



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: August 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 161,714 emergency users. This quarter gain represented slightly more than 4000 additional user radios. An additional statistic that we are also beginning to track is how many counties have directly connected consoles with VIPER network. The number currently stands at 29, with Beaufort and Caldwell being the latest additions. We have seven further counties with orders for consoles, which will bring the total in CY22 to 36. Integration of the direct connection consoles greatly enhances the ability for local PSAPs to be able to reroute VIPER radio calls in the event of the loss of a 911 PSAP during emergencies or other unusual occurrences.

New Tower Construction Progress – Five sites (5) are currently under construction, Aho (Watauga County) is nearing completion and will be operation in Q3, Hayesville (Clay County) has the tower erected and further equipment installation is ongoing with a Q3 turn up as well. Hot House (Cherokee County) has foundations in the ground and tower and building installations are pending with a potential site completion in Q4. High Top (Buncombe County) has civil work well underway with the new equipment shelter scheduled for installation and site turn up set for the end of CY22. Finally, Jones Pond (Anson County) is set to have the tower erected in early October and we anticipate the site to be online in Q1 2023. We have one remaining site, Hawshaw Mountain (Avery County), that we are awaiting the relocation of onsite utilities and hope to begin site development work prior to winter setting in. Estimated site turn-up is Q2 2023.

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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 contracts for the new hardware and radios in place by the end of Q3 2022.