

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2024 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 6, 2023

Question: What is the cost to the City to join neighboring jurisdictions on FirstNet, the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety? Could the City expect to see any cost savings by joining the regional network?

Response:

The annual operating cost for FirstNet services would be about the same as the incumbent providers. The provider rates are set based on the contract the City joined with Fairfax County government. The contract sets the monthly rate at \$40 per device for all providers. There are no annual operating cost savings, however the initial installation cost which includes IT resources for implementation and equipment setup would be \$1.3 million.

Funding would be needed for new hardware that is compatible with FirstNet. The Department of Emergency & Customer Communications, Fire, Police, and Sheriff would need new mobile data terminals (MDTs) (\$5,000 per device approximately), iPads (about \$1,000 per device), smartphones (about \$250 per device), and wireless devices (about \$100 per device) as well as staffing to assist in the transitioning of devices which will require about 4 hours per unit to configure then deploy. Further analysis is needed to determine how many units would need to be replaced. Due to the nature of public safety services, it is unclear at this time if this could be a gradual (over a couple years) transition or a one-time replacement while ensuring stability of critical communications.

Additional charges could be incurred to provide similar coverage areas as incumbent providers. For example, procuring additional hardware and/or services to provide adequate coverage for both telephone calls and internet services. A contractor is needed to assist the Department of Information Technology Services with software and hardware deployment. Anticipated contractor and equipment costs total \$311,100 and \$974,900, respectively, which leads to the total estimated cost of \$1,286,000. Prices are subject to change based on supply chain and delivery of hardware. The estimated vendor cost does not include costs from the service provider. The delivery schedule could also impact contractor duration. Pricing may also change based on make/model and vendor negotiations.

Attachment 1 shows the units owned by each department across the public safety clusters. It details estimated costs of contractor hours, unit replacements, and department replacement costs.

Attachment 1: Table A