



North Carolina Department of Public Safety

State Highway Patrol

Roy Cooper, Governor
Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary

Freddy L. Johnson, Jr.
Commander

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairs of Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety

From: Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary, DPS 
Freddy L. Johnson, Jr., Commander, State Highway Patrol 

Subject: VIPER Quarterly Report

Date: February 15, 2022

Pursuant to Session Law 2016-94, Section 17B.1, The Department of Public Safety shall report annually no later than March 1 and quarterly thereafter to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety on the progress of the State's VIPER system.

Network Status - Network Status - 241 total sites planned for statewide coverage of which 235 sites are constructed and on-the-air representing 98% completion. The remaining six sites are currently underway and in varying stages of the construction process, either site engineering, resolution of leases or the completion of site construction. All the remaining sites are fully funded for construction. The system currently supports 156,645 emergency users. This quarter gain represented slightly more than **3,150 additional user radios**.

SUA Status - VIPER has just completed its upgrade to Release 7.20.2. The Legislature provided a one-time appropriation of \$1.5M for the Service Upgrade Assurance (SUA) program which allowed VIPER to enter into a nine-year agreement with Motorola to provide a long-term SUA contract with subsequent system upgrades scheduled every three (3) years. This contract has a defined, recurring funding appropriation of \$1.5M from the Legislature, which began 1 July 2019, with the approval of an FY19-20 mini-budget. The 7.20.2 upgrade represents the first three years of the nine-year agreement. A new multi-year contract will be required in FY27-28 to continue the SUA beyond the current agreement period.

New Tower Construction Progress - Two sites (2) are currently under construction, Aho (Watauga County) and Hayesville (Clay County) both sites are awaiting the physical towers to be delivered, however we are anticipating a significant delay due to the manufacturer having lost their production plant during the Kentucky tornadoes in 2021. VIPER hopes to have the Aho and Hayesville sites operational by the end of Q2 2022. VIPER is moving forward with the tower access road at Hot House (Cherokee County) and we are projecting a site turn up during Q3 2022.

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VIPER continues to work on leases or perform engineering work at Jones Pond (Anson County), Hawshaw Mountain (Avery County), and High Top (Buncombe County).

Other Significant Projects/Funding Needs:

- **Microwave Upgrade:** VIPER operates a statewide microwave network in conjunction with the University of North Carolina Public Television. This network utilizes T1 technology (circuit based) which has been the national standard for connectivity for over 50 years. With the transition to Ethernet and the ability to manage our bandwidth needs more efficiently, the manufacturer (Alcatel) will no longer support our current MDR-8000 microwave radios past the end of CY2021. VIPER has been awarded \$19,325,000 from the Legislature, and supported by Governor Cooper, to move forward with this important project in CY2022. VIPER is working to prepare an Invitation for Bid (IFB), seeking competitive pricing for the replacement microwave radios needed to complete the replacement of the end of life (EOL) Alcatel MDR-8000 radios. VIPER expects to have a contract for the new radios in place by the end of Q2 2022.