analytics **Actions:** Identify common performance measures; establish appropriate access to relevant data, integrate telephony, CAD, staffing, transfer, QA/QI, and response information into system-level reporting and executive dashboards when practicable	Provides greater visibility into performance across the emergency communications and response continuum Supports evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Establish comprehensive QA/QI for civilian 911 call-taking and system-level review of relevant cross-agency interfaces **Actions:** Establish dedicated QA/QI capacity within APD; use applicable APCO and NENA standards to inform program development; review selected incidents, transfers, handoffs, and service pathways; use findings to inform training, policy, and coaching	Provides more consistent and objective performance information Strengthens the connection among QA/QI, training, policy, and employee development while preserving discipline-specific QA/QI responsibility within each agency
Technology and Systems	Prioritize technology investments intended to reduce workload, improve workflows, strengthen information sharing, and address identified routing or system issues **Examples:** Automated Secure Alarm Protocol (ASAP), AI-supported QA/QI, call-processing workflow automation; and coordination with CAPCOG or other system owners where authority resides externally	Focuses technology investment on identified operational needs Supports interoperability, improved information flow, and opportunities to reduce routing or workflow inefficiencies

Enhancement	Proposed Approach	Intended Outcome
911/311 Coordination	Clarify and streamline routing and reporting pathways between 911 and 311 **Examples:** Review transfer criteria and telephone-reporting workflows; improve information sharing where feasible; evaluate automation or self-service options for appropriate 311 requests	Supports efforts to reduce avoidable transfers and caller confusion Simplifies navigation of emergency and non-emergency service pathways Provides opportunities to reduce unnecessary call processing and associated workload
Public Engagement and Customer Understanding	Strengthen public communication regarding 911 as an access point to the broader public safety system **Examples:** Update public-facing references from APD 911 to Austin 911 where appropriate; expand education regarding 911, 311, Integral Care C3, and other response options; more consistently include 911 in City and public safety communications	Supports greater understanding of available services and appropriate use of 911 Helps establish clearer expectations regarding available service pathways Reinforces 911's role as a civilian access point to the broader public safety system
Adaptability and Long-Term Planning	Strengthen long-term planning for changing service demands and capacity needs within the existing operating model **Examples:** Develop a multiyear emergency communications strategy; incorporate workforce, technology, facility, service capacity, and investment needs into long-range planning	Supports the City's ability to anticipate and plan for changing needs while maintaining the existing discipline-specific operating model

These modernization efforts are intended to address identified opportunities without changing the organizational ownership of discipline-specific functions. Implementation requirements will vary by initiative and may include policy changes, staff time, additional personnel, technology investment, procurement, or cross-agency coordination.

5.3 Targeted Organizational and Modernization Efforts Costs

The alternative organizational approach includes incremental costs associated with professional civilian emergency communications leadership and targeted modernization efforts. Some costs may be distributed across existing departmental or City resources, while others may require new funding. MCP is not assigning financial responsibility for individual elements; the purpose of this analysis is to identify planning-level costs associated with implementing the recommended approach.

Several modernization efforts may be advanced primarily through staff time, policy development, coordination, or administrative effort rather than through a distinct new expenditure. Others may require dedicated staffing, software, technology investment, professional services, or public-engagement resources. Table 33 summarizes the currently identifiable planning-level costs associated with the approach.

Table 33: Targeted Organizational and Modernization Efforts Requirements

Targeted Improvement	One-Time Setup	Recurring Annual
Professional Civilian Emergency Communications Leadership (includes salary and benefits)	N/A	$176,850–$229,250
Cross-Agency Coordination	Primarily staff time / existing resources	Primarily staff time / existing resources
Operations and Call Flow	Primarily staff time / existing resources	Primarily staff time / existing resources
Analytics and Performance Visibility	TBD	TBD
QA/QI Staff (salaries and benefits for 1 Manager and 3 Evaluators)	N/A	$410,110
QA/QI Software	$5,000–$10,000	$35,000–$45,000
Technology and Systems[28]	TBD	TBD
911/311 Coordination	Primarily staff time / existing resources	Primarily staff time / existing resources
Public Engagement and Customer Understanding[29]	N/A	$50,000+
Adaptability and Long-Term Planning	Primarily staff time / existing resources	Primarily staff time / existing resources
Professional Services	$50,000	$50,000
Approximate Costs	**$55,000–$60,000+**	**$721,960–$784,360+**

[28] Technology and systems costs will depend on the capabilities selected and the extent to which existing City or regional platforms can be used. Illustrative estimates include approximately $100,000 annually for AI-supported QA/QI; ASAP implementation costs remain to be determined.
[29] Public engagement costs will vary based on the scope of outreach, use of internal City resources, and the extent to which external communications or engagement support is required.

The figures in Table 33 are planning-level estimates intended to illustrate the currently identifiable incremental costs associated with the recommended approach. Actual costs will depend on final staffing decisions, technology selections, procurement methods, use of existing City resources, and the extent to which capabilities can be supported through existing departmental or shared resources. Items identified as TBD or otherwise dependent on future decisions will require additional validation during implementation planning.

6 Comparative Evaluation and Recommendations

Three organizational options for APD's civilian 911 call-taking function are considered in this comparative evaluation. Although the study considered the potential benefits of a broader unified emergency communications model, legal, civil service, labor, collective bargaining, accreditation, credentialing, clinical oversight, and operational requirements shaped the scope of the organizational options evaluated under current conditions. The analysis therefore assumes no change to discipline-specific fire and EMS functions or to Police dispatch, which remain subject to their existing statutory, labor, credentialing, and operational frameworks.

Each option was evaluated against its ability to support operational effectiveness, interagency coordination, governance, customer experience, accountability, QA/QI, workforce stability, training and workforce development, preservation of discipline-specific expertise, technology, scalability, financial sustainability, operational resiliency, legal and regulatory compliance, and implementation feasibility and risk.

This analysis distinguishes organizational placement from operational performance. Changing where civilian 911 call takers report would not, by itself, address factors such as field response times, resource availability, dispatch queues, technology limitations, alternative response capacity, or coordination among APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, 311, and other service providers. Improvements in QA/QI, performance reporting, call routing, and customer experience also depend on complementary governance, operational, workforce, and technology changes.

Each option was therefore considered based on its potential to support measurable improvement, preserve recent staffing and operational gains, maintain specialized public safety expertise, support continuity of service during implementation, and provide a sustainable framework for changing workload, capacity, technology, and service demands.

Option A. Maintain Current Organizational Placement with Targeted Modernization Efforts

- Primary 911 call-taking functions remain under APD oversight, with the addition of a professional civilian leader reporting to the chief of police overseeing those operations, while targeted structural, performance management, technology, and operational enhancements are implemented.

Option B. Maintain Current Organizational Structure/ No Changes

- Primary 911 call-taking function remains under APD oversight with existing agency structures and coordination practices unchanged.

Option C. Create Standalone PSAP / Independent Department (Resolution 20250813-18)

- Primary 911 call-taking functions move from APD oversight to a standalone City department, while discipline-specific dispatch remains with the existing agencies.

6.1 Comparative Evaluation Matrix

To identify the organizational approach best positioned to support Austin's 911 call-taking function, the feasibility study compared the three options described above. The evaluation considers the extent to which each option preserves demonstrated strengths, addresses identified gaps, introduces new risks or complexity, and supports the City's long-term emergency communications objectives.

The options were evaluated across the key criteria examined throughout the study (Table 34). The assessment recognizes that organizational structure alone does not determine performance; many opportunities identified through the study are influenced more directly by leadership, governance, staffing, training, QA/QI, technology, workflows, and management practices.

The following evaluation scale provides a consistent framework for interpreting the comparative assessment. Ratings range from Strong Advantage, where an option provides or preserves a demonstrated strength, to

Disadvantage, where it creates or retains a material weakness, cost, risk, or complexity. A Mixed rating indicates that an option provides meaningful benefits and material tradeoffs.

Evaluation Scale
Strong Advantage — Provides or preserves a demonstrated strength under the criterion
Advantage — Provides a meaningful benefit or improvement
Neutral — No meaningful advantage or disadvantage
Mixed — Provides meaningful benefits and meaningful tradeoffs
Disadvantage — Creates or retains a material weakness, cost, risk, or complexity

Table 34 applies this scale across the study criteria. The comparison is intended to show the relative advantages and tradeoffs of each option rather than serve as a numerical ranking. Taken together, the results provide the basis for identifying the approach that offers the strongest overall balance of operational benefit, organizational sustainability, financial impact, and implementation risk while preserving the City's long-term emergency communications needs.

Table 34: Comparative Evaluation

Evaluation Criterion	Option A Maintain Current Organizational Placement with Targeted Modernization Efforts	Option B Maintain Current Structure / No Changes	Option C Create Standalone PSAP / Independent Department
Legal and Regulatory Considerations	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves established legal and discipline-specific structures without transferring the 911 call-taking function or creating a separate regulatory framework	**Strong Advantage** — Continues operating within established legal, labor, licensing, and regulatory structures	**Mixed** — Civilian 911 transfer appears achievable based on requirements identified in this assessment but would introduce additional administrative and regulatory requirements; broader fire and EMS constraints remain
Discipline-Specific Expertise and Service Delivery	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves discipline-specific authority and existing expertise while supporting targeted system improvements	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves specialized expertise embedded in the current model	**Disadvantage** — Separates civilian police call-taking from APD dispatch and operational authority, while AFD and ATCEMS retain discipline-specific call processing and dispatch within their respective agencies; law enforcement requirements, expertise, and training alignment would therefore need to be maintained across a new organizational boundary
Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves established operational relationships while supporting more formal coordination across agencies and directly addressing identified 911/311 and cross-agency workflow opportunities	**Advantage** — Established relationships, co-location, and shared technology support effective coordination, although identified opportunities for more formal coordination remain	**Mixed** — Preserves existing technical and operational interoperability but does not inherently address identified coordination gaps and adds a new organizational interface between civilian police call-taking and APD

Evaluation Criterion	Option A Maintain Current Organizational Placement with Targeted Modernization Efforts	Option B Maintain Current Structure / No Changes	Option C Create Standalone PSAP / Independent Department
Operational Effectiveness	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves demonstrated operational strengths while targeting identified call flow, performance management, and process opportunities	**Advantage** — Current structure supports effective performance, although identified improvement opportunities remain	**Mixed** — Core call-taking responsibilities remain substantially unchanged while coordination requirements with APD increase
Workforce Sustainability and Professional Development	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves recent workforce gains while adding professional civilian leadership and supporting continued workforce development	**Advantage** — Preserves demonstrated near-term workforce stability; senior communications-specific career progression remains more limited	**Mixed** — Could expand communications-specific career and leadership opportunities but introduces near-term transition and organizational identity risk
Governance[30]	**Strong Advantage** — Adds professional civilian emergency communications leadership and dedicated accountability for the 911 call-taking function while retaining APD operational alignment and existing discipline-specific authority	**Mixed** — Maintains established authority and accountability through APD but does not provide dedicated professional civilian leadership for the 911 call-taking function	**Mixed** — Establishes dedicated civilian 911 leadership and greater structural independence but separates police call-taking from APD operational authority and creates additional organizational interfaces requiring clearly defined decision rights and accountability

[30] For purposes of this evaluation, Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration addresses how participating agencies work together operationally, including workflows, handoffs, and cross-agency coordination. Governance addresses leadership, authority, accountability, decision rights, and organizational responsibility for the 911 call-taking function.

Evaluation Criterion	Option A Maintain Current Organizational Placement with Targeted Modernization Efforts	Option B Maintain Current Structure / No Changes	Option C Create Standalone PSAP / Independent Department
Training and QA/QI	**Strong Advantage** — Preserves the established training structure while adding dedicated QA/QI capacity and stronger performance feedback mechanisms	**Mixed** — Preserves an established training program; dedicated QA/QI capacity and formal feedback loops remain improvement opportunities	**Mixed** — Could provide greater dedicated focus on training and QA/QI but adds organizational capacity and discipline-specific coordination requirements; QA/QI improvement is not dependent on organizational structure
Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity	**Advantage** — Allows professional civilian leadership and targeted modernization to be implemented without transferring the civilian call-taking function to a separate department	**Strong Advantage** — Avoids structural transition and associated implementation risk	**Disadvantage** — Requires organizational transition involving additional administrative, workforce, governance, and operational dependencies
Customer Experience and Public Confidence	**Advantage** — Directly targets identified call flow, service awareness, and public communication opportunities	**Mixed** — Preserves a generally strong caller experience within 911's direct control, while identified customer experience opportunities remain	**Mixed** — Could provide a more organizationally neutral identity, but the effect on public understanding or confidence is uncertain and operational factors affecting caller experience remain
Technology and Innovation	**Advantage** — Targets identified modernization, analytics, automation, and workflow opportunities while preserving existing technology relationships	**Mixed** — Preserves a strong technology foundation, while modernization and end-to-end analytics opportunities remain	**Neutral** — Could provide greater visibility for 911-specific priorities but would not change authority over shared City and regional systems

Evaluation Criterion	Option A Maintain Current Organizational Placement with Targeted Modernization Efforts	Option B Maintain Current Structure / No Changes	Option C Create Standalone PSAP / Independent Department
Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation	**Mixed** — Requires targeted investment while leveraging existing administrative infrastructure and shared resources; planning-level incremental costs remain subject to final decisions ROM: $800,000+	**Neutral** — Preserves existing administrative infrastructure and avoids incremental costs associated with study-driven organizational changes; existing limitations in cost visibility remain ROM: No change	**Disadvantage** — Improves financial visibility but adds costs without identified operational savings ROM: Higher incremental cost; see Section 4.11
Future Growth and Scalability	**Mixed** — Strengthens long-term planning for changing workload and capacity needs while retaining civilian 911 within APD; future City decisions affecting APD or civilian 911 oversight could require reevaluation of the structure	**Mixed** — Can accommodate changing workload and capacity needs within the existing operating environment but does not address identified long-term planning opportunities; future City decisions affecting APD could require reevaluation	**Mixed** —Provides organizational separation from APD, which could offer greater flexibility if future City decisions affect APD or civilian 911 oversight; independence does not otherwise increase staffing, facility, technology, or operational capacity

6.2 Recommended Model

Based on the comparative evaluation, MCP recommends that primary 911 call-taking remain within APD under professional civilian emergency communications leadership, supported by targeted modernization efforts. This approach provides the strongest overall balance between preserving demonstrated strengths and addressing the improvement opportunities identified through the feasibility assessment.

Austin's current model has demonstrated strong call-answer performance, improved workforce stability, established interagency relationships, and direct alignment between civilian police call-taking and APD operational requirements. The assessment also found that many identified improvement opportunities are not dependent on establishing a separate department. An independent PSAP would not, by itself, change core call-processing responsibilities, downstream response factors, discipline-specific expertise, or authority over shared technology, and would introduce additional cost, organizational interfaces, administrative requirements, and transition risk.

The comparative evaluation supports retaining civilian 911 call-taking within APD under professional civilian emergency communications leadership rather than establishing a standalone 911 department.

The recommended approach therefore focuses City investment and organizational effort on the areas where the assessment identified meaningful opportunities for improvement. These include strengthening professional civilian emergency communications leadership; strengthening cross-agency coordination, QA/QI, and performance management; improving call flow, customer access, and service navigation; advancing technology and analytics. These efforts are intended to address identified gaps while preserving the operational relationships, workforce stability, discipline-specific expertise, and shared infrastructure that support the current system.

Maintaining civilian 911 call-taking within APD does not mean maintaining the status quo. The recommendation introduces professional civilian emergency communications leadership for the function and calls for targeted modernization supported by clearly defined responsibilities, measurable performance objectives, appropriate investment, and phased implementation. Progress should be evaluated against established baseline measures to assess the effects of these changes on call processing, quality, workforce performance, coordination, and customer experience and to inform subsequent implementation decisions.

The recommended approach does not preclude future reconsideration of organizational structure. Changes in service demand, City priorities, conditions affecting APD or civilian 911 oversight, or system performance could warrant reevaluation in the future. Strengthened leadership, QA/QI, analytics, and performance visibility would provide additional information to support that assessment. In the near term, the recommended approach provides a lower cost and lower transition risk path for addressing the principal opportunities identified through this study than establishing a standalone PSAP (911 department).

6.3 Recommendations

The comparative evaluation identified several actions to support the recommended organizational approach and address the targeted modernization efforts described in Section 5. These recommendations focus on professional civilian emergency communications leadership, cross-agency coordination, QA/QI and performance management, operations, technology, customer experience, and workforce sustainability.

The recommendations are intended to build on Austin's demonstrated strengths while addressing identified gaps through professional civilian leadership and targeted modernization. Implementation requirements, timing, responsible parties, and resource needs are further addressed in Section 7.

6.3.1 Professional Civilian Emergency Communications Leadership

MCP recommends establishing professional civilian emergency communications leadership for Austin's 911 call-taking function within APD. The recommendation builds on, rather than replaces, the civilian operational management already in place. Under the current structure, civilian operations managers and supervisors provide day-to-day management of the 911 function, with the leadership chain continuing through sworn APD command. The recommended model would establish a civilian emergency communications professional with responsibility for the 911 call-taking function who reports directly to the chief of police and operates alongside existing APD leadership.

The role should have clearly defined responsibility and authority for the management and strategic direction of civilian 911 call-taking, while existing operational managers continue to support day-to-day supervision and operations within the resulting structure. Responsibilities at the senior leadership level should include workforce strategy, training, QA/QI, performance management, operational planning, and coordination of technology modernization and process changes affecting the function. This structure would provide dedicated professional emergency communications leadership at the senior level while maintaining access to APD leadership and alignment with APD operational requirements.

The recommended leadership structure does not change Austin's discipline-specific operating model. Civilian 911 call takers would continue to answer incoming 911 calls, fully process police-related calls, and transfer fire, EMS, and appropriate mental health calls to the responsible agency for discipline-specific processing. Police dispatch would remain under its current leadership, while AFD, ATCEMS, and Integral Care C3 would retain their existing communications responsibilities and operational authority.

The civilian emergency communications leader should also serve as a consistent point of coordination for matters involving 911 and its relationships with APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, 311, and other City partners. The position could facilitate initiatives and help identify and escalate issues that cross organizational boundaries but would not exercise operational authority over participating agencies. Cross-agency matters should continue to be addressed through the appropriate departmental leadership and coordination mechanisms.

Effective implementation of this model will depend on clearly defining the position's authority, responsibilities, reporting relationship, and interfaces with existing APD leadership before the role is established. The City should also identify the professional qualifications and emergency communications experience appropriate for the position so that the role provides the specialized leadership contemplated by this recommendation.

The recommended scope is limited to civilian 911 call-taking and does not change the current leadership of Police dispatch. In the future, the City could evaluate whether placing Police dispatch under the professional civilian emergency communications leader would provide operational or organizational benefit. Any such change would require separate evaluation and City decision-making and is not part of the current recommendation.

6.3.2 Operations and Cross-Agency Coordination

MCP recommends formalizing cross-agency coordination and continuing to refine the operational interfaces among Austin 911, APD, AFD, ATCEMS, Integral Care C3, 311, and other participating service providers. The objective is not to change discipline-specific authority or call-processing responsibilities, but to strengthen coordination where calls, information, and responsibilities move across organizational boundaries. The

recommended model preserves the existing discipline-specific operating structure while creating a new civilian leadership role for the 911 call-taking function. Cross-agency and intra-APD coordination should therefore remain an explicit focus as the leadership model is implemented.

Austin's existing relationships, co-location, shared technology, and established workflows provide a strong foundation for this effort. A regular cross-agency coordination forum should provide a consistent mechanism for identifying shared operational issues, coordinating initiatives, documenting responsibilities and action items, and escalating matters that require departmental or executive resolution. Participation should reflect the agencies and functions affected by the issues being addressed, and the forum should support coordination rather than exercise operational authority over participating organizations.

Operational modernization should also focus on the points in the call process where avoidable delay, repetition, or confusion can occur. Austin should review call-intake and transfer practices, successive ACD greetings, the initial 911 greeting, transfer language, and continued call-taker engagement during multidiscipline incidents. Changes should be evaluated within the existing operating model, in which Austin 911 answers incoming 911 calls, fully processes Police-related calls, and transfers Fire, EMS, and appropriate mental-health calls for discipline-specific processing.

The City should similarly review the interface between 911 and 311, including transfer criteria, telephone-reporting workflows, information sharing, and opportunities for automation or self-service where appropriate. The purpose is to make emergency and non-emergency service pathways easier to navigate and reduce avoidable handling or transfers without shifting responsibilities among agencies.

The professional civilian emergency communications leader should have a central role in advancing operational matters affecting Austin 911 and participating in cross-agency coordination. Responsibility for implementing changes, however, should remain with the department or agency that has authority over the affected function. Clearly defined ownership, escalation paths, and follow-through will be important to maintaining progress on initiatives that cross organizational boundaries.

6.3.3 QA/QI, Performance Management, and Analytics

MCP recommends establishing a comprehensive QA/QI program for Austin's civilian 911 call-taking function and strengthening performance management and analytics across the emergency communications environment. The program should provide consistent measurement of call-taking performance, support employee development, and create a systematic connection among QA/QI findings, training, coaching, policy, and operational practices.

Dedicated QA/QI capacity should be established within Austin 911 to support systematic call review, performance trending, and feedback. Program development should be informed by applicable APCO and NENA standards and should establish defined measures, review criteria, documentation practices, and reporting expectations. QA/QI should evaluate both individual and aggregate performance so that recurring trends can be distinguished from isolated events and addressed through the appropriate training, coaching, policy, or operational response.

Performance management should extend beyond individual call review. Austin should establish a defined set of KPIs that provides visibility into call-answer performance, call processing, transfers, routing, quality, workload, and other measures relevant to the 911 function. Baseline measures should be established so that performance can be monitored over time and the effects of modernization efforts can be assessed.

The City should also strengthen performance visibility across the broader emergency communications and response continuum. Because responsibility for call processing, dispatch, and field response is distributed among multiple agencies, end-to-end performance reporting should be developed collaboratively and should

distinguish the portions of the process controlled or influenced by Austin 911 from those affected by discipline-specific dispatch, field staffing, incident priority, resource availability, and other downstream factors. Participating agencies should retain responsibility for their own operational performance and discipline-specific QA/QI.

The professional civilian emergency communications leader should use QA/QI findings and performance information to support management of the 911 call-taking function and should participate in collaborative efforts to improve cross-agency performance visibility. Development of shared reporting should be subject to appropriate data access, security, ownership, and governance requirements and should not imply operational oversight of participating agencies.

6.3.4 Technology Modernization

MCP recommends developing a coordinated technology modernization strategy that builds on Austin's existing technology foundation and prioritizes capabilities that support the operational, performance management, and customer experience opportunities identified through the assessment. Technology investments should be driven by defined operational needs and measurable objectives rather than organizational structure alone.

Near-term priorities should include evaluating technologies that can reduce manual workload, improve call-processing workflows, strengthen information sharing, and support QA/QI and performance analytics. Opportunities identified through the assessment include ASAP-to-PSAP, AI-supported QA/QI, call-processing workflow automation, enhanced reporting and analytics, and improvements to information exchange across systems. Individual technologies should be evaluated based on operational benefit, integration requirements, security, reliability, cost, and the ability to support existing workflows before implementation.

Technology planning should also address routing and location-related issues that affect call processing but are not controlled solely by Austin 911. Where authority or system ownership resides with other City departments, regional entities, or service providers, Austin 911 should work through the appropriate technical and operational relationships to identify issues, evaluate potential changes, and coordinate implementation. Organizational changes to the 911 function would not, by themselves, alter these external dependencies.

The City should develop a multiyear technology roadmap that identifies priorities, dependencies, anticipated replacement and lifecycle needs, implementation sequencing, cybersecurity and resiliency requirements, and planning-level costs. The roadmap should be coordinated with operating and capital planning so that technology decisions account for both initial investment and ongoing licensing, maintenance, support, and replacement requirements.

The professional civilian emergency communications leader should provide operational input into technology priorities affecting Austin 911 and coordinate with APD, City technology resources, participating response agencies, regional partners, and other system owners as appropriate. Responsibility and decision authority for shared technology should remain with the entities that own, manage, fund, or support those systems.

6.3.5 Customer Experience, Public Engagement, and Long-Term Planning

MCP recommends strengthening the customer-facing aspects of Austin's emergency communications environment while establishing a more deliberate approach to long-term planning. These efforts should focus on helping residents understand how to access available services, reducing avoidable friction as callers move through the emergency and non-emergency response system, and preparing the 911 function for changing workload, workforce, facility, technology, and capacity needs.

Public communication should more clearly describe 911 as a civilian access point to Austin's broader public safety and response system. Where appropriate, public-facing references should identify the function as Austin

911 rather than APD 911, while accurately reflecting its organizational placement within APD. Public education should also help residents understand when and how to access 911, 311, Integral Care C3, and other available response options. These efforts are intended to support greater awareness of service pathways and more accurate expectations about what occurs after a caller contacts 911.

The City should also consider mechanisms for obtaining more direct information about the caller experience. Because this assessment relied primarily on stakeholder engagement rather than direct community input, future customer experience efforts could include appropriately designed feedback, outreach, or other methods for identifying recurring concerns and evaluating public understanding of available service pathways. Findings from these efforts could inform public education, operational practices, and future modernization priorities.

Long-term planning should address the capacity required to sustain Austin's existing 911 call-taking responsibilities as conditions change. A multiyear emergency communications strategy should consider projected workload, staffing and workforce development, facility capacity, technology lifecycle needs, resiliency, and anticipated operating and capital requirements. Planning should be informed by performance trends and should be revisited periodically as demand, technology, and City priorities evolve.

The planned CTECC II facility should be incorporated into this planning as a capacity and continuity resource rather than treated as an organizational solution. Facility, workforce, technology, and financial planning should be coordinated so that future capacity decisions reflect the operational requirements of the 911 function and the broader emergency communications environment.

7 Implementation Strategies

The recommended approach—professional civilian emergency communications leadership with targeted modernization—should be implemented through a phased program that preserves Austin's demonstrated organizational and operational strengths while establishing the leadership, QA/QI, performance management, operational, technology, and coordination capabilities described in Section 6. Because civilian 911 call-taking would remain within APD, implementation can proceed without transferring the function to a separate department or establishing the administrative structure required for a new City department.

Implementation should begin by establishing ownership and accountability for the modernization program. Early actions should include defining and initiating establishment of the professional civilian emergency communications leadership role, designating an implementation lead, formalizing cross-agency coordination, establishing baseline performance measures, and developing the implementation workplan, resource requirements, and project controls. Subsequent phases can then establish core QA/QI and performance management capabilities and advance prioritized operational and technology modernization efforts.

Project management, risk management, change management, stakeholder engagement, and performance monitoring should support implementation throughout the roadmap. Defined readiness gates should be used to assess progress, address dependencies and risks, and determine whether the activities necessary to advance to the next phase are sufficiently established.

Table 35: Implementation Focus

Implementation Principle	What it Means
Establish Leadership and Implementation Ownership	Define and initiate establishment of the professional civilian emergency communications leadership role; designate an implementation lead; and establish the workplan, resource requirements, priorities, baseline measures, and project controls.
Formalize Cross-Agency Coordination	Establish consistent coordination mechanisms, responsibilities, documentation, and escalation paths while preserving discipline-specific operational authority.
Build QA/QI and Performance Capabilities	Establish dedicated 911 QA/QI, performance reporting, analytics, and feedback loops connecting QA/QI, training, policy, and operations.
Address Targeted Modernization	Advance prioritized call flow, 911/311 coordination, technology, automation, customer experience, and public education initiatives.
Manage Change and Implementation Risk	Use structured project, risk, and change management to coordinate dependencies, engage stakeholders, support workforce stability, and protect continuity of service.
Measure, Refine, and Plan Forward	Assess results against baseline measures, refine initiatives based on findings, and establish subsequent workforce, technology, facility, and capacity priorities.

The recommended approach should be implemented as a coordinated modernization program rather than as a collection of independent initiatives. Professional civilian leadership, QA/QI, performance management, call flow modernization, 911/311 coordination, technology modernization, public engagement, and other activities are interrelated and should be managed against common objectives, dependencies, and measures of success. This coordination will allow the City to evaluate implementation results and adjust priorities as additional information becomes available.

Implementation of the recommended organizational and modernization changes will require consistent implementation controls. Figure 2 summarizes the project, risk, change management, stakeholder engagement, and performance monitoring practices that should support the phased approach.

Figure 2: Implementation Controls

Implementation progresses through four phases: Mobilize, Establish, Implement, and Optimize and Plan Forward. Each phase includes readiness considerations intended to confirm progress, identify unresolved dependencies, and inform advancement to the next stage.

7.1 Phase 1 – Mobilize (0–3 Months)

Phase 1 establishes the organizational and implementation foundation for the recommended approach. The initial focus should be on defining the professional civilian emergency communications leadership role, establishing implementation ownership, confirming priorities and resource requirements, and preparing the targeted modernization efforts for implementation.

The City should define the civilian emergency communications leader's responsibilities, authority, reporting relationship, qualifications, and interfaces with existing APD leadership and operational management. Because creation and recruitment of the position may extend beyond the initial phase, APD should designate an interim implementation lead to coordinate the modernization program until responsibility can transition to the professional civilian leader or another appropriate resource.

During mobilization, the City should also establish the structure for more formal cross-agency coordination, confirm baseline performance measures, validate planning level resource requirements, and identify dependencies affecting QA/QI, analytics, operations, technology, 911/311 coordination, and public engagement.

These activities should provide the foundation for the capabilities and modernization efforts advanced in subsequent phases.

Table 36: Phase 1 – Mobilize (0-3 Months)

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Establish leadership and implementation foundation	• Define professional civilian emergency communications leadership role, authority, reporting relationship, qualifications, and organizational interfaces • Initiate applicable classification, funding, and recruitment processes • Designate interim implementation lead • Establish implementation workplan and project controls	• Leadership model defined and process to establish/fill the role initiated • Implementation ownership and responsibilities identified
Formalize cross-agency coordination approach	• Identify participating agencies and appropriate representatives • Define purpose, scope, cadence, documentation practices, responsibilities, and escalation paths	• Coordination mechanism defined and ready to operate without changing discipline-specific authority
Establish performance baseline	• Confirm existing measures and data sources • Identify priority KPIs and gaps • Establish baseline measures for call-taking, workforce, QA/QI, transfers, workload, and other relevant areas	• Baseline established for monitoring implementation and assessing subsequent changes
Confirm modernization priorities and resources	• Validate near-term priorities, dependencies, staffing assumptions, technology needs, planning-level costs, procurement considerations, and responsible parties	• Priority modernization efforts are sufficiently defined to advance into implementation planning
Prepare for organizational and operational change	• Identify affected employees and stakeholders • Establish communications and change-management approach • Document implementation risks and mitigation responsibilities	• Workforce and stakeholder impacts identified and implementation risks actively managed

Gate 1 – Mobilization Foundation Established

Before advancing to Phase 2, the City should confirm that the leadership model and implementation responsibilities are sufficiently defined to support active implementation. The professional civilian emergency communications leadership role does not need to be filled at this stage, but the position development process should be underway and interim implementation ownership should be established.

Table 37: Phase 1 Gates

Readiness Consideration	Issues Requiring Resolution Before Implementation
Professional Civilian Leadership	Role, authority, reporting relationship, qualifications, and relationship with existing APD leadership and civilian operational management defined; position development/recruitment process initiated.
Implementation Ownership	Interim implementation lead identified; workplan, responsibilities, project controls, and escalation paths established.
Cross-Agency Coordination	Participants, purpose, cadence, documentation, and escalation mechanism defined.
Performance Baseline	Priority measures, available data, baseline values, and material data gaps identified.
Resources and Dependencies	Initial staffing, funding, procurement, technology, policy, and cross-agency dependencies identified; unresolved issues assigned for resolution.
Change and Risk Readiness	Key workforce, operational, and implementation risks identified with responsible parties and mitigation actions.

7.2 Phase 2 – Establish (3–6 Months)

Phase 2 moves from mobilization to establishment of the core capabilities needed to support the recommended approach. During this phase, the City should continue implementation of the professional civilian emergency communications leadership model, put the cross-agency coordination mechanism into practice, establish dedicated QA/QI and performance management capabilities, and develop implementation plans for priority operational and technology modernization efforts.

The timing of recruitment and appointment of the professional civilian emergency communications leader may extend into this phase. If the position is filled, responsibility for appropriate elements of the modernization program should begin transitioning from the interim implementation lead to the civilian leader. If recruitment remains underway, interim implementation ownership should continue so that other modernization activities are not unnecessarily delayed.

Phase 2 should also establish the processes needed to use performance information consistently. This includes developing the QA/QI framework, confirming performance measures and reporting practices, addressing priority data access or reporting gaps, and establishing feedback mechanisms connecting QA/QI findings with training, coaching, policy, and operational practices. Cross-agency performance reporting should be developed collaboratively, with participating agencies retaining responsibility for their own operational performance and discipline-specific QA/QI.

In parallel, the City should complete detailed planning for the operational and technology initiatives prioritized during Phase 1. This work should identify responsible parties, dependencies, resource and procurement requirements, implementation sequencing, and measures that can be used to assess the effects of subsequent changes.

Table 38: Phase 2 – Establish (3-6 Months)

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Advance professional civilian leadership	• Continue position development, funding, recruitment, and selection activities as needed • Onboard the civilian emergency communications leader if appointed • Define transition of appropriate implementation responsibilities from the interim lead	• Professional civilian leadership role is established or progressing through the applicable City process, with continuity of implementation ownership maintained
Activate cross-agency coordination	• Begin regular coordination meetings • Document shared issues, responsibilities, action items, and escalation needs • Refine participation or processes based on initial experience	• A consistent mechanism is operating for matters requiring coordination across organizational boundaries
Establish QA/QI capability	• Confirm QA/QI staffing model and resources • Develop program standards and review criteria • Establish documentation, coaching, feedback, and reporting processes • Initiate recruitment/procurement as needed	• Core QA/QI capability is established or sufficiently advanced to begin systematic review
Develop performance reporting and analytics	• Confirm KPIs and baseline measures • Address priority data access and reporting gaps • Develop initial reporting/dashboard capability • Establish processes for collaborative cross-agency reporting where appropriate	• Performance information is available or under active development to support management and subsequent evaluation of modernization efforts
Prepare priority operational modernization	• Finalize plans for call flow, transfer, ACD greeting, multidiscipline-call, and 911/311 initiatives • Identify affected policies, training, technology, and participating agencies	• Priority operational changes are defined and ready for controlled implementation
Prepare technology modernization	• Evaluate priority technologies • Confirm operational requirements, system ownership, integration dependencies, security considerations, procurement approach, and planning-level costs	• Priority technology initiatives have sufficient definition to support implementation decisions and sequencing

Gate 2 – Core Capabilities Established

Gate 2 confirms that the City has progressed beyond mobilization and has established, or made sufficient progress toward establishing, the core capabilities needed for active implementation. Before advancing priority modernization initiatives, ownership should be clear, significant dependencies should be understood, and the affected operational areas should be prepared for implementation.

Table 39: Phase 2 Gates

Readiness Consideration	Issues Requiring Resolution Before Implementation
Professional Civilian Leadership	Position establishment and recruitment are progressing through applicable City processes; if the role is filled, authority and implementation responsibilities are clearly defined. If not yet filled, interim ownership remains in place.
Cross-Agency Coordination	Coordination mechanism is operating with appropriate participation, documentation, responsibilities, and escalation paths.
QA/QI and Performance Management	QA/QI framework, staffing/resource approach, review criteria, and feedback processes are defined; material barriers to implementation are identified and assigned.
Performance Reporting and Analytics	Priority KPIs and baselines are established; data sources, access requirements, ownership, and significant reporting gaps are documented.
Operational Modernization	Proposed workflow changes have identified owners, dependencies, training/policy implications, and measures for assessing effects.
Technology Modernization	Priority technologies have defined operational requirements, ownership, dependencies, security/procurement considerations, and planning level resource needs.
Implementation Risk	Material workforce, service continuity, technology, procurement, and cross-agency risks have identified owners and mitigation actions.

7.3 Phase 3 – Implement (6–12 Months)

Phase 3 focuses on implementing the targeted modernization efforts prepared during the first two phases. By this stage, implementation ownership, cross-agency coordination, performance measures, and the foundational QA/QI and analytics capabilities should be sufficiently established to support controlled implementation and evaluation of priority initiatives.

Operational efforts should include implementing approved changes to call-intake and transfer workflows, 911/311 coordination, and other identified service pathways. Changes should be introduced with appropriate training, communications, documentation, and performance monitoring so that their effects can be assessed and adjustments made as needed. The existing discipline-specific operating model remains unchanged:

Austin 911 continues to answer incoming 911 calls, fully process Police-related calls, and transfer fire, EMS, and appropriate mental health calls for discipline-specific processing.

Technology modernization should advance according to the priorities, dependencies, procurement requirements, and implementation plans established during earlier phases. Initiatives may include ASAP-to-PSAP, QA/QI and analytics capabilities, workflow automation, or other technologies selected through the planning process. Implementation timing will vary based on procurement, integration, security, system ownership, and resource requirements and should not be driven solely by the roadmap timeframe.

QA/QI and performance information should be used throughout implementation to monitor operational effects, identify emerging issues, and inform adjustments to training, policy, workflows, and subsequent modernization priorities. Customer and workforce feedback should also be considered where appropriate so that implementation decisions reflect both quantitative performance information and operational experience.

Table 40: Phase 3 – Implement (6-12 Months)

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Implement priority operational modernization	• Implement approved call-intake, transfer, multidiscipline-call, and 911/311 workflow changes • Update associated policies, scripts, documentation, and training • Monitor implementation effects	• Priority operational changes are implemented with sufficient information to assess their effects and identify needed adjustments
Advance technology modernization	• Implement approved technology initiatives according to established sequencing • Complete applicable procurement, integration, testing, security review, training, and change-management activities	• Selected technology capabilities are placed into operation or progressing according to approved implementation plans
Operationalize QA/QI and performance management	• Conduct systematic call review • Monitor performance measures and trends • Establish regular reporting • Connect findings with coaching, training, policy, and operational review	• QA/QI and performance information are routinely available to support management and modernization decisions
Strengthen performance visibility	• Develop and refine reporting across relevant portions of the call and response continuum • Address identified data gaps • Coordinate with participating agencies where information crosses organizational boundaries	• City and operational leaders have greater visibility into performance while participating agencies retain responsibility for their respective functions

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Advance customer-facing modernization	• Implement selected public communication, service navigation, and customer experience initiatives • Establish feedback mechanisms where appropriate.	• The City has additional information and tools to support public understanding and assess the caller experience
Monitor workforce and operational impacts	• Track staffing, workload, training needs, employee feedback, service continuity, and implementation risks • Adjust sequencing or mitigation strategies where warranted	• Workforce and operational effects are identified and considered as implementation proceeds

Gate 3 – Priority Modernization Implemented or Underway

Phase 3 assesses whether the priority modernization efforts have progressed sufficiently to support broader evaluation and long-term planning. Advancement does not require every initiative to be complete; however, implemented activities should have defined ownership, available performance information where practicable, and processes for identifying and addressing implementation issues. Initiatives still underway should have documented plans, dependencies, and responsible parties.

Table 41: Phase 3 Gates

Readiness Consideration	Issues Requiring Resolution Before Optimization
Professional Civilian Leadership	Leadership role is established or remaining position-related dependencies are documented and actively managed; responsibility for ongoing modernization is clear.
Operations and Coordination	Priority operational and cross-agency initiatives are implemented or underway; unresolved workflow, ownership, or coordination issues have defined paths to resolution.
QA/QI and Performance Management	Systematic QA/QI review and performance reporting are operating or sufficiently advanced to provide information for evaluation and refinement.
Technology Modernization	Priority technology initiatives are implemented or proceeding under defined plans; material integration, procurement, security, funding, or ownership issues are documented.
Customer and Workforce Considerations	Available customer, employee, workload, and service performance information has been reviewed and material concerns have identified responses.
Performance Evaluation	Baseline and post-implementation information is available where sufficient time and data exist to support meaningful comparison; limitations are documented.

Readiness Consideration	Issues Requiring Resolution Before Optimization
Implementation Risk	Remaining material risks and dependencies have identified owners, mitigation actions, and escalation paths.

7.4 Phase 4 – Optimize and Plan Forward (12–18 Months)

Phase 4 focuses on evaluating implementation results, refining modernization efforts, and establishing the practices needed to sustain the recommended approach over time. By this stage, the City should have sufficient experience with at least some of the implemented changes to compare available results with baseline measures, identify areas requiring adjustment, and determine priorities for continued modernization.

Evaluation should consider operational performance, QA/QI findings, workforce and customer feedback, technology performance, cross-agency coordination, and implementation experience. Results should be interpreted in context, recognizing that some initiatives may require additional time or data before their effects can be meaningfully assessed. Where expected results have not been observed, the City should examine implementation, resources, workflow, training, technology, or other contributing factors before determining whether additional changes are warranted.

The City should use this phase to transition successful modernization efforts from project-based implementation into routine management and planning practices. QA/QI, performance reporting, cross-agency coordination, technology planning, and other ongoing activities should have defined ownership, resource requirements, review cycles, and mechanisms for continued refinement.

Long-term planning should focus on sustaining Austin's existing 911 call-taking responsibilities as workload, workforce, technology, facility, and capacity needs change. A multiyear emergency communications strategy should establish subsequent modernization and investment priorities and incorporate the planned role of CTECC II and other identified operational dependencies.

The City may also use the information developed through implementation to inform future organizational decisions if circumstances materially change, including future City decisions affecting APD or civilian 911 oversight. As the professional civilian leadership model matures, the City could also evaluate whether placing Police dispatch under the professional civilian emergency communications leader would provide operational or organizational benefit. Any such change would require separate evaluation and City decision-making and is not part of the current recommendation.

Table 42: Phase 4 – Optimize and Plan Forward (12-18 Months)

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Evaluate modernization results	• Compare available performance information with established baselines • Review QA/QI findings, operational results, workforce and customer feedback, and implementation experience • Document data or timing limitations	• The City has a clearer understanding of observed results, unresolved issues, and areas requiring additional evaluation

Objective	Major Tasks	Intended Result
Refine operational and modernization efforts	• Adjust workflows, training, QA/QI practices, reporting, technology, coordination processes, or implementation strategies based on available findings	• Modernization efforts are refined based on operational experience and performance information
Transition to sustained management	• Assign ongoing ownership for QA/QI, performance reporting, cross-agency coordination, technology planning, public engagement, and other recurring activities • Identify continuing resource requirements and review cycles	• Ongoing modernization and performance management activities are incorporated into routine management practices
Establish long-term priorities	• Develop or update the multiyear emergency communications strategy • Identify workforce, facility, technology, capacity, and financial priorities • Incorporate CTECC II and known dependencies into planning	• Subsequent priorities are informed by operational needs, available performance information, and resource requirements
Maintain organizational readiness	• Monitor material changes in City priorities, APD structure, civilian 911 oversight, service demand, or other conditions that could affect the organizational model	• The City retains the information and planning framework needed to evaluate future organizational questions if circumstances warrant

At the conclusion of the phased implementation period, ongoing modernization should transition into established management and planning practices rather than end as a discrete project. The professional civilian emergency communications leader should have defined responsibility for sustaining the activities within the 911 function, while cross-agency initiatives should continue through the coordination mechanisms and departmental responsibilities established during implementation. Performance information, QA/QI findings, operational experience, and changing resource needs should inform subsequent planning and investment decisions.

8 Conclusion

The assessment finds that Austin's current 911 call-taking operation is performing well and provides a strong foundation for continued modernization. Recent investments in staffing, recruitment, retention, leadership, and operational practices have strengthened workforce stability and call-answer performance. The current structure also preserves established relationships among public safety agencies, shared technology and administrative efficiencies, and direct alignment between civilian police call-taking, Police dispatch, and APD's discipline-specific operational requirements.

The assessment did not identify operational, organizational, or financial benefits of establishing a standalone 911 department that outweigh the additional costs, organizational interfaces, administrative requirements, and

transition risks identified through the study. Changing organizational placement would not, by itself, change core call-processing responsibilities, downstream response factors, discipline-specific expertise, or authority over shared technology. It would also create a new organizational boundary between civilian Police call-taking and APD dispatch and operational authority.

The assessment identified meaningful opportunities to strengthen Austin's 911 function and the broader emergency communications environment without establishing a separate department. These include professional civilian emergency communications leadership; more formal cross-agency coordination; comprehensive QA/QI and performance management; end-to-end analytics and performance visibility; call flow and 911/311 modernization; technology modernization; public engagement and customer experience initiatives; and more deliberate long-term planning.

Accordingly, MCP recommends that civilian 911 call-taking remain within APD under professional civilian emergency communications leadership, supported by targeted modernization. The recommended model introduces a meaningful leadership change while preserving Austin's existing discipline-specific operating structure. Police dispatch would remain under its current leadership, and AFD, ATCEMS, and Integral Care C3 would retain their existing communications responsibilities and operational authority.

The recommendation is not to maintain the status quo. It establishes professional civilian leadership for the 911 call-taking function and a phased modernization program supported by defined accountability, dedicated QA/QI, performance measurement and analytics, cross-agency coordination, technology and operational modernization, and structured implementation controls. Progress should be evaluated against established baselines so that modernization efforts can be refined based on observed results, operational experience, workforce and customer feedback, and changing resource needs.

Over time, these capabilities should support continued planning for changing workload, workforce, technology, facility, and capacity needs. They also provide additional information the City can use to evaluate future organizational questions if circumstances materially change, including future City decisions affecting APD or civilian 911 oversight. Any such consideration should be based on the conditions and evidence available at that time rather than treated as an assumed next step in the recommended approach.

The central conclusion of the feasibility study is that Austin's strongest path forward is to pair professional civilian leadership with targeted modernization while retaining civilian 911 call-taking within APD. This approach directs organizational attention and investment toward the areas where the assessment identified meaningful opportunities for modernization while preserving the operational relationships, discipline-specific expertise, workforce stability, and infrastructure that support the current system.

Appendix A: Decision Evidence Matrix

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Legal and Regulatory Considerations *Section 4.1*	The assessment identified the need to preserve applicable civil service, labor, collective bargaining, licensing, credentialing, accreditation, clinical oversight, and other regulatory requirements.	Not primarily quantitative; applicable legal, labor, civil service, licensing, credentialing, and regulatory requirements were reviewed.	Comparable organizational structures and applicable legal, labor, licensing, credentialing, and accreditation frameworks.	Legal, HR, labor, classification, administrative, and transition requirements associated with organizational change.	Noncompliance; unresolved labor or civil-service requirements; credentialing or licensing issues; implementation delays.	The current structure operates within established requirements; transferring civilian 911 call-taking would introduce additional administrative and regulatory requirements, while broader Fire and EMS constraints remain.
Discipline Specific Expertise and Service Delivery *Section 4.2*	Specialized Police, Fire, and EMS expertise is a current strength and should be preserved.	Training and certification requirements; available QA/QI and classification information; transfer and rework information where available.	Peer PSAP organizational models; multidisciplinary training and discipline-specific expertise practices.	Potential changes to Police call-taking leadership, APD–911 protocols, training, QA/QI, and coordination; additional cross-department interfaces under a standalone model.	Separation of civilian Police call-taking from APD dispatch and operational authority; increased coordination required to maintain law enforcement requirements, expertise, and training alignment	Structural change provides limited direct benefit to discipline-specific expertise; a standalone model creates a new organizational boundary between civilian Police call-taking and APD while Fire and EMS

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
					across organizational boundaries.	retain discipline-specific call processing and dispatch within their respective agencies.
Operational Coordination and Interagency Collaboration *Section 4.3*	Established relationships, co-location, and shared technology support operational coordination; identified opportunities include more formal cross-agency coordination, workflow refinement, 911/311 coordination, and clearer service pathways.	Available transfer and workflow information; CAD and multidiscipline-call observations; identified gaps in end-to-end transfer and coordination measures.	Cross-agency coordination practices and comparable multiagency or co-located emergency communications environments.	Potential workflow changes, more formal coordination mechanisms, leadership participation, and additional organizational interfaces under a standalone model.	Disruption of established relationships; unclear responsibility for shared initiatives; increased coordination requirements when organizational boundaries change.	Existing coordination is a current strength; targeted modernization can address identified workflow and coordination opportunities without changing discipline-specific authority.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Operational Effectiveness *Section 4.4*	Response time is a key stakeholder concern; operational performance is influenced more directly by staffing, training, QA/QI, technology, workflows, and downstream response factors than by the reporting structure.	Available call-answer and call-processing data; abandoned-call performance; identified gaps in transfer, classification, queue, and downstream performance data.	NENA/NFPA call-processing standards and performance measures; peer PSAP performance where sufficiently comparable.	Potential changes to staffing, training, QA/QI, workflows, technology, performance management, and organization interfaces.	Organizational restructuring alone may not improve performance; new organizational boundaries could affect coordination and information flow.	Limited operational benefit from structural change alone; greater opportunity lies in targeted operational and process modernization.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Workforce Sustainability and Professional Development *Section 4.5*	Recent staffing recovery is viewed as a significant success; stakeholders emphasized preserving morale, culture, recruitment and retention gains, leadership connectivity, and workforce stability.	Vacancy, turnover/attrition, staffing, recruitment, retention, and training completion data.	Peer staffing, career development, leadership, and workforce support models.	Leadership structure, workforce development, training, wellness, human resources (HR) support, career progression, and transition requirements.	Retention, morale, organizational identity impacts, and loss of recent staffing gains during transition.	Workforce stability is a demonstrated current strength; larger organizational transition presents greater near-term workforce risk, while targeted leadership change can preserve continuity and support professional development.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Governance *Section 4.6*	Stakeholders identified interest in dedicated 911 leadership, accountability, organizational focus, and advocacy while emphasizing the importance of preserving discipline-specific authority and operational relationships.	Organizational structures, reporting relationships, leadership roles, decision and escalation processes, and continuity considerations.	Civilian emergency communications leadership, accountability, and reporting structures in comparable PSAPs.	Current sworn leadership structure; potential professional civilian emergency communications leadership within APD; additional leadership and administrative requirements associated with a standalone department.	Unclear role boundaries or authority; duplication of leadership responsibilities; weakened alignment between civilian Police call-taking and APD operational requirements.	Professional civilian emergency communications leadership within APD can provide dedicated expertise and accountability while preserving Police operational alignment; independence provides greater structural separation but adds organizational interfaces and decision-right requirements.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Training and QA/QI *Section 4.7*	Training is an established strength; dedicated QA/QI capacity and systematic performance review are identified improvement opportunities.	Available training completion and turnover information; CTO capacity; QA/QI volume and results where available; identified gaps in systematic QA/QI and performance-trend data.	Peer PSAP training and QA/QI programs; applicable APCO and NENA standards and practices; State requirements; relevant certification and accreditation requirements.	Dedicated QA/QI capacity; trainer and CTO capacity; QA/QI technology and reporting; formal feedback loops connecting QA/QI, training, coaching, policy, and operations.	Insufficient training or QA/QI capacity; fragmented feedback among QA/QI, training, policy, and operations; potential loss of discipline-specific alignment under organizational separation.	Training is a current strength; QA/QI is a significant modernization opportunity, and improvement is not dependent on organizational structure.
Implementation Risk and Operational Continuity *Section 4.8*	Current operations have recently improved; stakeholders emphasize preserving workforce stability, service continuity, and established interagency relationships during any change.	Staffing and turnover data; call-answer performance; service-disruption information; transition cost estimates; implementation milestones and readiness measures.	Comparable PSAP reorganizations; transition timelines, change management practices, and implementation controls.	Professional civilian leadership, administrative support, funding, workforce change, system access, cross-agency coordination, legal and labor considerations, and phased implementation.	Workforce instability; degraded service performance; unresolved organizational or technology dependencies; implementation complexity.	A standalone department presents greater near-term implementation and continuity risk; the recommended leadership change and targeted modernization can be phased while retaining the existing departmental structure.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Customer Experience and Public Confidence *Section 4.9*	Stakeholders identified opportunities to reduce avoidable transfers and duplicate questioning, strengthen 911/311 coordination, and provide clearer information about service pathways and what callers can expect during the call process.	Available call-answer, abandoned-call, transfer, and complaint information; direct customer survey data were not available through this assessment.	Customer experience, transfer, routing, and public information practices in comparable PSAPs.	Potential QA/QI, workflow, technology, public-engagement, and customer-feedback resource requirements.	Caller confusion or unintended workflow impacts during change; difficulty distinguishing call-taking concerns from downstream response factors.	Meaningful customer experience opportunities exist, but many are driven by workflow, information, technology, and downstream response factors rather than organizational placement alone.
Technology and Innovation *Section 4.10*	Technology modernization was consistently identified as a significant opportunity, particularly in analytics, reporting, QA/QI, workflow automation, interoperability, and information sharing.	Available system performance and reporting information; technology inventories; identified data, integration, and workflow limitations.	NG911 capabilities; ASAP; AI-supported QA/QI and automation; analytics and reporting practices; comparable public safety technology environments.	Technology acquisition, integration, licensing, cybersecurity, support, lifecycle, and professional-services costs; dependencies on City, regional, vendor, and other system owners.	Integration and interoperability issues; cybersecurity and privacy; vendor dependencies; procurement constraints; authority over shared systems.	Technology modernization represents a significant opportunity under either organizational structure; independence does not inherently change authority over shared City or regional systems.

Evaluation Criterion	Stakeholder Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Benchmarking / Industry Reference	ROM / Organizational Impacts	Primary Risks	Assessment Finding
Financial Sustainability and Resource Allocation *Section 4.11*	Stakeholders identified the need for appropriate 911 advocacy and investment while expressing concern about additional cost that does not produce corresponding operational benefit.	Current operating costs; planning-level standalone costs; estimated incremental costs associated with professional civilian leadership and targeted modernization.	Comparable PSAP cost structures and administrative-support models where sufficiently comparable.	Incremental costs associated with professional civilian leadership and targeted modernization; startup and recurring costs associated with a standalone department.	Underestimated implementation or recurring costs; funding constraints; duplication of administrative functions; investment without measurable operational benefit.	Targeted modernization requires additional investment while leveraging existing infrastructure and shared resources; a standalone department introduces substantially greater incremental cost without identified structural savings.
Future Growth and Scalability *Section 4.12*	Population growth, changing workload, facility capacity, technology needs, and long-term planning were identified as important future considerations.	Population and call-volume trends; workload and staffing data; facility and console capacity; technology capacity where available.	Capacity planning and scalability practices in comparable emergency communications environments.	Workforce, facility, technology, financial, and long-term planning requirements.	Facility limitations; insufficient workforce or technology capacity; funding constraints; failure to anticipate changing workload or service demand.	Both structures can accommodate changing workload and capacity needs; scalability depends more directly on workforce, facility, technology, and financial planning than on organizational placement.