

Volume I

Main Report

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Volume I – Chapter 1
Executive Summary

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1.3 MSR/SOI Update Key Findings

This section details a summary of key findings from the analysis presented in Volume I of this report. MSR determinations and recommendations for each agency can be found in each agency’s subsequent MSR Chapter in Volume II. A summary of key findings by fire agency can be seen in Figure 1-3 on the next page.

1.3.1 *West Slope*

Overall, this report found that all fire agencies on the West Slope are operating well together. Through the Fire Chiefs Association, the fire agencies coordinate and operate seamlessly with an automatic/mutual aid, boundary drop, and closest resource dispatch system. One great attribute for the fire agencies in the County of El Dorado is that they have close working relationships, are respectful of each other, and communicated to consultants a sense of comradery between each fire agency with the common goal to provide the highest level of service to residents of the County. The majority of the fire chiefs interviewed for the preparation of this MSR/SOI Update did not suggest that the variation between numbers of agency responses to automatic aid are a hinderance or concern. Even the agencies that provided more aid to their neighbors than they received in 2019 tout the system as a benefit to the County. These relationships and the close coordination between agencies are a benefit to the County as evidenced through the continued success of the automatic dispatch system.

The majority of the agencies are struggling to secure adequate revenue to be able to fund enough firefighters on shifts to meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 standards for staffing. As discussed in Volume II – Chapter 1, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agency MSR General Information, research and studies found that (2-0) staffing models are seriously deficient in keeping ahead of wildfire and slower for key activities in relation to fire suppression than (3-0) and (4-0) staffing models. A detailed description of the difficulties firefighters in the County face due to limited staffing can be found in Volume I – Appendix C. Through research outlined in the referenced chapter, and discussions with various fire chiefs and personnel in the County and throughout the state, a three staff per engine (3-0) model, though not ideal, is utilized in this MSR/SOI Update as an acceptable minimum standard practice. As shown in Figure 1-3, ~~seven-six~~ of the nine fire agencies (~~77-66~~ percent) in West Slope of the County are not meeting this minimum standard for career fire departments some or all of the time, and only two meet NFPA 1710 standards some of the time.

The property tax increments available to the fire agencies on the West Slope have remained relatively stable since the 2011 MSR. Property taxes have historically made up a significant portion of recurring revenue for the fire agencies in the County. However, due to changes in property tax allocations for special districts, property tax revenues have greatly diminished over the years. As a result, many of the fire agencies in the County now have insufficient funds for anticipated increases in operational costs, personnel costs, and maintenance costs; as well as funding for major capital improvements. Average property tax amounts per taxable parcel range from \$1,015 in EDH to \$140 in PIO. Many agencies have passed benefit assessments and special taxes to try to alleviate some of the financial challenges; but many of those have not increased since their inception and are not keeping up with inflation. More detail can be found in Volume I – Chapter 5, Countywide Finances.

Countywide Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services MSR & SOI Update – Draft

Figure 1-3: Summary of Key Findings by Agency

Agency	Staffing Model	Estimated Population 2020	Total Calls for Service 2019	Percent of Aid Calls Received (2019)	Average Property Tax Increment FY 2018/2019	Average Property Tax per Taxable Parcel FY 2018/2019	Agency Net Position 2019	Agency Non-Recurring Revenues as Percentage of Total Revenue (FY 2018/2019)	2020 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates
West Slope									
CAM	2-0	19,697	3,508	17%	14.13%	\$720	\$15,547,462	33%	Fair
DSP	3-0/4-0	13,286	3,845	50%	20.57%	\$535	\$(8,601,813)	13%	Limited
ECF	2-0/3-0	49,340	10,843	35%	13.82%	\$357	\$(25,232,988)	37%	Limited
EDH	3-0/4-0	51,348	6,161	8%	18.32%	\$1,015	\$32,896,285	12%	Great
GRV	(1-0)*	4,685	1,388	39%	8.24%	\$188	\$792,831	82%	Deficient Limited
GEO	(1-0)*	4,322	2,279	13%	12.29%	\$213	\$(2,867,298)	68%	Limited
MQT	(2-0/3-0)*	1,712	465	10%	11.61%	\$168	\$657,473	44%	Limited
PIO	1-0	8,834	1,729	22%	10.02%	\$140	\$2,034,997	14%	Fair
RES	2-0	4,763	1,520	32%	11.00%	\$386	\$(1,615,043)	10%	Limited
Tahoe Basin									
FLL	2-0	1,731	30	Unknown ⁺	5.34%	\$128	\$1,149,049	85%	Deficient
LAV	2-0	22,323	1,001	Unknown	20.34%	\$552	\$(4,802,034)	32%	Fair
MEK	2-0	5,153	934	Unknown	9.63%	\$398	\$1,089,121	5%	Limited
SLT	3-0/4-0	22,525	3,299	Unknown	22.22%	\$194	\$109,091,066	33%	Great
<p>*GEO, GRV, and MQT each operate as a combination <u>or volunteer</u> fire department under NFPA 1720. More information can be found in the MSR Chapter for <u>GEO and MQT these Districts</u>.</p> <p>⁺SLT Dispatch was not able to provide a breakdown in mutual aid calls received versus provided for agencies in the Tahoe Basin. The analysis for the West Slope could not be replicated for these agencies.</p>									

Though the net positions appear to show the majority of the agencies in the County are in good financial position, this is only a snapshot of time that does not tell the whole story. Some agencies appear to be drawing down from reserves to cover expenditures over revenues, while others appear to have excess revenues available year over year. Multiple factors affect an agency's net position with some agencies covering a much higher unfunded accrued liability than others. More detail can be found in Volume I – Chapter 5, Countywide Finances.

The 2020 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates shown in Figure 1-3 diverge from the estimates that were produced for the 2010 Fire and Emergency Services Study (FESS) and 2011 MSR. The analysis for 2010 was not able to be reproduced, therefore a comparison between 2010 and 2020 could not be conducted. Consultants created a new estimate calculation with a formulaic approach that should be reproducible for future MSR/SOI Updates. The determinations and criteria for the 2020 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates were chosen based on the range of information provided in order to estimate the fiscal and deployment conditions of the fire agencies while attempting to align with the information presented in the 2010 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates. Agencies could receive a range of scores that fall within four categories: 1) Great, 2) Fair, 3) Limited, and 4) Deficient. Seven of the fire agencies (77 percent) on the West Slope are estimated to be below the "Fair" category. These agencies are generally struggling with lower staffing levels, a negative net position, require more aid from neighboring agencies, and were found to be at or below average for meeting infrastructure needs and providing sufficient services to meet current and future demands.

Station Staffing and Volunteers

Of the ~~456~~ fire stations on the West Slope, ~~46-42~~ percent are staffed full-time, ~~16-18~~ percent are staffed part-time/seasonally, and ~~38-40~~ percent are not staffed. Of the stations that are not staffed, ~~10-nine~~ (~~48-56~~ percent) were historically staffed by volunteers, ~~while the remaining 11 (52 percent) were staffed by paid firefighters~~. With the loss of volunteers at those ~~10-nine~~ stations, it is likely that the "wide station spacing" identified in the 2010 Fire and Emergency Services Study (FESS) is worsened by stations that are no longer staffed (even with volunteers). Many of the unstaffed stations are scattered throughout the West Slope and are used to house additional equipment and apparatus. The largest gap between staffed stations appears to be along the US Highway 50 Corridor from ECF Station No. 17 in Pollock Pines to LAV Station No. 7 in Meyers. Three agencies in the County own multiple stations within their boundaries, but only staff one station. In the 2010 FESS, it was determined that approximately 300 volunteers were available to the County for daily minimum staffing. Of the agencies that still utilize volunteers, there is estimated to be approximately 150 volunteers available Countywide. This is significantly less than the estimated 300 volunteers that were available throughout the County in 2010.

Dispatch System Challenges

There are concerns with the dispatch system on the West Slope. ~~Consultants made multiple attempts to gather information about the dispatch system from the County Sheriff's Office, but received no response to requests.~~ It is likely that inadequate radio coverage is an issue for fire agencies throughout the County. Consultants have been made aware of numerous gaps in the system. For example, many chiefs have described occasions where personnel (based on pager calls) leave for a call five to 10 minutes before formally receiving the dispatch. In addition, firefighting personnel need to manually switch to different

repeaters as they travel through the County which can pose challenges, especially for new staff. The EDH Fire Chief noted that the current dispatch system is over 40 years old and is antiquated when compared to neighboring dispatch systems such as the Sacramento Regional Fire/EMS Communications Center. The command station hardware used in the system is 17 years old and needs to be replaced. If this station were to fail, CAL FIRE Camino ECC would lose all contact with providers in the County (Frank Yost, personal communication, February 23, 2022). According to the El Dorado County Communications Manager, no studies have been conducted or are planned to determine the efficiency and status of dispatch system infrastructure. The dispatch system delays and challenges outlined in Volume I - Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure, may be an issue, not only for residents who experience these delays when accessing the system, but also for firefighting personnel. Lack of radio coverage can leave firefighters vulnerable when responding to incidents if they are unable to call for help or backup when entering a building or arriving on scene.

Roadway System Challenges

Multiple fire agencies have expressed common delays in responding to emergencies after inclement weather due to downed trees and limbs. Much of the access problems due to fallen debris occur along the West Slope. It is not uncommon for hundreds of trees to be felled by a large storm and it can take the County Department of Transportation Maintenance and Operations Division up to three months to clean up the damage from major storms on County roads. The delays in response by County Division staff can be attributed to major financial losses and subsequent reduction in staffing levels in FY 2008/2009. Though the economy has recovered, staffing levels have not, while the demand for maintenance work to clear brush alongside County roadways has greatly increased. More information on these challenges can be found in Volume I - Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure.

Water System Challenges

Water available for fire suppression is varied throughout the West Slope based on fire agency location. El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) is the largest purveyor of water in the County. Fire agencies have indicated that the fire hydrant capacity and available water storage is adequate except for the following agencies:

- DSP: The southern portion of DSP (south of the town of El Dorado) has only a few fire hydrants. Consequently, most of these residents rely on private wells that may have insufficient fire flow. DSP has begun to impose a residential water supply and sprinkler standard on certain projects. However, there are no plans to increase the capacity of the overall water system.
- MQT: The water system overall is fragile and could easily fail during a wildfire that attacks the pump station and backup generator. The pump station and backup generator are not “hardened” or resistant to wildfire and are exposed. Also, the daily usage of EID water customers can affect water tank capacity and pressure depending on time of day. Hardening of the water supply for MQT as well as the need for more water storage within the District may warrant further study.
- PIO: PIO recognizes the need to provide a more efficient emergency water delivery/supply system for the communities served. The sufficiency of available water supply for fire flows throughout PIO’s boundary area is a subject that may warrant further study.

- RES: For RES, the majority of the District relies on rural, privately owned water tanks and wells for water supply. Overall, the provision of water sufficient for fire flows to all areas of the RES is an issue that needs further study.

1.3.2 Tahoe Basin

Two agencies in the Tahoe Basin are estimated to be below the “Fair” category for 2020 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates. Both FLL and MEK, as well as LAV (which is estimated to be in the “Fair” category), are struggling with adequate finances to be able to fund enough firefighters on shifts to meet the National Fire Protection Association 1710 standards for staffing. As shown in Figure 1-3, three of the four fire agencies in the Tahoe Basin of the County are not meeting minimum standards for career fire departments all of the time. MEK has a Shared Services agreement with North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTF) in Placer County with the Districts moving towards an annexation of MEK into NTF. MEK’s low staffing is augmented by the robust services of NTF. FLL’s location is isolated from the other agencies in the Tahoe Basin and does not operate in the winter months due to lack of access. FLL has recently been the subject of a review by the California State Auditor that found that the District’s billing practices as well as its small electorate jeopardize its ability to provide services. The District has been working to correct those issues identified in the State Auditor’s report. LAV, though in the “Fair” category, has a high negative net position and failed to increase its benefit assessment in recent years. Property tax concerns summarized for the West Slope also jeopardize the stability of the fire districts in the Tahoe Basin.

LAV, FLL, and SLT have entered into a South Shore Response Plan with other neighboring fire agencies in the basin. This Plan operates like an automatic aid agreement, meaning aid is automatically dispatched by contractual agreement. These agencies along with MEK also operate together under the Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs’ Association (LTRFCA) which makes resources available between 10 fire agencies in the basin through mutual aid. The LTRFCA works collaboratively on regional issues relating to the delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in the greater Lake Tahoe Region.

Station Staffing and Volunteers

Of the ~~nine-ten~~ fire stations in the Tahoe Basin, six are staffed full-time, ~~one-two~~ ~~is-are~~ staffed part-time/seasonally, and two are not staffed. All agencies in the Tahoe Basin own and staff at least one fire station. None of the fire agencies in the Tahoe Basin utilize volunteers. LAV is considering restarting its volunteer program within the next few years due to local citizens expressing an interest in volunteering. Due to the high number of staffed stations, the Tahoe Basin appears to have adequate coverage, although it should be noted that the topography, seasonal variability of weather and visitor traffic, and narrow two-lane mountain roads can make access to areas challenging.

Dispatch System Challenges

Reliable communications in the Lake Tahoe Basin are difficult due to the topography in the area. The Fire Chief for LAV mentioned that the SLT Dispatch primary repeater for the area does not reach many areas of the LAV District. LAV owns and maintains a repeater located on the Angora Ridge which will simulcast transmissions. This repeater on the Angora Ridge allows LAV and FLL to receive all communications. The City of South Lake Tahoe is aware of gaps in the system and will be working diligently within the next few

- Consultants recommend that the next MSR/SOI Update utilize the same scoring criteria outlined in this chapter to determine trends in the fiscal and deployment conditions of the fire agencies.
- Consultants recommend that the 2011 MSR “Plan A” option be considered as a discussion item for the proposed Fire Summit.
- Consultants recommend that the 2011 MSR “Plan B” option be considered as a discussion item for the proposed Fire Summit.
- Consultants recommend that further analysis of a Countywide Sales Tax Initiative be considered including discussions with Amador County as to the success of Amador County’s Measure M. County fire chiefs would need to be included in discussions regarding how to ensure equitable distribution of the funds should the County choose to take up this option.

1.4.3 Chapter 6 – Sphere of Influence Study and Determinations

The SOI Study recommends, under Option 1, that all fire agency SOI’s remain unchanged except for the following:

- Designate a Zero Sphere for RES in anticipation of annexation into EDH.
- Expand the SOI for EDH to include the RES SOI and District Boundary.
- Designate a Zero Sphere for MEK in anticipation of annexation into North Tahoe Fire Protection District in Placer County.

In addition, the CSA SOI’s are also recommended to remain unchanged.

Fire Summit

As detailed in Volume I - Chapter 6, Sphere of Influence Study and Determinations, consultants recommend that LAFCO, the County of El Dorado, and the fire agencies in the County work together to host ~~two~~ one for the West Slope and one for the Tahoe Basin. Fire agencies in the County currently work very closely together to provide collaborative fire protection and emergency medical services. However, many agencies are facing difficult financial challenges. Agencies are providing the best services they can with limited financial resources and are taking full advantage of alternative financing options available to them. A Fire Summit hosted in both areas of the County would provide opportunities for the public to gain a holistic view of fire protection and emergency medical services ~~in the County~~ and a better understanding of the challenges fire agencies face. Because of the close working relationships the agencies have with each other, it is likely that ~~a Fire Summits that which~~ includes the County of El Dorado, as well as LAFCO, would bring forth positive solutions that can be supported by all parties involved. Consultants hope that the LAFCO Commission will seriously consider hosting or partnering with the County of El Dorado or the fire agencies to host ~~a these~~ Fire Summits within two years of the release of this report and follow with the stakeholder meetings as outlined. There may be grants available to provide funding for ~~a these~~ Fire Summits.

1.5 SOI Recommendations

MSR determinations can be found at the end of each Chapter in Volume I and at the end of the MSR analysis for each agency in each agency’s Chapter in Volume II. SOI Determinations for each fire agency

1.5.6 Garden Valley Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Garden Valley Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the Garden Valley Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown in Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.

1.5.7 Georgetown Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Georgetown Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the Georgetown Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown Appendix L.

1.5.8 Lake Valley Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Lake Valley Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that Lake Valley Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown Appendix L.

1.5.9 Meeks Bay Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Meeks Bay Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the Meeks Bay Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence be reduced to a zero sphere as shown in Appendix L in anticipation of future annexation into North Tahoe Fire Protection District in Placer County.

1.5.10 Mosquito Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Mosquito Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that Mosquito Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.

1.5.11 Pioneer Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Pioneer Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that Pioneer Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.

1.5.12 Rescue Fire Protection District

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Rescue Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the Rescue Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence be reduced to a zero sphere, as shown in Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.

1.5.13 City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by the City of South Lake Tahoe as specified under Government of Cities Law, California Government Code Section 34000 *et seq.* Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the City of South Lake Tahoe Sphere of Influence remain unchanged, as shown in Appendix L.

1.5.14 County Service Area 3

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by County Service Area No. 3 as Emergency Medical Services. All powers specified under Government Code §25213 are designated as latent with the exception of Government Code 25213(t). Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the CSA 3 Sphere of Influence remain unchanged, as shown in Appendix L.

1.5.15 County Service Area 7

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by County Service Area No. 7 as Emergency Medical Services. All powers specified under Government Code §25213 are designated as latent with the exception of Government Code 25213(t). Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the CSA 7 Sphere of Influence remain unchanged, as shown in Appendix L.

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California counties and the Lake Tahoe Basin. Along with fire equipment, CAL FIRE Grass Valley ECC also coordinates air ambulance requests for the five-county region of the Sierra-Sacramento Valley EMS Agency and serves as the dispatch for Sierra Nevada Ambulance. In 2020, the Grass Valley ECC dispatched 31,533 incidents, processed 39,741 events, and answered over 100,000 phone calls. Of those incidents, there were 341 wildland fires in the State Responsibility Area (SRA), of which 96.7 percent of them were contained at less than 10 acres (Communications Operator Peard, personal communication, January 2021).

4.1.2 West Slope Dispatch

As mentioned previously, fire protection and emergency medical services agencies on the West Slope are dispatched through CAL FIRE Camino ECC. These agencies are part of the El Dorado County Emergency Services Authority (West Slope JPA) formed for the purpose of ensuring automatic aid between the fire agencies for the delivery of an extensive, prehospital emergency medical service in an efficient manner without regard to jurisdictional boundaries (West Slope JPA, 2021). A key component of the JPA system is a centralized dispatch center with emergency medical dispatch trained personnel. CAL FIRE Camino ECC is the centralized dispatch center contracted through the West Slope JPA to provide dispatch services for the West Slope agencies. The nine local fire protection and emergency medical services agencies under this agreement are listed as follows:

- Cameron Park Community Services District (CAM)
- Diamond Springs/El Dorado Fire Protection District (DSP)
- El Dorado County Fire Protection District (ECF)
- El Dorado Hills County Water District (EDH)
- Garden Valley Fire Protection District (GRV)
- Georgetown Fire Protection District (GEO)
- Mosquito Fire Protection District (MQT)
- Pioneer Fire Protection District (PIO)
- Rescue Fire Protection District (RES)

Dispatches also occur through CAL FIRE Camino ECC for neighboring agencies in neighboring counties, CAL FIRE, and USFS. Other members to the West Slope JPA include CAL FIRE Camino ECC and Marshall Medical Center, the local area hospital. Through the current automatic aid dispatch system, all fire agencies in the County along with CAL FIRE are dispatched automatically as the closest resource to any calls for service, regardless of agency boundaries. CAL FIRE Camino ECC utilizes Automatic Vehicle Locating (AVL) to dispatch resources based on GPS location and Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) access showing maps, location of other resources, and incident information to fire and emergency medical personnel. However, not all fire agencies in the County have AVL included in their vehicles and engines because the cost to add this equipment is borne by each agency.

The number of calls for service throughout the West Slope have varied with four agencies seeing a downward trend in calls and five agencies seeing an upward trend from 2010 to 2019 as described in each agency's MSR Chapter in Volume II. Calls may be routed to CAL FIRE Camino ECC from Central Dispatch

through the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, the City of Placerville Police Department Dispatch, or CHP Sacramento Communications Center depending on the origin of the call.

The current County of El Dorado communications infrastructure is owned ~~by the West Slope JPA~~ by the County and CAL FIRE Camino ECC, and maintained by the El Dorado County Communications Manager at the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office. Costs for maintenance are covered by the West Slope JPA and upgrades to the system have been financed by grants through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The system is built on a VHF frequency system utilizing multiple mountain top repeater sites to provide coverage from Echo Summit to the County lines on the north, south, and western borders of the County (CAL FIRE, 2017). There are two radio channels utilized by fire protection and emergency medical dispatch personnel; the dispatch channel and the command channel. The dispatch channel is owned and operated by CAL FIRE Camino ECC and is used to dispatch fire agencies to calls. The command channel is owned by the County and operated by the El Dorado County Communications Manager at the Sheriff's Office. The command channel is used by fire agency personnel to communicate en route to calls and at the scene. The licenses for the operation of the two channels are owned by the State of California (Frank Yost, personal communication, February 23, 2022).

Of the repeaters utilized by CAL FIRE Camino ECC and fire agency personnel on the West Slope, 18 are owned by the County and maintained by the County Sheriff's Office, while three are owned and maintained by CAL FIRE Camino ECC. Through an interview with the El Dorado County Communications Manager, consultants were informed that the repeaters have all been upgraded or replaced to meet best practice standards. The repeaters share locations with the Sheriff's Office. These sites have been hardened for power outages with all repeaters having battery power backup for at least 72 hours. Some repeater locations also have propane tank backup with the ability to run up to 8 days without power (Frank Yost, personal communication, February 23, 2022).

Response Plans & Dispatch

CAL FIRE Camino ECC receives calls and dispatches fire protection and emergency medical resources based on Response Plans created by each fire agency and categorized by incident type. As mentioned, all local fire agencies within the County, including CAL FIRE, operate with automatic, closest resource, and boundary drop agreements. As a result, CAL FIRE Camino ECC will dispatch the closest appropriate resource throughout the County. For example, if an incident occurs near the boundary of one agency, not all the equipment from that agency may be dispatched to that incident. Dispatch will send out the closest appropriate resource based on the Response Plans regardless of agency and based on the location of resources at the time of the dispatch. CAL FIRE Camino ECC does ~~not currently~~ have the capability to dispatch the closest resource using AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location through GPS) for some agencies, but not for others. ~~Those agencies without AVL are limited to limiting being~~ dispatched to/from fire stations and staging locations. This system creates continuous automatic aid across agency boundaries and ensures that all calls are answered as quickly as possible for all residents and visitors to the County. This system may result in engines with varied staffing levels responding to incidents, whether due to the proximity of resources to the incident, or availability of nearby resources if some resources are committed to another incident at the same time (Assistant Chief Newman, personal communication, December 2020). Costs to respond to out of agency incidents are borne by each agency, though some agencies may bear more of the cost burden than others due to incident frequency and location. Fire agencies review

Agency	Arrived	Canceled	Total Calls for 2019	Percent Canceled
GEO	771	1,508	2,279	66%
GRV	573	815	1,388	59%
MQT	168	297	496	60%
PIO	851	878	1,729	51%
RES	799	721	1,520	47%
Total	20,006	11,732	31,769	37%

As indicated by Table 4-1 and Figure 4-1 above, some agencies in 2019 had more canceled dispatches than arrived. Specifically, agencies PIO, GEO, GRV, and MQT had over half of all calls in 2019 canceled. The fire agencies RES and DSP had just under half of all calls canceled in 2019. It appears that the CAM and EDH had the least number of canceled calls for service. As mentioned previously, when agency resources are called then canceled, this may add more wear and tear on equipment, and increases fuel consumption. This also may delay an agency’s resources being able to respond elsewhere within that agency depending on the destination of the last call that was canceled. It should be noted that some agencies may decline to respond to some calls for aid, which would also count as a ‘canceled’ call.

As noted in the 2011 MSR, “mutual aid greatly enhances services to the residents of the county because it guarantees that a response will be received by the closest available resource regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. On the other hand, while firefighters have an overall mutual respect for each other and an agency’s mission may not directly address financial equity, costs are incurred during mutual aid calls. Most fire chiefs have noted that mutual aid agreements have a real fiscal cost in that they can put a strain on an agency’s resources, both from the perspectives of maintenance to equipment and coverage.” The number of calls that are canceled could provide a starting point to determine the strain the current system places on agency resources.

The dispatch model CAL FIRE Camino ECC employs for the County of El Dorado as described in this section is similar to other counties. For example, CAL FIRE Camino ECC also dispatches calls for Amador County fire agencies and utilizes the same model as the County of El Dorado. According to CAL FIRE Camino ECC staff, most of the 21 CAL FIRE ECC’s follow similar models. However, larger municipal agencies such as Sac Metro Fire for the City of Sacramento will generally dispatch fewer resources for similar types of incidents primarily due to higher levels of staffing on each piece of equipment as a result of better funding. Also, larger municipal agencies do not have the extended commitment times necessary for vegetation fires that the fire agencies in the County experience and also cover fewer square miles with more densely populated areas when compared to the fire agencies in the County of El Dorado.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend that a future update to the Fire and Emergency Services Study include a review of the current system to determine if there are ways to increase efficiency while acknowledging the financial constraints that limit staffing resources for some agencies.

Dispatch System Challenges

In the course of discussing the dispatch system with fire chiefs in the County, consultants were made aware of deficiencies in the current dispatch system. ~~Consultants made multiple attempts to gather information about the dispatch system from the County Sheriff’s Office, but received no response to~~

~~requests.~~ The following information is based on conversations with some of the fire chiefs as well as a *Needs Assessment and System Issues Report* that was prepared by Federal Engineering (FE) at the request of the El Dorado Hills County Water District (EDH) (EDH, 2020). In addition, consultants interviewed staff from the County Sheriff's Office, CALFIRE, and the West Slope JPA regarding infrastructure challenges.

The *Needs Assessment and System Issues Report* for EDH assessed the existing VHF radio system and dispatch services to identify current and future needs and assist in determining the best course of action for improved radio communications and dispatch services. The limitations of this report are that it only addressed deficiencies and needs for El Dorado Hills County Water District, not countywide. Though the analysis is limited, some of the information presented suggests larger challenges within the dispatch system as a whole. The report found the following dispatch issues:

- There is inadequate radio coverage within areas of the EDH boundary including while traveling to calls and interior of buildings;
- Operational issues include:
 - Need for radio users to manually switch to different repeaters.
 - Radio users not able to hear radio traffic from other areas.
 - Radio users often “stepping on” radio traffic from another repeater.
- Coverage and operational issues can result in a lack of communication, which is a firefighter safety issue;
- Need for repeated tactical channels;
- CAL FIRE ECC issues include:
 - CAL FIRE ECC is tailored for wildland fire response and do not adequately address EDH daily needs.
 - Appears to prioritize their mission over local government needs.
 - Call taking procedures frequently result in unnecessary units responding to a low-priority call or the responding units are not appropriate for the event type.
- Lack of control for needed changes.

(Source: EDH, 2020)

CAL FIRE Camino ECC in conjunction with the West Slope JPA and EDH prepared an *El Dorado County Communications Feasibility Study* for the CAL FIRE Camino ECC in response to eight requested enhancements to the current communications system requested by the West Slope JPA and EDH. CAL FIRE determined that the requests were feasible, however the costs were prohibitive for EDH to cover on their own, as all County fire agencies would benefit from the enhancements.

Based on conversations with other fire chiefs, it is likely that inadequate radio coverage is a larger issue for other agencies throughout the County. Consultants have been made aware of numerous issues with holes in the system. ~~For example, many chiefs have described occasions where personnel leave for a call five to 10 minutes before formally receiving the dispatch. In addition, t~~The operational issues listed above (such as the need for firefighting personnel to manually switch to different repeaters) are likely challenging for other fire agencies throughout the County. The EDH Fire Chief noted that the current dispatch system is over 40 years old and is antiquated when compared to neighboring dispatch systems such as the Sacramento Regional Fire/EMS Communications Center. This sentiment was echoed by the

Director for the West Slope JPA when describing the existing infrastructure. Consultants were informed that no funding has been allocated by the County or the West Slope JPA for any meaningful attempts at hardening the system for wildfire resiliency or upgrading equipment. The West Slope JPA Director is not aware of any plans in place in the event that the system fails (Brain Veerkamp, personal communication, February 22, 2022). According to the El Dorado County Communications Manager, the Sheriff's Department is planning to spend approximately \$700,000 to upgrade the Sheriff's system to simulcast in order to have Sheriff's Office personnel radios automatically switch between repeaters as they move throughout the County (Frank Yost, personal communication, February 23, 2022). Lack of funding for the fire protection and emergency medical dispatch system may prevent a similar upgrade from occurring for the dispatch system utilized by CAL FIRE Camino ECC and the fire agencies.

Through discussions with ~~the EDH Fire Chief~~CALFIRE Camino ECC and Central Dispatch, it was relayed to consultants that the Central Dispatch system for El Dorado County through the Sheriff's Office directly does not connect-transfers information to the system employed by CAL FIRE Camino ECC. ~~As a result, when~~When 911 calls for fire and emergency medical services are placed through a landline throughout the County, Central Dispatch receives the call and inputs the incident into the system while simultaneously calling CAL FIRE Camino ECC to relay the incident. While ~~the~~ CAL FIRE Camino ECC dispatcher is ~~inputting~~ verifying the call information into the CAD system received from Central Dispatch, a second dispatcher will start dispatching the call to the appropriate closest responding agency. Consultants have heard from numerous fire chiefs that they believe delays are 5 to 6 minutes from when a call is initially taken in to being routed to the time it is routed to the responding fire agency. ~~Consultants could not verify this information due to lack of response by Central Dispatch.~~ Many fire chiefs ~~have~~ expressed to consultants that they will send resources out to a call and be at the call or having traveled for 5 to 6 minutes, sometimes longer, before the call is officially received by their agency. Firefighting personnel from numerous agencies will listen to the ~~dispatch channel~~broadcasted call for from Central Dispatch ~~and hear the call transmitted to CAL FIRE Camino ECC~~, allowing them to get a jump start on calls coming into their jurisdiction. Consultants were not able to obtain dispatch timings for calls routed through Central Dispatch, CAL FIRE Camino ECC, and to the fire agency. According to Central Dispatch, calls are routed to CAL FIRE Camino ECC within seconds (Cassidy Thomason, personal interview, February 22, 2022). This statement could not be verified due to lack of data. CAL FIRE Camino ECC provided consultants with the average transfer times for incidents to fire agencies in 2019 at approximately 1 minute 27 seconds. This suggests that the time to transfer calls is under two minutes on average (Assistant Chief Brain Newman, personal communication, March 2022). A more detailed analysis of transfer call times may help understand the disparities between what fire agency personnel are experiencing and what each dispatch center is reporting. Further analysis could not be completed due to lack of data from Central Dispatch. A more efficient system, with one central dispatch center, could prevent the need to have calls for service routed through multiple dispatch centers.

These dispatch system delays and challenges may be an issue, not only for residents who experience these delays, but also for firefighting personnel. Lack of radio coverage can leave firefighters vulnerable when responding to incidents if they are unable to call for help or backup when entering a building or arriving on scene. According to the Sheriff's Office, mobile radio units receive complete coverage throughout the County, however handholds do not. Additionally, the command station hardware is 17 years old and needs to be replaced. If this station were to fail, CAL FIRE Camino ECC would lose all contact with providers in

the County (Frank Yost, personal communication, February 23, 2022). According to the El Dorado County Communications Manager, no studies have been conducted or are planned to determine the efficiency and status of dispatch system infrastructure. The El Dorado County Communications Manager also relayed to consultants that the West Slope agencies would be more successful in winning grants for dispatch upgrades, such as handheld and mobile radios, by pursuing grants together than through individual applications or with a few agencies at a time. Consultants hope that the County Sheriff’s Office is in close coordination with the current Communications Manager over succession planning for anticipated retirement and recommend that any anticipated study be conducted before Mr. Yost’s departure from the department.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend a future study be conducted of the dispatch system inefficiencies to determine gaps in radio coverage and other issues that may need to be addressed to create a more efficient and safe system for residents and firefighters in the County. This study should include a review of existing infrastructure and provide recommendations for infrastructure hardening, coverage gaps, and estimated costs.

4.1.3 Tahoe Basin Dispatch

Dispatch for the County of El Dorado area of the Lake Tahoe Basin is routed through the City of South Lake Tahoe Police Dispatch Center (SLT Dispatch) and the CAL FIRE Grass Valley ECC (Grass Valley ECC). Fire agencies dispatched through the SLT Dispatch are:

- City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department (SLT)
- Lake Valley Fire Protection District (LAV)
- Fallen Leaf Lake Community Services District (FLL)
- CAL FIRE
- USFS

Calls for service throughout the Tahoe Basin continued to trend upward from 2010 to 2019 as described in each agency’s MSR Chapter in Volume II. Meeks Bay Fire Protection District (MEK) is the only agency dispatched through Grass Valley ECC within the County of El Dorado. This is due to the various agreements between MEK and North Tahoe Fire (NTF) in Placer County. More information regarding this agreement can be found in Volume II – Chapter 10, Meeks Bay Fire Protection District MSR.

Call Re-routing

As mentioned previously, all landline calls in the unincorporated areas of the County are routed through the Sheriff’s Office. This includes landlines in the unincorporated areas of the Tahoe Basin. As a result, landline 911 calls are routed through two PSAPs before being dispatched to either LAV or FLL. Through the current system, Central Dispatch with the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office receives all 911 calls by landline and will re-route to SLT Dispatch, which causes delays (Chief Savacool, personal communication, April 2021). LAV staff listen to the Sheriff Dispatch channel which allows LAV to respond to calls before even being dispatched. LAV staff are concerned about the re-routes causing delays and acknowledge that there could be several minutes from when they hear a call on the Sheriff Dispatch channel before they receive the dispatch through SLT (Chief Zlendick, personal communication, February 2021). Consultants

were not able to obtain dispatch timings for calls routed through the two PSAPs then to LAV or FLL. ~~Queries with the County Sheriff Dispatch Center received no response.~~ It is not known how long it takes for calls to be routed, nor if dispatch systems between the separate PSAPs are able to easily transfer calls.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend a future study be conducted of the dispatch system inefficiencies in the Tahoe Basin side of the County to determine gaps in radio coverage and other issues that may need to be addressed to create a more efficient and safe system for residents and firefighters in the Tahoe Basin.

Dispatch System Challenges

Reliable communications in the Lake Tahoe Basin are difficult due to the topography in the area. Microwave communications have limited success beyond a few miles due to the direct line of sight requirements needed for point-to-multipoint (PtMP) systems. The use of fiber optic communications is limited or non-existent for center-to-center (C2C) communications. Radio systems in place for the fire agencies do not provide adequate coverage for first responders and can result in significant interference in certain areas (GCTC, 2019).

The *Tahoe Transportation District's 2016 Linking Tahoe Corridor Connection Plan* (LTCCP) and Transit Master Plan identified that cross-jurisdictional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and information and communication technology are critically needed to decrease accidents and congestion, improve response times, and provide traveler information. Cellular data analysis indicated approximately 19.5 million to 29 million visitors enter the Tahoe Basin in any given year (58 percent overnight and 42 percent for day use) with the majority of visitors accessing the region on primarily a two-lane mountain highway system with Highway 50 through the County of El Dorado. Communities within the County of El Dorado side of the Tahoe Basin are in the wildland-urban interface and are considered to be “Communities at Risk” susceptible to wildfire. Growth in visitation is expected to occur from the metropolitan of the Sierra Pacific Megaregion, extending from the San Francisco Bay Area to Reno, with visitors driving to Lake Tahoe to enjoy world-class recreation opportunities. As valley temperatures rise, extreme weather associated with an increase in winter and summer recreation travel, and an increase in visitor demand means the occurrence of a significant number of people present in the Basin who are unfamiliar with the regional driving safety requirements, evacuation protocols, routes, and ability to access information during a catastrophic event (GCTC, 2019).

The 2007 Angora Fire in the County of El Dorado near Meyers burned 3,100 acres, destroyed 242 residences, 67 commercial structures and damaged 35 other homes. At the peak of the fire there were as many as 2,810 firefighters involved in battling the blaze (Sabalow, 2019; Stockwell, 2007). Following the Angora Fire, the Bi-State Blue Ribbon Commission developed recommendations, many of which have been implemented. One shortcoming remaining in regional interoperations is the large number of dispatch centers servicing the region. There are five dispatch or command centers providing emergency services across the Lake Tahoe Basin region. Some centers are primary, and others are secondary (Public Safety Answering Points - PSAP) using several different Computer-Assisted Dispatch (CAD) platforms with limited ability to transfer emergency calls from CAD to CAD. This leads to phone transfers of emergency callers often multiple times, culminating in duplicate dispatches, increased call taking times, and uncoordinated responses. These practices are also not in alignment with the National Academies of

Emergency Dispatch’s best practices. Finding 42 of The Emergency California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission Report (2008) identified that “Interagency communications during wildland fire occurrences is at times delayed and confusing” (GCTC, 2019).

As of May 2021, the City of South Lake Tahoe is allocating resources towards updating the existing 40-year-old SLT Dispatch center software and equipment which the current Fire Chief described as antiquated. It was determined that an upgrade would be more efficient than replacement of existing equipment. The new system being pursued by the City would: add a new alerting system in all participating fire stations; build redundancies into the system to ensure no loss in communications should one system fail (also called “hardening” the system); upgrade mobile command for mobile dispatching during a disaster; and improve interoperability between Nevada and California agencies. The City is also looking at using geolocation software on all participating fire agency units to dispatch the closest resource more accurately to incidents as opposed to the current system which dispatches the closest agency (Chief Savacool, personal communication, April 2021).

The Fire Chief for LAV mentioned that the SLT Dispatch primary repeater for the area does not reach many areas of the LAV District. LAV owns and maintains a repeater located on the Angora Ridge which will simulcast transmissions. This repeater on the Angora Ridge allows LAV and FLL to receive all communications (Chief Zlendick, personal communication, February 2021). As mentioned above, the City is aware of gaps in the system and will be working diligently within the next few years to make the necessary upgrades.

Addendum: Consultants were provided more detailed information from the SLT Fire Department Chief regarding upgrades that have been approved by South Lake Tahoe City Council on September 17, 2021 and December 15, 2020.

The City is anticipating spending over \$5 million for a major communications system upgrade. With these upgrades, the City will have four towers to greatly improve radio coverage for both fire and police. The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is also being upgraded to utilize Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) to transition dispatching from zone based to GPS based. Each fire apparatus and chief officer from all jurisdictions will have a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) in their vehicle showing maps, location of other resources, and incident information. This will create a true closest resource dispatching process that will significantly improve incident response and will eliminate a lot of unnecessary radio traffic as crews will be able to communicate with dispatchers via the MDT. Additionally, other agencies in the Tahoe Basin will be able to be tracked and dispatched through this CAD system as long as they have a tablet or smartphone tied to their vehicle to this system.

The City approved a sole-source CAD option in order install the same CAD system utilized by the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office. This way, both dispatch centers will be on the same system and can mutually track each other’s resources. This will also provide a backup for each dispatch center in the event that one location fails, the other dispatch center can coordinate and communicate with the other’s resources. The upgrades are anticipated to be completed around Quarter 3 of 2022 and will make the South Lake Tahoe Dispatch Center the most technologically advanced dispatch center in the Tahoe Basin (Chief Savacool, personal communication, February 23, 2022).

4.4 Determinations

Based on the information included in this report, the following written determinations make statements involving each service factor which the Commission must consider as part of a municipal service review. The determinations listed below are based upon data presented in this chapter and are recommended to the Commission for consideration. The Commission’s final MSR determinations will be part of a Resolution which the Commission formally adopts during a public meeting.

4.4.1 *Dispatch Call and Response*

- All fire agencies within the County operate with automatic and mutual aid, boundary drop, and closest resource agreements. All fire agencies in the County along with CAL FIRE are dispatched automatically as the closest resource to any calls for service, regardless of agency boundaries. This creates continuous automatic aid across agency boundaries and ensures that all calls are answered as quickly as possible for all residents and visitors to the County.
- Through the current system, Central Dispatch with the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office receives all 911 calls by land line and will re-route to either Camino ECC or SLT Dispatch, which ~~causes~~ may cause delays. **Recommendation:** Consultants recommend that a future study be conducted of the dispatch system inefficiencies including time delays in re-routing calls for service. The study should also determine gaps in radio coverage and other issues that may need to be addressed to create a more efficient and safe system for residents and firefighters in the County. This study should include a review of existing infrastructure and provide recommendations for infrastructure hardening, coverage gaps, and estimated costs.
- All agencies appear to meet response time standards as described in the County of El Dorado General Plan, Public Services and Utilities Element based on the average response time for 2019. Fire agencies meeting response times based on agency goals are varied. Consultants recommend a more thorough analysis on response time data be conducted through an update to the Fire and Emergency Services Study.

West Slope

- Fire agencies on the West Slope are dispatched through CAL FIRE Camino Emergency Command Center.
- Based on the Response Plans, the number of personnel on each piece of equipment per fire agency on the West Slope dictates the number of additional resources that CAL FIRE Camino ECC will request for each type of incident. This can lead to more resources being dispatched for certain calls for certain fire agencies when compared to others, causing an unequal burden of responses for some agencies. **Recommendation:** LAFCO consider reviewing trends of calls received versus responded to by agencies and how staff levels may play a role in this disparity at the next MSR/SOI Update.
- For the West Slope, CAL FIRE Camino ECC dispatches all resources needed for each incident, even if not all of the responding resources end up being needed. This is beneficial in that the system not only ensures an adequate weight of attack, but is also safer for firefighting personnel. Firefighters can rely on additional resources for incidents instead of playing ‘catchup’

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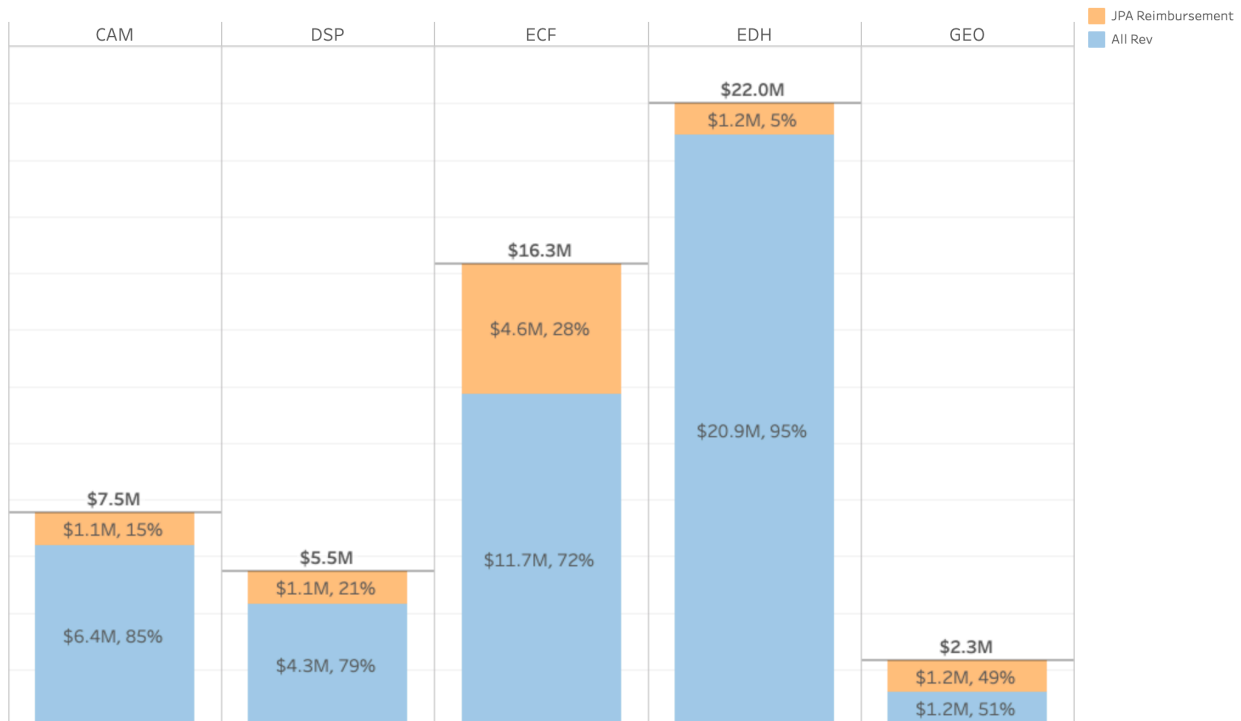
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Fire Agency	Ambulance Identifier	JPA Providing Funding	Reimbursement Amount Received from JPA for FY 2018/2019
LAV	Medic 7, Medic 6 (Reserve)	Cal Tahoe	\$692,276.00

Source: FY 2018/2019 audited financial statements per agency
**DSP did not include ambulance reimbursement in the FY 2018/2019 audited financial statement. This amount was provided to consultants via email.*

Each participating agency on the West Slope is under a service agreement with the West Slope JPA and receives the same flat rate monthly payment of \$95,833.33 per ambulance. The current contract for the West Slope JPA with the County was awarded in July 2018 and runs for five years. The contract totals \$56.5 million with an additional \$500,000 annually for the first three (3) years for repair and replacement of capital assets. Fire agency staff have expressed to consultants that they are subsidizing the ambulance service in the County. Information regarding how much, if any, each agency is subsidizing ambulance services can be found in each agency’s specific MSR chapter. The LAFCO Ad Hoc Committee requested a graph showing the JPA reimbursements compared to total revenue. Figure 5-3 below shows the breakdown of each agency’s total revenue in FY 2018/2019 compared to the JPA reimbursements each agency received for that fiscal year.

Figure 5-3: FY 2018/2019 Total Revenue vs. JPA Reimbursement

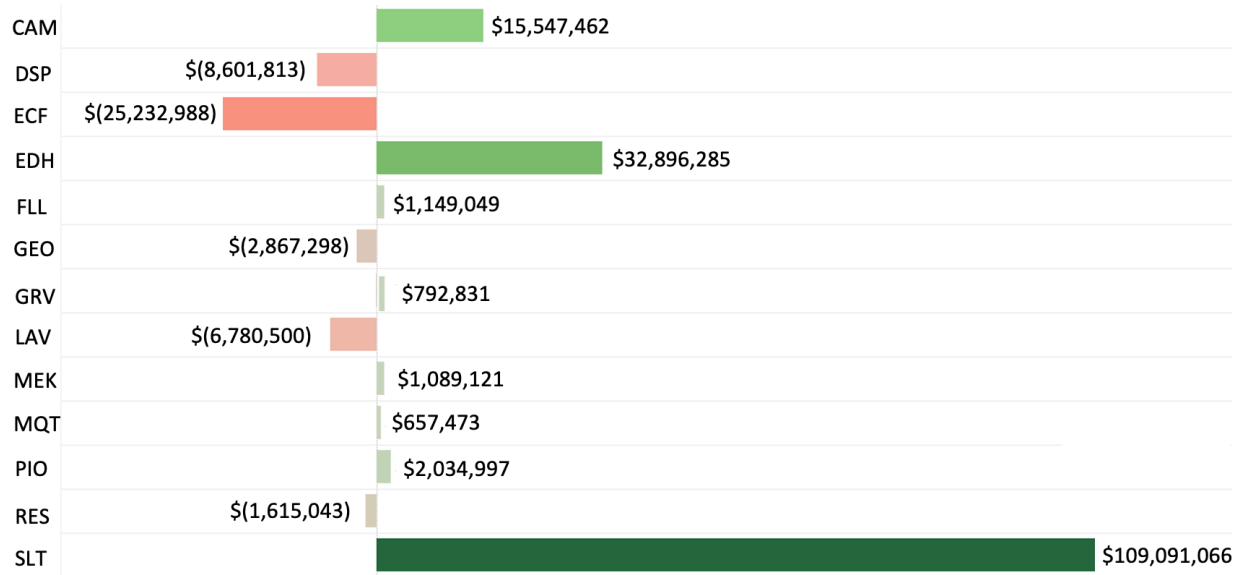


JPA reimbursements made up over a quarter of total revenue for GEO and ECF and almost a quarter for DSP. For GEO, JPA reimbursements accounted for just under half of all revenue for FY 2018/2019. Based on FY 2018/2019 revenues, it would be extremely difficult for these three agencies to make up the difference if JPA reimbursements were to be reapportioned elsewhere.

5.3.5 Agency Net Positions

The Statement of Net Position for each agency as of June 30, 2019 is shown in Figure 5-12.

Figure 5-12: Agency Net Positions (June 30, 2019)



The Net Position comes from each agency’s audited financial statements (except for GRV) and includes a summary of each agency’s assets, deferred outflows of resources, and liabilities, which provide information about the nature, and amounts of investments in assets and obligations to the agency’s creditors. It also provides the basis for computing rates of return, evaluating the capital structure of the agencies and assessing the financial flexibility of each agency. GRV did not have audited financial statements available for review, therefore consultants utilized County ledgers. ECF has the highest negative net position at approximately \$25 million while SLT has the highest positive net position at approximately \$109 million. Though the net positions appear to show the majority of the agencies in the County are in good financial position, this is only a snapshot of time that does not tell the whole story. A look at overall trends in revenues over/under expenditures as discussed in the next section illustrates if agencies with a positive position are having to pull from reserves to cover expenditures or if agencies in a negative position are able to save excess revenues year over year. For this analysis, consultants reviewed the audited financial statements for each agency from FY 2017-2018 to FY 2018-2019 and the budgets for FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021. ~~It should be noted that~~The CalPERS UAL is included in the statements of net position for those agencies that participate in CalPERS.

Net Position without Net Pension Liability

The LAFCO Ad Hoc Committee requested consultants provide a net position summary graph that excluded the net pension liability for those agencies that participate in CalPERS as of June 30, 2019. This analysis utilized the FY 2018/2019 audited financial statements for each agency and excluded the “Net pension liability” line-item from the Liabilities section in the Statement of Net Position. Figure 5-12 shows the Agency Net Positions as of June 30, 2019 with the net pension liability removed.

Net Position without Net Pension Liability

The LAFCO Ad Hoc Committee requested consultants provide a net position summary graph that excluded the net pension liability for those agencies that participate in CalPERS as of June 30, 2019. This analysis utilized the FY 2018/2019 audited financial statements for each agency and excluded the “Net pension liability” line-item from the Liabilities section in the Statement of Net Position. Figure 5-12 shows the Agency Net Positions as of June 30, 2019 with the net pension liability removed.

Figure 5-13: Agency Net Positions (June 30, 2019) with Net Pension Liability removed



In general, agencies that were in a net negative position moved to a net positive position. Only DSP and GEO remained in a net negative position. Though GRV participates in CalPERS, the *unaudited financial compellations* received from the County Auditor-Controller’s Office, does not clearly define which liability on the General Ledger is the net pension liability. Therefore, GRV could not be included in this analysis and is not shown in Figure 5-12, even though they participate in CalPERS. While removing the net pension liability may create a closer “apples to apples” comparison between all agencies in the County, those that do participate in CalPERS still need to grapple with the anticipated increases in UAL payments to CalPERS, which could represent a significant financial challenge. Consultants caution making any decisions regarding the financial health of these agencies with the net pension liability removed.

Trends in Revenues Over/Under Expenditures

The five agencies with a negative net position include DSP, ECF, GEO, GRV, and LAV. Based on the revenues over/under expenditures for these agencies from FY 2017-2018 to FY 2020-2021, DSP, GRV, and LAV are trending in a positive direction with anticipated revenues over expenditures through FY 2020-2021, allowing these agencies the opportunity to add to reserves. GEO and ECF are trending downward with the amount of revenues over expenditures continuing to decline. It should also be noted that the budgets for FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021 do not include anticipated Strike Team reimbursements except for GRV which budgeted for Strike team reimbursements in their budgets. While it appears that DSP, GRV, and LAV are trending in a positive direction, the severity of the net position is not likely to be largely affected

Two additional criteria were evaluated for each fire agency based on information contained in this chapter as well as Volume I - Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure. These criteria are as follows:

- 1) At least 70 percent of Agency revenue is from recurring revenue sources in FY 2018/2019; and
- 2) 25 percent or less of calls for service were answered by another agency through automatic aid in 2019.

These two additional criteria were added to the scoring system based on information discussed in the 2011 MSR and 2010 FESS. Scoring of these two criteria for each agency were based on the following:

- For Criteria No. 1, agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised more than 70 percent of total revenue received a score of 2, agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised more than 60 percent of total revenue received a score of 1, and agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised less than 60 percent of total revenue received a score of 0.
- For Criteria No. 2, agencies in which 0 to 10 percent of total calls for service were answered by another agency received a score of 2; agencies in which greater than 10, but less than 25 percent of total calls for service were answered by another agency received a score of 1; and agencies in which 25 percent or greater of total calls for service were answered by another agency received a score of 0.

The total agency scores were categorized in a range of conditions as follows:

- Scores from 0 to 3 are in a “Deficient” condition;
- Scores from 4 to 8 are in a “Limited” condition;
- Scores from 9 to 13 are in a “Fair” condition; and
- Scores from 14 to 18 are in an “Great” condition.

Each West Slope agency’s final score and condition are listed in Table 5-7 below.

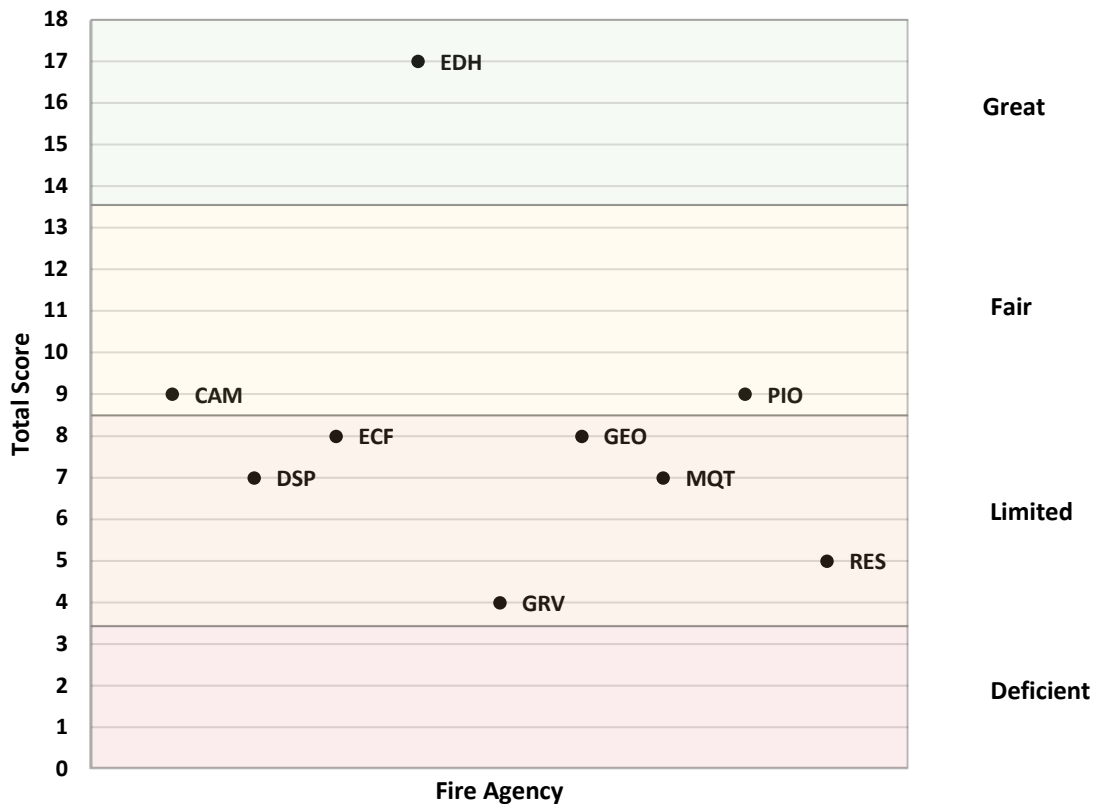
Table 5-7: Fiscal and Deployment Condition of Fire Agencies, 2020

Fire Agency	Total Score	Condition Category
CAM	9	Fair
DSP	7	Limited
ECF	8	Limited
EDH	17	Great
GRV	34	Limited Deficient
GEO	8	Limited
MQT	7	Limited

Fire Agency	Total Score	Condition Category
PIO	9	Fair
RES	5	Limited

As shown in Table 5-7, EDH is the only fire agency on the West Slope with a score in the “Great” category. Much of this is due to the substantial and stable revenue enjoyed by this agency which allows EDH to generally meet above average standards for determinations as well as receive the highest number of points for the two additional criteria. Two agencies (CAM and PIO) are within the “Fair” category. These agencies, though receiving less revenue than an agency in the “Great” category, generally meet above average or average for determinations and received at least one point for the two additional criteria. The remaining ~~six~~ seven fire agencies are in the “Limited” ~~and “Deficient”~~ category ~~with five (DSP, ECF, GEO, RES, and MQT) and one (GRV) respectively.~~ These fire agencies are struggling to secure financial resources, are generally scored average or below average for determinations, and did not receive points for at least one of the two additional criteria. The scores represent a point on a spectrum of possible scoring between each category. ~~Figure 5-165-14~~ Figure 5-14 on the next page provides a visual of that spectrum.

Figure 5-~~165-14~~ 14: Fiscal and Deployment Conditions of Fire Agencies as a Spectrum



GRV is just one point ~~below~~ above “Deficient.” RES is within the “Limited” condition by two points from “Deficient” and DSP and MQT are two points from the “Fair” condition. ECF and GEO are one point below “Fair” while CAM and PIO are one point above “Limited.” EDH is firmly within the “Great” condition. Due to the difficulties in comparing the 2011 MSR, it is not clear if these agencies are trending towards “Great” or towards “Deficient.”

Tahoe Basin

For the Tahoe Basin agencies, total scores have the ability to range from 0 at the lowest to 16 at the highest. Agencies that did not have ratings for one or more of these specific MSR determinations due to complications with receiving the necessary information were given a 0 score for that determination. The determinations from the agency MSR Chapters utilized for the scoring process are the same as the West Slope agencies. One additional criterion was evaluated for each fire agency based on information contained in this chapter. This criterion is as follows:

- 1) At least 70 percent of Agency revenue is from recurring revenue sources in FY 2018/2019.

Only this criterion could be evaluated for the Tahoe Basin agencies due to complications with available data from SLT Dispatch. More information about dispatch data limitations can be found in Volume I – Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure. Scoring of this criterion for each agency was based on the following:

- For Criteria No. 1, agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised more than 70 percent of total revenue received a score of 2, agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised more than 60 percent of total revenue received a score of 1, and agencies in which revenue from recurring sources comprised less than 60 percent of total revenue received a score of 0.

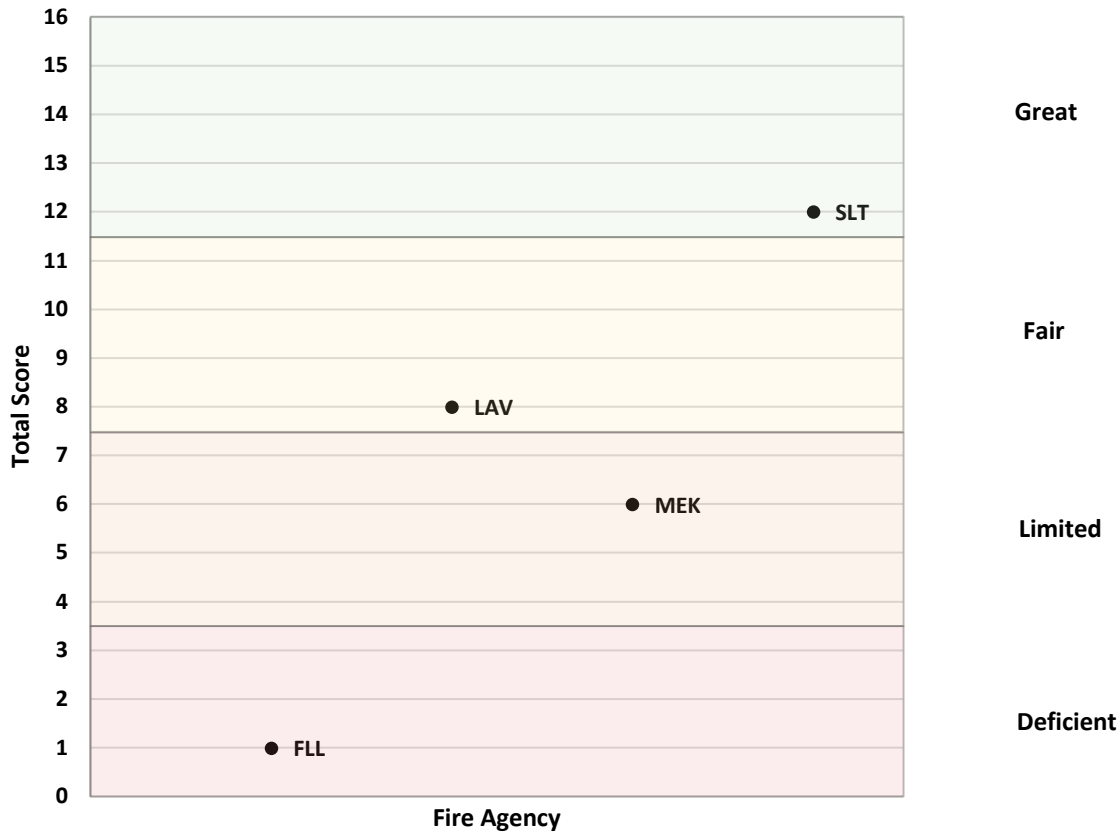
The total agency scores were categorized in a range of conditions as follows:

- Scores from 0 to 3 are in a “Deficient” condition;
- Scores from 4 to 7 are in a “Limited” condition;
- Scores from 8 to 11 are in a “Fair” condition; and
- Scores from 12 to 16 are in an “Great” condition.

Each Tahoe Basin agency’s final score and condition are listed in Table 5-8 below. One of the four agencies in the Tahoe Basin fell into one of the four categories. SLT received a score in the “Great” category. Much of this is due to the substantial revenue enjoyed by the City Fire Department which allows the City to generally meet above average standards for determinations as well as receive one point for the additional criterion.

Table 5-8: Fiscal and Deployment Condition of Fire Agencies, 2020

Fire Agency	Total Score	Condition Category
FLL	1	Deficient



Summary Results

Overall, ~~nine-ten~~ of the 13 fire protection and emergency medical services agencies in the County are within “Limited” or “Fair” condition. Only two agencies are in “Great” condition and ~~two-one are-is~~ in “Deficient” condition. Because comparisons cannot be drawn between where an agency’s condition is for this MSR/SOI Update compared to the 2011 MSR, it is not clear if any agencies are trending in a negative direction or a positive direction. The scoring for this MSR/SOI Update utilized four different scoring conditions as opposed to the 2011 MSR and 2010 FESS in which only three were utilized. Consultants for this MSR/SOI Update specifically did not use the same language to identify agency conditions in order to avoid the appearance of trends being drawn between the two condition estimates. The inability to directly compare the 2011 MSR to this MSR/SOI Update is due to the lack of clarity in the 2011 MSR and 2010 FESS that made it impossible to exactly replicate the rationale for each agency’s 2011 condition.

Though consultants would not recommend any inference to be made between the two separate conditions attached to each agency in 2010 and 2020, for the sake of providing a loose analysis of how the agencies may have shifted over the last 10 years, a possible correlation could be considered. Assuming the “Best” 2010 condition and “Great” 2020 condition were considered similar; the “Modest/Stretched Services” 2010 condition and “Fair” 2020 condition were considered similar; and if the two scores of “Limited” and “Deficient” for the 2020 condition were to be considered similar to the “Unstable” condition for 2010, the following trend could be suggested as shown in Table 5-9 below.

Table 5-9: 2020 Condition Categories versus 2010 Condition Categories & Possible Trend

Fire Agency	2020 Total Score	2020 Condition Category	2010 Condition Category	2020 Possible Condition Categories
CAM	9	Fair	Best	Modest/Stretched Services
DSP	7	Limited	Best	Unstable
ECF	8	Limited	Modest/Stretched Services	Unstable
EDH	17	Great	Best	Best
FLL	1	Deficient	Unstable	Unstable
GRV	34	Limited/Deficient	Unstable	Unstable
GEO	8	Limited	Unstable	Unstable
LAV	8	Fair	Best	Modest/Stretched Services
MEK	6	Limited	Best	Unstable
MQT	7	Limited	Unstable	Unstable
PIO	9	Fair	Unstable	Modest/Stretched Services
RES	5	Limited	Modest/Stretched Services	Unstable
SLT	12	Great	Best	Best

As mentioned, consultants hesitate to make any inference between the 2010 condition and the 2020 condition estimates. Because of the difficulty in drawing one to one comparisons between the two condition years, it is not advisable for any inference to be drawn. For the sake of providing this loose analysis however, it appears that many of the agencies that were considered in “Best” condition in 2010 are now in the “Modest/Stretched Services” or “Unstable” condition for 2020 with only one agency appearing to move in a positive direction from “Unstable” to “Modest/Stretched Services.” Because it is not precisely clear what exactly caused an agency to be considered “Best”, “Modest/Stretched Services” or “Unstable” in 2010, a direct correlation between the condition in 2010 and those for 2020 cannot be determined. The next MSR/SOI Update should be able to replicate the existing analysis to be able to accurately compare the 2020 fiscal and deployment condition of the agencies in the County with future conditions.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend that the next MSR/SOI Update utilize the same scoring criteria outlined in this section to determine trends in the fiscal and deployment conditions of the fire agencies.

5.5 Alternative Financing Options

The 2011 MSR provided multiple avenues for agencies to increase finances beyond those already explored. A big factor in the discussions in 2011 was the potential for annexation or consolidations between agencies. The following section details those financial options and suggests an additional option for County fire agencies to consider. An additional resource available to fire agencies in the County is the

Funding Alternatives for Emergency Medical and Fire Services produced by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA is updating this guide to provide local-level EMS and fire departments with comprehensive information about funding sources. The estimated release date is January 2022 (FEMA, 2021). More information can be found at: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/grants/>.

5.5.1 ERAF Funds Retained (2011 MSR “Plan A”)

This option is detailed in the 2011 MSR and suggests that the merging of fire districts to retain ERAF funds could allow for the benefits of consolidation while retaining local control. Proposition 98 shifted partial financial responsibility for funding education to local government through the allocation of local property tax revenues to “educational revenue augmentation funds” (ERAFs). Districts with “multi-county” agencies were made exempt from [the 1993/94 ERAF shift](#). “Multi-county” agencies are those local governments whose service area span more than one County. For the County of El Dorado, EDH and LAV are exempt as their service areas cross into neighboring counties. This option centers around the premise that the ERAF exemption could be extended into other districts if they merge with EDH or LAV. If this were to occur, the majority of the funds being diverted from the fire agencies to education would be retained to fund fire protection and emergency medical services. [Consultants are aware of legal precedent that may allow for the ERAF exemption to be extended through the merging of districts.](#)

This scenario may relieve some of the funding constraints felt by many of the fire agencies in the County, however political will and community support would be necessary to begin the process of merging fire agencies. This option was brought to the fire agencies back in 2011 and no apparent movement has been made to further this option since. The difficulties in merging fire agencies in the County without the political will by the agencies to do so may make this option unattainable in the current political climate. Unless there is significant buy-in to move this option forward, it is unlikely for this option to succeed.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend that this option be considered as a discussion item for the proposed Fire Summit (Details regarding the Fire Summit can be found in Volume I - Chapter 6).

5.5.2 Adjustment to the CSA 7 Ambulance Services West Slope Special Tax (2011 MSR “Plan B”)

This option is detailed in the 2011 MSR and suggests an adjustment to the Ambulance Services West Slope Special Tax for CSA 7. This would affect the nine agencies that operate within the West Slope. The proposal for this option in the 2011 MSR is as follows:

- Adding an escalator to the charge so that revenue collection can keep up with the rising costs of materials and fuel;
- Tying the tax to the number of living units instead of parcels since several multi-bed facilities and elderly care residents, which generate a high number of calls, are located within a single parcel;
- Expand the types of services it funds to fire-based Basic Life Support (BLS) medical services; and
- Indicate that the current special tax remains in place in case the voters reject the proposed adjustment.

financial plans that provide a timeline for facility improvements, anticipated future staffing needs, and apparatus replacement schedules with identified funding sources.

- On behalf of its full-time employees, all but three of the fire agencies contribute pension payments to the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS). The agencies that participate in CalPERS are required to meet the UAL payments every fiscal year.
- In conversations with consultants, some agencies expressed concern keeping pace with CalPERS UAL obligations year over year.
- For all UAL plan payments, increases are anticipated up to 30-40 percent by FY 2024/2025.
- It is not clear how agencies are planning to meet these increases in employer contributions

5.6.4 Agency Net Positions

- Though the net positions appear to show the majority of the agencies in the County are in good financial position, this is only a snapshot of time that does not tell the whole story.
- There is variability in the fiscal conditions of each agency based on revenues over/under expenditures for each fiscal year studied. Some agencies appear to be drawing down from reserves to cover expenditures over revenues, while others appear to have excess revenues available year over year.
- Multiple factors affect an agency's net position with some agencies covering a much higher UAL than others.

5.6.5 2020 Fiscal and Deployment Conditions

- For 2020 Fiscal and Deployment Condition Estimates, a score for each fire agency was created based on specific MSR determinations within each agency MSR Chapter and two new criteria.
- Overall, nine-ten of the 13 agencies in the County are within "Limited" or "Fair" condition. Only two agencies are in "Great" condition and two-one are-is in a "Deficient" condition.
- The inability to directly compare the 2011 MSR to this MSR/SOI Update is due to the lack of criteria in the 2011 MSR and 2010 FESS that made it impossible to exactly replicate the rationale for each agency's 2011 condition.
- The scoring for this MSR/SOI Update utilized 4 different conditions as opposed to the 2011 MSR and 2010 FESS in which only three were utilized. Consultants for this MSR/SOI Update specifically did not use the same language to identify agency conditions in order to avoid the appearance of trends being drawn between the two condition estimates. **Recommendation:** Consultants recommend that the next MSR/SOI Update utilize the same scoring criteria outlined in this section to determine trends in the fiscal and deployment conditions of the fire agencies.

5.6.6 Alternative Financing Options

- 2011 MSR "Plan A" may relieve some of the funding constraints felt by many of the fire agencies in the County, however political will and community support would be necessary to begin the process of merging fire agencies. **Recommendation:** Consultants recommend that the 2011 MSR "Plan A" option be considered as a discussion item for the proposed Fire Summit.

**Volume I – Chapter 6
Sphere of Influence Study and Determinations
Markup Pages**

- Diamond Springs/El Dorado Fire Protection District
- Georgetown Fire Protection District
- Garden Valley Fire Protection District
- Mosquito Fire Protection District
- Pioneer Fire Protection District
- Rescue Fire Protection District

6.3 Existing Services and Infrastructure

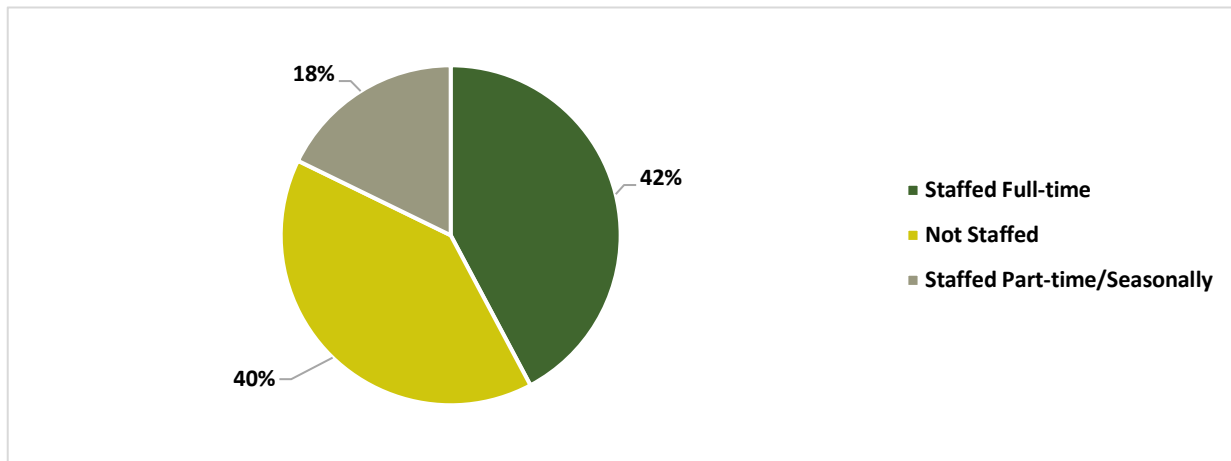
A brief review of existing services and infrastructure for fire protection and emergency medical services agencies in the County will help to inform the Sphere of Influence (SOI) discussion including any proposed changes in SOI or boundary adjustments between fire agencies. This section details a countywide overview of staffing and infrastructure for fire agencies in the County divided into the West Slope and the Tahoe Basin geographic areas. A total of 55 fire stations are located throughout the County. Some stations have historically been solely volunteer stations while others have been consistently operated by full-time personnel. On the West Slope, there are 46 stations, while there are 9 stations in the Tahoe Basin side of the County.

6.3.1 Station Staffing

West Slope

Nine fire agencies provide fire protection and emergency medical services on the West Slope including seven fire protection districts, one county water district, and one community services district. All agencies own and staff at least one fire station. Appendix G lists the agency, station number, address, and staffing status for all fire stations in the County for 2020. Stations are staffed either full-time (24/7/365), part-time and/or seasonally, or not staffed at all. For this analysis, career versus volunteer staffing is not analyzed. Some of the stations that are not staffed as of 2020 were historically staffed by volunteers. As shown in Figure 6-1, based on information gathered by consultants from each fire agency in 2020, 19 stations are staffed full time, ~~20-18~~ are not staffed, and ~~seven-eight~~ are staffed part-time or seasonally.

Figure 6-1: Percent of Stations Staffed versus Not Staffed on the West Slope



Of the stations that are not staffed, nine (55 percent) were historically staffed by volunteers. In the *2010 Fire and Emergency Services Study (FESS)* conducted by Citygate, it was determined that approximately 300 volunteers were available to the County for daily minimum staffing. It was also noted that all fire agencies reported active volunteer associations. For this MSR/SOI Update, consultants found that only the following agencies still utilize volunteers:

- Cameron Park Community Services District (CAM)
- Garden Valley Fire Protection District (GRV)
- Georgetown Fire Protection District (GEO)
- Mosquito Fire Protection District (MQT)
- Pioneer Fire Protection District (PIO)
- Rescue Fire Protection District (RES)

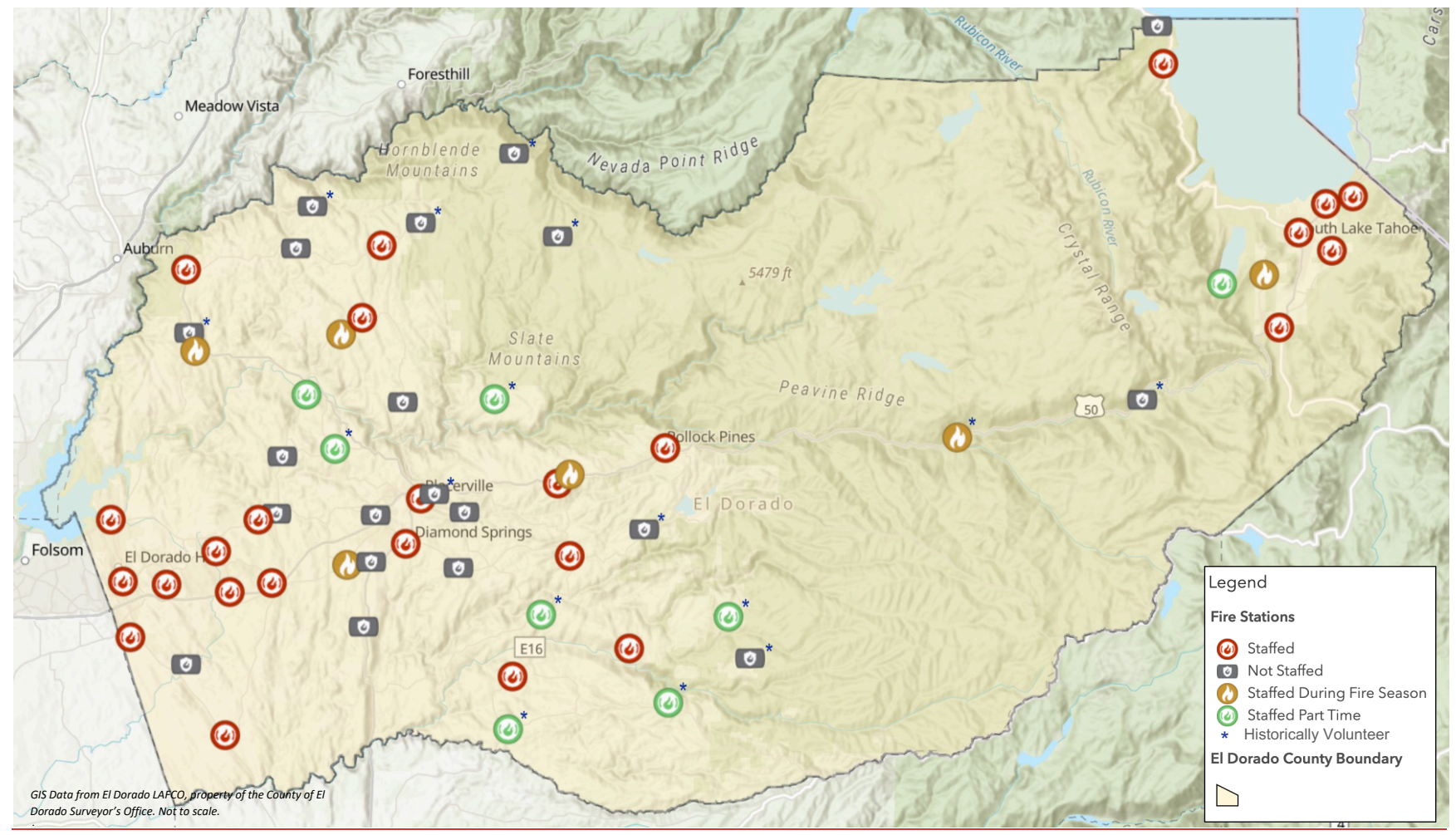
Of the agencies that still utilize volunteers, it is estimated that approximately 150 volunteers are available countywide. This is significantly less than the roughly 300 volunteers that were available throughout the County in 2010. Though nine of the ~~20-18~~ stations were historically staffed by volunteers, they are no longer staffed. This lack of coverage may exacerbate the two points made by the 2010 FESS:

- 1) The resources for the most part are very widely spaced, meaning the initial crew is very limited in serious emergencies and has to wait for resources from a distance or for volunteers to arrive; and
- 2) Given the light staffing per resource and the wide station spacing, serious fires may not get enough total firefighters quickly enough, which means the fire grows to greater alarms.

With the loss of volunteers at these nine stations, it is likely that the already identified “wide station spacing” is worsened by stations that are no longer staffed, even with volunteers. Figure 6-2 shows station locations and staffing status of each station in 2020. The stations that are “Staffed During Fire Season” are CAL FIRE or USFS stations, or they are staffed seasonally by these two entities through agreements with a fire agency in the County. Stations that are “Staffed Part Time” are staffed by that agency either with career firefighters or volunteers and are not staffed 24/7/365. Stations that are “Staffed” are staffed 24/7/365 by career firefighters and/or volunteers; and stations that are “Not Staffed” do not have any staff, either volunteers or paid personnel, deployed from the station.

Many of the unstaffed stations are scattered throughout the West Slope and are used to house equipment and apparatus. The largest gap between staffed stations appears to be along the US Highway 50 Corridor from ECF Station No. 17 in Pollock Pines to LAV Station No. 7 in Meyers. Three agencies in the County own multiple stations within their boundaries, but only staff one station. Not only are ~~44-42~~ percent of County stations not staffed, most fire agencies within the County also do not meet minimum national standards for staffing levels on apparatus during shifts at the stations that are staffed.

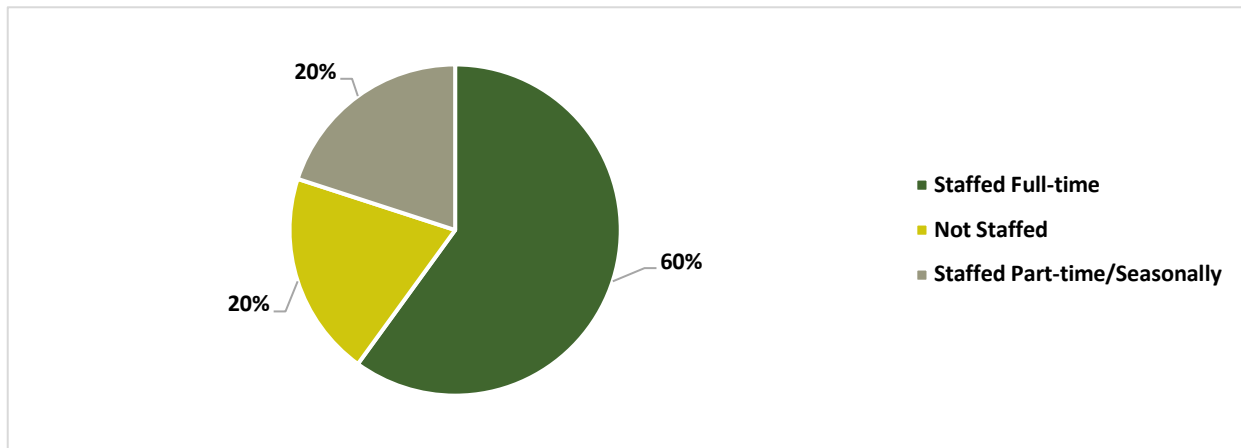
Figure 6-2: Station Locations and Staffing Status, 2020



Tahoe Basin

Three agencies provide fire and emergency medical services in the Tahoe Basin which is comprised of two fire protection districts and one City. All agencies in the Tahoe Basin own and staff at least one fire station as listed in Appendix G. Stations are staffed either full-time (24/7/365), Part-time and/or seasonally, or not staffed at all. For this analysis, career versus volunteer staffing is not analyzed. As shown in Figure 6-3 based on information gathered by consultants from each fire agency, six stations are staffed full time, two are not staffed, and ~~one~~two are staffed part-time or seasonally.

Figure 6-3: Percent of Stations Staffed versus Not Staffed in the Tahoe Basin



None of the fire agencies in the Tahoe Basin utilize volunteers. LAV is considering restarting its volunteer program within the next few years due to local citizens expressing an interest in volunteering. The distribution of stations and staffing status in the Tahoe Basin can be seen in Figure 6-2. Due to the high number of staffed stations, the Tahoe Basin appears to have adequate coverage, though it should be noted that the topography, seasonal variability of weather and visitor traffic, and narrow two-lane mountain roads can make access to areas challenging.

6.3.2 Staffing Levels

As discussed in Volume II - Chapter 1, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Agency MSR General Information, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1710 for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments recommends departments operate under a (4-0) staffing model, meaning four firefighters on an engine. Through conversations with the fire chiefs in the County as well as preliminary research into staffing statewide, consultants found that, though not ideal, many fire agencies throughout the State are only able to provide (3-0) staffing, meaning three firefighters on an engine. This loss of one firefighter per engine has become a minimum acceptable standard due to budgetary constraints for many rural and underfunded fire agencies. Research outlined in Volume II - Chapter 1, suggests that the safest option is for (4-0) staffing, which allows responding crews to immediately begin fire suppression tactics upon arrival and safely enter structure fires without needing to wait for assistance. Although a (3-0) staffing model is not acceptable by NFPA 1710, some fire suppression tactics are able to begin with this model when compared to even lower staffing models. In

addition, many fire chiefs in the County, through interviews with consultants, acknowledged that (3-0) staffing, though not meeting with the NFPA 1710 standards, has become the minimum acceptable level for many fire service providers throughout the state. Thus, consultants used (3-0) staffing as a minimum standard when reviewing staffing levels for fire agencies in the County.

In addition, two agencies in the County have determined that the standard for NFPA 1720 as Combination Fire Departments is applicable to their district. NFPA 1720 is the Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments. This standard is also relevant to combination fire departments. Combination fire departments are defined by NFPA 1720 as departments which have emergency service personnel comprising less than 85 percent majority of either volunteer or career staff. Staffing requirements for NFPA 1720 can be found in Volume II - Chapter 1. These two agencies have indicated to consultants that minimum staffing in demand zones based on response times for these districts meet the objective standards outlined in NFPA 1720. As shown in Table 6-1, ten (77 percent) fire agencies in the County are not meeting the minimum standard of (3-0) staffing some or all of the time.

Table 6-1: Agency and Staffing Model (2020)

Agency	Staffing Model
West Slope	
CAM	2-0
DSP	3-0/4-0
ECF	2-0/3-0
EDH	3-0/4-0
GEO	Combined* (1-0)
GRV	<u>Volunteer* (1-0)</u>
MQT	Combined* (2-0/3-0)
PIO	1-0 [†]
RES	2-0
Tahoe Basin	
FLL	2-0
LAV	2-0
MEK	2-0
SLT	3-0/4-0
<i>Source: Interviews with Fire Chiefs for each agency by consultants</i> <i>*GEO, GRV, and MQT each operate as a combination <u>or volunteer</u> fire department under NFPA 1720. More information can be found in the MSR Chapter for <u>GEO and MQT</u> these Districts.</i> <i>[†] PIO does not meet NFPA 1710 or 1720 standards.</i>	

On the West Slope, five-four fire agencies do not meet minimum staffing requirements for career fire departments under NFPA 1710 some or all of the time. Three fire agencies are operating at or above NFPA 1710 standards some or all of the time. Two-Three agencies operate as combination or volunteer fire agencies with a combination of career and volunteer personnel under NFPA 1720. Those agencies that are combination or volunteer fire departments as defined under NFPA 1720 are operating at the NFPA

1720 standards but have expressed challenges retaining volunteers over the long term. [The Fire Chief for PIO informed consultants that it is not possible for the District to meet the staffing requirements of NFPA 1710 or 1720 \(Chief Whitt, personal communication, April 11, 2022\).](#)

In order to meet OSHA requirements as outlined Volume II - Chapter 1, the fire agencies operating with less than three firefighters to an engine would need to wait for aid or resources from another station when responding to structure fires before entering the building. As discussed in Volume I - Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure, dispatch will send out the closest resource based on the Response Plans regardless of agency and based on the location of resources at the time of the dispatch. Response Plans also set standards for the number of resources dispatched per incident type. This system leads to more resources being dispatched for certain calls for certain fire agencies when compared to others. If a fire agency has two personnel per engine, that agency's Response Plan may require more engines dispatched from neighboring agencies to certain call types versus a fire agency that has four personnel per engine and would likely not require as many additional engines for the same call type. CAL FIRE Camino ECC staff acknowledges that if each fire agency within the County were staffed at the minimum standard (3-0) model (three firefighting personnel per engine) then fewer resources would need to be dispatched per incident. This would allow for more resources to be available for other incidents; increase the County fire agencies' ability to respond to simultaneous incidents; reduce the amount of liability for the fire agencies responding; as well as minimize the wear and tear on equipment (CAL FIRE Assistant Chief Newman, personal communication, December 2020).

In the [Tahoe Basin](#), only SLT operates at the minimum standard (3-0) model and also provides some level of staffing at NFPA 1710 standards. The remaining three agencies operate below minimum standards and would need to wait for aid in order to meet OSHA requirements. Fire agencies in the Tahoe Basin operate together under the Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs' Association Agreement (LTRFCA) and through automatic dispatch. Member agencies in the LTRFCA provide support and aid for up to 24 hours to agencies within two hours distance at no charge. This allows for the three agencies with lower staffing to receive aid when needed through automatic aid or requested aid. As discussed in the 2010 FESS, though the Tahoe Basin was not analyzed in great detail for this report, it is likely that this area of the County has a "weight of attack" problem. Due to lack of available mutual aid data, consultants could not look further into this issue.

According to research conducted by the California Office of Emergency Service Firefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies (Cal OES FIRESCOPE), agencies of medium to smaller size can be challenged to maintain geographical coverage at times of increased emergency activity. Even under normal threat levels, a fairly routine call for service can deplete the availability of their resources and result in a degree of drawdown. If an incident becomes prolonged or requires the commitment of resources beyond the initial response, the agencies capabilities can be affected. In the case of some smaller agencies, a single resource committed to an incident can result in extreme drawdown and challenge their ability to meet their basic jurisdictional coverage responsibilities (Cal OES, 2020). On the [West Slope](#), this could account for the variations in the amount of automatic aid provided to some agencies when compared to others. As discussed within each agency MSR Chapter, due to the automatic aid system dispatching the closest available resource to any call, it is difficult to draw any specific conclusions from the amounts of aid provide and received between agencies. Consultants have found that a more detailed analysis of automatic aid is needed to determine the reasoning for variation

Addendum – New Information from RES/EDH

Consultants and LAFCO staff were informed by the EDH Fire Chief on April 11, 2022 that the EDH Board of Directors held a special meeting on April 4, 2022. The Board voted to take three actions regarding the RES Annex and Shared Services Agreement:

1. Rescind the Letter of Intent to Annex;
2. Notify RES of EDH's intent to terminate the Shared Services Agreement; and
3. Meet with the RES Board of Directors to discuss the terms of a Transitional Services Agreement.

The review conducted by consultants of Rescue Fire Protection District, as outlined in the MSR Chapter for the District, was based on the proposed annexation with EDH and the prior shared services agreement between the two agencies. As a result of this new information, consultants recommend that LAFCO conduct a Municipal Service Review of RES within 3 years of this report. In addition, based on the Feasibility Study and Proposal for Annexation completed in 2019, consultants recommend that the Commission approve the proposed SOI changes for both EDH and RES as detailed within this report to codify a future annexation between these two agencies.

Zero Sphere for MEK for Future Annexation to NTF

Volume II – Agency MSRs, Chapter 10 is the MSR for MEK and contains details as to the ability for MEK to provide services including district formation, boundary, government structure, population and land use, disadvantaged communities, finances, and the provision of fire protection and emergency medical facilities and services provided. Figure 6-7 on the next page shows the existing district boundary and SOI for MEK.

MEK has two agreements with North Tahoe Fire Protection District (NTF). The first is an agreement between MEK and NTF for fire services management. The second is the employee unification agreement providing safety personnel and employee association unification between NTF and MEK. The entire staff for MEK is employed by NTF as of November 2021 when the former Clerk for MEK retired (LAFCO, 2020a).

In the past several years, the District has taken several actions to save money, lower expenses or improve services at the same costs. Specifically, through service agreements with NTF, the District has adopted a priority driven budget process, and large capital purchases are conducted in concert with NTF and/or purchasing groups to achieve economy of scale savings (LAFCO, 2020a). MEK participates in automatic and mutual aid agreements through its contract with NTF. As indicated in the *2018 Performance Review and Examination of Alternative Governance Models Report* conducted by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI), most economy of scale and efficiency savings have already been gained using the existing agreements with NTF (NTF and MEK, 2018). Aside from consolidation, there are no additional work tasks that could be further reduced as a cost savings measure (LAFCO, 2020a).

The *2018 Performance Review and Examination of Alternative Governance Models Report* outlines potential actions by LAFCO or others that could assist in addressing challenges faced by MEK (NTF and MEK, 2018). One option described is the legal unification of MEK and NTF as a reorganization and

chiefs interviewed for the preparation of this MSR/SOI Update did not suggest that the variation in agency responses to automatic aid are a hindrance or concern. Even those agencies that provided more aid to their neighbors than they received in 2019 tout the system as a benefit to the County. These relationships and the close coordination between agencies are a benefit to the County as evidenced through the continued success of the automatic dispatch system even with the wide disparities in aid received and provided between agencies as shown in Volume I - Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure. These relationships are likely to further agencies organically coming to decisions, such as consolidation, to benefit their communities.

The concluding analysis from the 2011 MSR, the 2019 LAFCO study session, and the 2010 FESS outlines the revenue availability for some fire agencies over others as one of the major barriers to consolidation. This MSR/SOI Update finds that the majority of the fire agencies are taking full advantage of alternative funding opportunities, including attempts to increase special taxes or assessments, and applying for grant funds. Unfortunately, as evidenced by the low staffing levels shown in Table 6-1 and the failure of recent attempts to increase special taxes and/or assessments outlined in Volume I – Chapter 5, Countywide Finances, many agencies are struggling to bring in enough revenue to meet the demands of a modern fire agency. Chapter 5 outlines alternative financing options that fire agencies as a collective or individually may consider pursuing.

Growth within the County has predominantly occurred in the El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park Community Regions while tourism and agritourism, important economic drivers for the County, have grown significantly in areas east of the City of Placerville. This has led to large property tax disparities between fire agencies throughout the County and an unequal cost burden from visitors to areas in the County that receive lower amounts in property taxes. In addition, the County Board of Supervisors has chosen to redistribute funds that could be allocated for fire protection services, such as PILT and Proposition 172 funds (detailed in Chapter 5, Countywide Finances), to other County services. Though the County Board of Supervisors has recently redistributed Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenues towards tourism impacts, which have included fire protection agencies, actions to redistribute funds in the past have likely contributed to some of the financial instability currently felt by many of the fire agencies. The County is a necessary partner in working to solve the financial difficulties facing many of the fire agencies and will play a key role in the Fire Summits described below.

Fire Summits

With this option, consultants recommend that LAFCO, the County of El Dorado, and the fire protection agencies in the County work together to host atwo Fire Summits, one on the West Slope and one in the Tahoe Basin. There have been many study sessions at El Dorado LAFCO regarding what options are available to support fire services in the County (LAFCO, 2019; 2020b). These sessions have brought many options to the table to try to craft a path forward for the County. Examples from other counties throughout the State have been proposed including how those models might be deployed in the County of El Dorado. LAFCO has put a considerable amount of time and energy into reviewing the challenges faced by the fire agencies in the County that provide fire protection and emergency medical services. Consultants see that there is a need for collaboration between all relevant parties to discuss these opportunities moving forward.

Currently, fire agencies in the County work very closely together to provide collaborative fire protection and emergency medical services. However, many agencies are facing difficult financial challenges as outlined in Volume I - Chapter 5, Countywide Finances, due to historic property tax allocations and lack of alternative revenue streams, such as Proposition 172 funds and Federal Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funds. Agencies are providing the best services they can with limited financial resources and are taking full advantage of alternative financing options available to them. Consultants hope that through a collaborative effort, alternative financial opportunities may become more viable, such as the sales tax initiative passed in Amador County. In addition, the proposed Fire Summits would provide opportunities for the public to get a holistic view of fire protection and emergency medical services in the County and a better understanding of the challenges fire agencies face. Because of the close working relationships the agencies have with each other, it is likely that a Fire Summits that includes the County of El Dorado as well as LAFCO would bring forth positive solutions that can be supported by all parties involved. Consultants hope that the LAFCO Commission will seriously consider hosting or partnering with the County or the fire agencies to host a Fire Summit within two years of the release of this report.

Discussion Topics

Topics to consider for inclusion in the Fire Summit:

- ERAF Funds Retained (2011 MSR “Plan A”) – Details in Volume I, Chapter 5, Section 5.5.1
- Adjustment to the CSA 7 Ambulance Services West Slope Special Tax (2011 MSR “Plan B”) – Details in Volume I, Chapter 5, Section 5.5.2
- Sales Tax Initiative (similar to Amador County) – Details in Volume I, Chapter 5, Section 5.5.3
- Option No. 2 – Establish a West Slope Fire Authority (similar to other County models such as San Diego) – Details in Volume I, Chapter 6, Section 6.4.2
- Willingness for Proposition 172 funds and PILT funds to be allotted for fire services in the future – Discussion of these funds in Volume I, Chapter 5, Section 5.2
- County funding as mechanism to entice agencies to consolidate (similar to Sonoma County)

These topics are starting points for framing the discussion for the summit. It is important for all parties to come to the table knowing that there is no clear answer and that the work involved is a collaborative effort to find solutions for the financial difficulties facing the majority of the agencies.

Summit Framework

In order to provide the greatest opportunity for collaboration, consultants recommend that at least two summits be held, one for the West Slope agencies and one for the Tahoe Basin to kickstart discussions. As there are specific geographic and population constraints facing agencies in the Tahoe Basin, it would be more beneficial for a separate summit to be held for these agencies. In addition, the Tahoe Basin summit could benefit by including other agencies in neighboring counties and the State of Nevada. It is anticipated that these summits would be the starting point for a set of stakeholder collaboration and negotiations between fire agencies, the County, and LAFCO.

Consultants recommend both Fire Summits be facilitated by a neutral third party with a basic knowledge of fire protection and emergency medical service issues and a general understanding of the problems

facing each fire agency in the County. Prior to the Summits, consultants recommend that a stakeholder assessment be conducted, a financial forecast of the agencies in the “fair,” “limited,” and “deficient” categories be created looking forward 5-10 years, and that a cost benefit analysis be produced to assess the viability of the West Slope Fire Authority discussed under Option No. 2 in the following section. In addition, the creation of a Process Design to outline the scope of each summit and stakeholder collaboration would provide all parties with an agreed upon roadmap.

Stakeholder Collaboration

It is likely that the stakeholder meetings would need to be conducted on a monthly basis for at least 10 sessions in order to continue the dialogue between all parties. Following the framework outlined here, two stakeholder groups would be created, one out of each Fire Summit. A key component of the stakeholder collaboration and negotiation meetings would be the inclusion of an economic/financial advisor who could quickly produce alternative financial scenarios for the group when discussing possible solutions. This way, possible solutions can be seriously considered, and multiple solutions could be combined to attempt to find the best outcome. It is anticipated that a member of each district’s board, LAFCO, the County, and any support staff would participate in stakeholder collaboration discussions.

Public Participation

Public participation and transparency are important components to the anticipated overall success of this venture. Consultants recommend that an inside/outside approach to the process be followed in order to inform the public of the constraints facing the fire agencies and the solutions being explored by the stakeholder groups. Brochures, digital media, educational sessions, and tours of agency facilities are some examples of opportunities to include the public in the process. In addition, if solutions include a new tax or future attempts to increase special taxes and benefit assessments, a coordinated and well-funded campaign, either targeted or countywide, could be affective in garnering support.

The framework outlined here is a rough idea of how the Fire Summits, stakeholder collaboration, and public participation could be designed to work towards solutions for the problems facing many of the fire agencies in the County. Consultants hope that the LAFCO Commission will seriously consider hosting or partnering with the County or the fire agencies to host a Fire Summit on the West Slope and in the Tahoe Basin within two years of the release of this report. Consultants recommend that both Fire Summits be held within the same year, no more than two weeks apart.

6.4.2 Option No. 2 – Establish a West Slope Fire Authority

Option No. 2 reviews the opportunity for fire protection and emergency medical services to be funded and administered under a West Slope Fire Authority through the existing County Service Area 7 (CSA 7). This option has been discussed by the LAFCO Commission on multiple occasions with the most recent being a “Study Session on Options for Alternative Governance Models for Fire Service” which took place on January 23, 2019. This option has also been termed the “San Diego Model” by LAFCO staff and commissioners.

The essence of this option is that the County Board of Supervisors would activate some or all of the latent CSA powers of: fire protection; fire suppression; vegetation management; search and rescue; hazardous

Another alternative to establishing the Fire Authority could be through the use of zones of benefit under County Service Area law. A zone of benefit is a geographic area within a county service area formed to raise revenue and provide authorized service(s) to the property owners and residents within the boundaries of the identified area. The State Board of Equalization designates the zone of benefit as a specific tax rate area. Funds for the services provided by the zone of benefit are established as a special tax or as a benefit assessment. The creation of specific zones of benefit for existing fire agencies who opt into CSA 7 could allow for an increase in funding in districts of the County were fire services are currently underfunded. The County Board of Supervisors would be the governing body for all zones of benefit created within CSA 7. The Board of Supervisors may establish an advisory committee for each zone of benefit. The purpose of the advisory committee is to periodically meet with property owners and residents within the zone to establish an annual budget and discuss other issues pertaining to fire protection and emergency medical services. It is important to note that input from an advisory committee and its members is wholly advisory. This alternative would also allow agencies to “opt-in” as described above.

West Slope Fire Authority (CSA 7)

As mentioned in Option No. 1, the fire agencies on the West Slope are functionally consolidated. The existing dispatch system means that the closest resource responds to incidents. Although the system appears to be operating well, there are benefits to the consideration of fire services being consolidated into one single entity on the West Slope. In reviewing raw dispatch data from CAL FIRE Camino ECC, 37 percent of all calls in 2019 resulted in a cancelation with some agencies having a higher number of canceled calls than others. A larger analysis of canceled versus arrived calls can be found in Volume I – Chapter 4, Countywide Infrastructure with highlights repeated here for ease of reference. According to CAL FIRE Camino ECC a “canceled call” is one where a unit is canceled prior to arrival at an incident. In terms of the raw dispatch data, this was relayed to consultants as any incident without an “arrived” time (CAL FIRE Camino ECC, 2020). A breakdown in number of calls and arrived vs. canceled calls per fire agency can be seen in Table 6-5.

Table 6-5: Dispatched Calls for 2019, Arrived vs. Canceled

Agency	Arrived	Canceled	Percent Canceled
CAM	2,746	762	22%
DSP	1,942	1,903	49%
ECF	7,595	3,248	30%
EDH	4,561	1,600	26%
GEO	771	1,508	66%
GRV	573	815	59%
MQT	168	297	64%
PIO	851	878	51%
RES	799	721	47%
Total	20,006	11,732	37%

As indicated above, some agencies in 2019 had more canceled dispatches than arrived. Specifically, PIO, GEO, GRV, and MQT had over half of all calls in 2019 canceled. RES and DSP had just under half of all calls canceled in 2019. It appears that CAM and EDH had the least number of canceled calls for service, most likely due to their locations within population centers in the County and along the Highway 50 Corridor. When agency resources are called then canceled, this may add more wear and tear on equipment, and increases fuel consumption. This also may delay an agency’s resources being able to respond elsewhere within that agency’s boundary depending on how quickly that call was canceled and the destination of that canceled call. It should be noted that some agencies may decline to respond to some calls for aid, which also count as a ‘canceled’ call.

The dispatch system, though a benefit to the County, may not be operating as efficiently in the current model as it could under one Fire Authority. Staff at CAL FIRE Camino ECC indicated that higher staffing levels at the fire agency level have the potential to reduce the number of canceled calls (Assistant Chief Newman, personal communication, December 2020). Under one Fire Authority, it is possible that staffing levels could be maintained at the minimum standard described in Section 6.3.2, and be more evenly spread throughout the County. Also, there would no longer be the cost burden associated with responding to “out of agency” calls for automatic aid within the County. Other cost savings may include: a reduction in the number of fire chiefs and command level staff; the consolidation of administrative functions, infrastructure, and resources; as well as the consolidation of existing funding. In addition, it is likely that a Fire Authority would be better positioned with staff and resources to be competitive for grant funds.

Currently, 22 percent of uniform staff on the West Slope are funded through the JPA. This means that of the total firefighters available throughout the West Slope of the County to staff fire engines and vehicles, 22 percent are assigned to ambulances. When they are on EMS emergency incidents or hospital-to-hospital transfers, they are not available for firefighting or technical rescue. The breakdown in staffing for those agencies on the West Slope who receive JPA funding can be found in Table 6-6 below.

Table 6-6: JPA Funded Staff per Agency as Percentage of Total FTE Staff (July, 1 2020)

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Total JPA Funded Staff²</u>	<u>Total FTE Uniform Staff³</u>	<u>Percent of Total Staff Funded by JPA</u>
<u>CAM</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>33%</u>
<u>DSP</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>27%</u>
<u>ECF</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>30%</u>
<u>EDH</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>GEO</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>75%</u>
<u>Other Agencies*</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>N/A</u>
Total	46	209¹	22%

*Other agencies includes FTE Uniform Staff as of July 1, 2020 for GRV, MQT, PIO, and RES.
¹This total does not include any identified volunteers, administrative, or support staff for each agency.

Sources:

²RFI’s for each agency’s MSR Chapter

³West Slope JPA Director, personal communication, March 2022.

CAM, ECF, and GEO have 30 percent or more of their total uniform staff assigned to ambulances. For GEO, 75 percent of staff are assigned to the ambulance. This leaves only two staff available for GEO, that are not assigned to the ambulance, that can be assigned to the fire station on shifts to respond to emergencies. If the 20 volunteer firefighters that are available for GEO were included in total staff, this would equate to 25 percent of staff assigned to ambulances, leaving 22 staff or 75 percent available to be assigned to the fire station on shifts. Consultants also reviewed ambulance responses by call type, looking specifically at fire call types. All ambulances on the West Slope range from 2.8 percent to 3.5 percent of fire call types compared to all calls for 2019 except for Medic 61. For Medic 61, the ambulance assigned to GEO, 5.3 percent of total calls were fire call types. This is over 2 percentage points higher than the other ambulances. GEO, compared to the other four agencies which receive JPA funding, responded to the lowest number of calls in 2019. Because 22 percent of uniform staff are funded through the JPA, a consolidated West Slope Authority through CSA 7 would likely better manage fire agency staffing and ambulance staffing, allowing for more firefighters to be available to be staffed on fire agency resources for those agencies that appear to rely heavily on JPA revenue for staffing.

It is likely that a consolidated Fire Authority could better maintain equipment and infrastructure with consolidated funding sources as well as additional revenue that could be allocated to fire protection and emergency medical services by the County Board of Supervisors. A consolidated Fire Authority could also balance needed equipment in specific areas throughout the County and have a holistic view to ensure the right amount and type of equipment is available in the County, such as the need for additional ladder trucks. The holistic approach to fire protection and emergency medical services operations, beyond just dispatch, could provide greater benefit to the County by more equitably distributing resources among all of the communities served. A thorough analysis of what a Fire Authority for the West Slope would look like and how it would operate would need to be conducted through a Service Plan, including a detailed cost-benefit analysis, in order to determine if this model would provide the benefits described.

To offer a very rough idea of the financing for a consolidated Fire Authority, consultants have combined the FY 2018/2019 audited financial information from all nine West Slope fire agency MSR chapters. The following analysis is hypothetical and assumes the following:

- Property tax, special taxes, and assessments, as well as all other revenue streams enjoyed by each agency would be made available to the new Fire Authority;
- All expenditures, debts, and liabilities would be absorbed by the new Fire Authority; and
- Staffing and costs for staff are a combination of what all nine agencies paid in 2019.

This analysis is painted in broad brush strokes to aid in discussions and in no way suggests that this is what financing would be for this option. If the West Slope Fire Authority model were to have existed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018/2019, the Authority would have brought in approximately \$58.7 million in revenues and had approximately \$54.2 million in expenses as seen in Figure 6-9.

Based on the rough analysis here, it appears that with existing operational expenditures and revenue streams, the West Slope Fire Authority would have been at a net positive position for FY 2018/2019. It should also be noted that the proposed budgets for FY 2019/2020 and FY 2020/2021 suggest a continued positive financial position with approximately \$2.17 million in revenues over expenditures for FY 2020/2021. ~~As mentioned previously, this is a very rough financial analysis of a hypothetical West Slope Fire Authority to provide some context for discussions. However, existing staffing levels are generally below minimum and national standards, and less than half of stations are staffed full-time on the West Slope.~~ It is likely that a consolidated agency would have different-increased costs for staffing and salaries as well as facilities and equipment. Because two agencies have identified as operating under NFPA 1720, and a hypothetical Fire Authority would likely operate under NFPA 1710, the number of paid career staff would likely increase, while the number of high-level staff would likely be reduced.

As this option would likely require a phased approach, similar to the process taken by San Diego County, the financing suggested here would not be made available to the County immediately. That being said, as fire agencies are annexed into CSA 7, any additional financing that the County may have had to re-allocate to fire protection and emergency medical services would likely no longer be necessary with all West Slope fire agencies annexed into CSA 7. Consultants do not recommend that the Commission consider this option in this report, however this option should be included in discussions at the proposed Fire Summit under Option 1 to determine the viability of this option for the County of El Dorado and the fire agencies on the West Slope.

Recommendation: Consultants recommend a true Cost-Benefit Analysis and Service Plan be conducted by the County or LAFCO to determine the viability of this option.

6.4.3 Option No. 3 – Boundary Adjustments

The 2011 MSR suggests that if consolidation is not a feasible option, the readjustment of service boundaries is needed in the future to ensure the following:

- Growing communities of interest are not split between service agencies. In other words, residents may have a community identity with one service provider while services are actually delivered by another.
- Issues of fiscal inequity brought to the surface by mutual aid are removed.
- Remove issues of increasing service demand upon districts that currently do not have the capacity or resources to address this increase.
- Remove any issues of “free riders” through the annexation of service area holes.

The 2011 MSR identified the following agencies as candidates for readjustment of their boundaries based on the concept of community identity, location of fire stations and mutual aid calls at the time:

- EDH and RES
- ECF and CAM
- DSP and ECF
- DSP and RES
- RES and CAM

6.5 Determinations

Based on the information included in this report, the following written determinations required by Government Code §56425(e), make statements involving each of the five factors which the Commission must consider as part of a Sphere of Influence Update. The Commission's final SOI determinations will be part of a Resolution which the Commission formally adopts during a public meeting. This report recommends the following determinations under Option 1 – Maintain Existing SOIs and Friendly SOI Changes; to amend the SOI for three agencies and leave the SOIs for the remaining 10 agencies unchanged. This report also recommends that the Municipal Service Review (MSR) for ~~three~~five agencies be revisited within three years to evaluate District viability. These Districts are FLL, GRV, MQT, PIO, and RES. These determinations are presented in a format similar to the 2011 MSR to keep them succinct. LAFCO staff has reviewed the following determinations and recommends them for the Commission's consideration.

6.5.1 *Cameron Park Community Services District*

Determinations for the CAM SOI are limited to the Service Area Boundary for all services; and the SOI for all services as those are the areas within the CAM where the District provides fire protection and emergency medical services. This report only reviewed the fire protection and emergency medical services for the CAM. MSRs for CAM related to other services provided by the District can be found on LAFCO's website at <https://www.edlafco.us/cameron-park-csd-msr>.

(1) The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.

The primary land uses within the service area for the CAM are residential, commercial, and open space. Most of the areas within the District are developed with high-density residential subdivisions and some commercial development along the Highway 50 Corridor. This has resulted in a high population density for this area relative to the undeveloped land surrounding the District as expected within a Community Region. There are no areas within the District that provide agricultural use. Future land uses are expected to remain relatively unchanged, with population growth likely to be consistent with the 2004 General Plan projections for the unincorporated portion of the County.

(2) The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

Parcels within the District receive adequate fire protection and emergency medical services. Proposed and current projects include the development of approximately 138 new residential units and one commercial development. New development within the District is required to pay development impact fees to fund improvements and new facilities to serve the new development. Although development impact fees will assist the District in providing adequate services for new development, staffing challenges could remain a concern as these fees cannot be used for operating expenses. In addition, the District responds frequently to some specific properties within the District. As a result of these frequent responses to certain properties, the District is

Recommendation

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by Pioneer Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that Pioneer Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence remain unchanged as shown Volume I - Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.

6.5.12 Rescue Fire Protection District

(1) The present and planned land uses in the area, including agricultural and open space lands.

The primary land uses within the service area are rural residential, agriculture and open space. The community of Rescue is a historic town site surrounded by low-density rural residential dwellings on larger sized lots. The District area also contains four schools, a cemetery, several wineries, and agricultural land-uses. Commercial land uses are limited to a commercial firewood business and a commercial storage facility. Several areas are primarily characterized by open space with limited rural residential uses. Future land uses are expected to remain relatively unchanged with population growth likely in the southwest area of the District, adjacent to the communities of Cameron Park and El Dorado Hills. The 2004 General Plan encourages future development within the community region of Rescue and the area west of Cameron Park.

The current RES Sphere includes lands to its west and east; neither of these areas are within the boundaries of a fire agency. A significant area of the SOI to the west (generally described as the Salmon Falls Area north of Green Valley Road) separates the District from the El Dorado Hills Fire Department and has been historically designated as part of Rescue’s Sphere of Influence. Although this area is included in the RES’s SOI, EDH is the first responder for this area as there is no access for RES personnel without driving through a significant part of EDH’s jurisdiction. There are no plans to develop the parcels to the east beyond the current General Plan designation and most of the parcels in this area are vacant or designated as open space. Fire services are provided to these areas by the closest available resource through dispatch.

(2) The present and probable need for public facilities and services in the area.

Parcels currently within the RES district receive adequate fire protection and emergency response services supported by the Shared Services Agreement with EDH and automatic aid through dispatch. The Rescue community and surrounding SOI areas that are proposed to be included in EDH’s SOI are dependent upon zoning and General Plan policies and land-use designations in the region. Consistent with the General Plan, the County of El Dorado has approved several new development projects in the RES boundary area including four subdivisions concentrated in the southwest area of the District, adjacent to the CAM and EDH. Upon the District’s annexation into EDH the additional property tax, assessment and/or special tax, and development impact fee

revenue, would likely offset the increased costs and required resources to ensure the provision of services to the area.

(3) The present capacity of public facilities and adequacy of public services that the agency provides or is authorized to provide.

Parcels currently within the RES District boundary and SOI receive fire protection and emergency response services from RES that are supported by the automatic aid dispatch system in the County and the existing Shared Services agreement with EDH. The RES received less aid than it provided in 2019, suggesting that District was able to provide adequate service to the communities within its boundaries and has the capacity to assist neighboring agencies in providing those services. The RES District staffing levels operate below the minimum national standard and the long-term fiscal sustainability of the District remains a challenge. Current tax revenues, assessments, and other funding is insufficient to sustainably deliver adequate fire protection services in the District. RES is currently operating with positive revenues over expenditures; however, the net position of a \$1.6 million deficit leaves the District in jeopardy of long-term liabilities being unfunded.

The proposed zero sphere for RES and expansion of EDH’s SOI to include the RES District Boundary and SOI would maintain existing services in the RES SOI areas. RES and EDH already operate under the existing Shared Services Agreement that provides for additional support to the RES District Boundary and SOI from EDH. Upon RES’s annexation into EDH, the combining of the two agencies will result in a stronger, more efficient and more robust organization that will led to long term preservation of emergency service delivery levels for communities served by the combined district.

(4) The existence of any social or economic communities of interest in the area if the Commission determines that they are relevant to the agency.

RES serves the community of Rescue as well as the areas west of Cameron Park.

(5) The present and probable need for public facilities and services of any disadvantaged unincorporated communities.

Within the boundaries of EDH and RES or the District’s SOI there are no areas that qualify as a disadvantaged unincorporated community. Therefore, no considerations for services are necessary.

Recommendation

Pursuant to Government Code Section 56425(i)(2), the Commission does hereby establish the functions and classes of services provided by the Rescue Fire Protection District as those specified in California Health & Safety Code §13862. Based upon the information contained in this report, it is recommended that the Rescue Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence be reduced to a zero sphere, as shown in Volume I - Appendix L; and that the District Municipal Service Review be revisited within 3 years.