

**CENTRAL LANE AMBULANCE TRANSPORT SYSTEM
JOINT ELECTED OFFICIALS TASK FORCE**

Meeting Summary

May 11, 2009

**Eugene Emergency Services Training Center – 1705 W 2nd Avenue
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Elected Officials Present:

Lane County Commissioner Rob Handy

Springfield City Manager Sid Leiken

Springfield Assistant City Manager Jeff Towery

Eugene City Councilors Mike Clark and Andrea Ortiz

Springfield City Councilor Dave Ralston

Lane Rural Fire/Rescue Board President Larry von Moos and Director Kevin King

Eugene Staff Present:

Randy Groves, Karen Brack, Denise Giard, Joe Zaludek, Larry Hill, Julie Lindsey, Glen Potter,
Joann Eppli

IAFF Local 851 Representatives Present:

Scott Olmos

Springfield Staff Present:

Dennis Murphy, Brian Evanoff, Bart Noll, Jana Sorenson

IAFF Local 1395 Representatives Present:

Kevin Gray

Lane Rural Staff Present:

Dale Borland, Bill Bass, Chris Heppel

LCOG Staff Present:

Byron Vanderpool and Paula Taylor

1. Welcome

- Randy Groves convened the third meeting of the Ambulance Transport System (ATS) Joint Elected Officials (JEO) Task Force. He then welcomed Springfield City Manager Sid Leiken, who will be replacing Springfield City Councilor John Woodrow. Randy recognized Councilor Woodrow's contributions to the Task Force and his work for the community, stating that Councilor Woodrow was a very impressive individual, and that he will be missed.
- Everyone present introduced themselves.

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2. Future ATS JEO Task Force Meetings

- The Task Force scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, May 28, 2009 from 12:00p.m. to 2:00p.m., as an alternate since the next regularly scheduled meeting falls on Memorial Day.

3. Meeting Summary Approval

- The Task Force approved the April 27, 2009 Meeting Summary.

4. ATS JEO Task Force Issue and Objective Statement

- The Task Force adopted the Issue and Objective Statement.

5. Register Guard Op-Ed Article

- Randy Groves called Glen Potter to the table, and asked Task Force members for feedback on the draft Register Guard Op-Ed Article, so it can be finalized and submitted for publication. He noted the importance of getting the information out to the public, and emphasized that this will be the first of several communications.
- District Board Director Kevin King pointed to the last paragraph on the first page, stating that there is no prior reference what the ATS JEO Task Force is.
- Mayor Sid Leiken confirmed that there is a 600 to 800 word limit.
- Councilor Mike Clark recommended changing the General Fund reference to “operating within General Fund already collected” in the fifth paragraph from the end.
- Councilor Dave Ralston asked that “for these reasons a Task Force has been formed” in the first to last paragraph.
- Mayor Sid Leiken suggested the first two paragraphs be moved towards the end of the article, or be deleted, to start with a stronger opening.
- Councilor Mike Clark said he thinks it would be viewed more positively if the article focused on the nature of the challenges and the unique approach of a regional response, rather than list suggestions for potential outcomes.
- Commissioner Rob Handy said that the draft article was very well written, and said that the fourth paragraph should be used as a powerful opening. He also suggested that the words “this is not true” be replaced. On the second page, Commissioner Handy asked if the third option in the sixth paragraph is really the option the Task Force wants to open with. He made the suggestion to show two sides of General Fund support, and then go to the third paragraph.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said she would like to see acknowledgement that we have an accredited agency, highly-trained paramedics, and have worked hard to have a good system. She said the question is, “How do we fund the system and keep it going?” Councilor Ortiz stated that she does not know if the list of options should be included. Commissioner Rob Handy said if this is going to be first in a series of articles, he believes it would be premature to put the options out there. Randy Groves re-stated that this article is the first formal step in the public education process, and that there will be a press release, and hopefully newspaper, television and radio coverage, as well as a series of public forums. The Task Force agreed to remove or generalize the list of options from

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this first article. Councilor Andrea Ortiz said she knows resources are limited, but suggested creating a Task Force page on the City's website. She also said she would like to see Councilor John Woodrow's name included in the article. Mayor Sid Leiken and the rest of the Task Force agreed. Mayor Leiken added that Councilor Woodrow was not just assigned, but asked to be a part of this Task Force.

- Commissioner Rob Handy said he appreciates Lane Rural Fire/Rescue Board President Larry von Moos and Director Kevin King being listed, and asked if the two Union presidents' names can also be included. Councilor Mike Clark agreed with Commissioner Handy's suggestion to include the two Union presidents' names. He said he also agrees with Councilor Ortiz's suggestions. Randy Groves pointed out that the elected officials were technically the Task Force and the unions, like the fire chiefs and their staffs, served in an advisory role. He suggested that the union involvement be included in the piece just like fire chief involvement.
- Randy Groves said that Glen Potter will make the revisions and circulate a second draft of the article for review electronically. He asked the Task Force for a quick response, so that the article can be submitted for publication sooner rather than later.

6. Breakdown of ATF Costs (Eugene)

- Randy Groves called Julie Lindsey to the table to review the information on Eugene's indirect costs on keeping our system running.
- Julie Lindsey explained that the department received a request from the Budget Committee to identify expenses that are currently being charged to the ATF that are not directly related to patient transports. She said those expenses include the cost of 19 firefighter/paramedic positions, equipment, supplies, the Supervising Physician, management, training and staff support, costs to other internal service funds, as well as a Central Services Allocation (CSA). She added that the ATF is currently projected to be \$500,000 over budget for FY10.
- Councilor Mike Clark confirmed that the CSA is the City's overhead that is charged to every fund in the City. Julie added that the CSA is calculated out of personnel costs.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz noted that firefighter/paramedic positions are \$2.2 million, and stated that single-role medics are very directly related to patient transport. Councilor Ortiz then asked where the money is going to come from for Rural Metro Ambulance. Randy Groves replied that Eugene Fire & EMS does not pay Rural Metro Ambulance, but their service reduces some of Eugene's revenue. Randy Groves noted that there are structural funding problems with the system, as well as capacity and workload issues. He said Rural Metro Ambulance is helping to alleviate some of the workload issues by handling low-end calls. It also reduces the need to add more high-cost dual-role or single-role units to handle low-end, low-pay calls. He elaborated that this was a cost avoidance strategy.

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7. Update Reports on Potential Solutions

Create an Ambulance Service Taxing District:

- Randy Groves introduced Byron Vanderpool and Paula Taylor to talk about an ambulance taxing district concept.
- Byron Vanderpool explained that LCOG has been contracted by the Lane Fire Defense Board to do studies on a couple of different types of special districts: a communications district, which will be presented to the board next week; and an ambulance taxing district formation. He said that Paula Taylor is the expert on special districts, and cautioned that today's presentation will be a high-level overview and not a draft report. He asked Task Force members to come forward with particular areas of interest.
- Randy Groves added that the Lane Fire Defense Board is comprised of only a few ambulance transport providers. However, everyone on the board felt that the issues with the ambulance transport system are big enough and serious enough that the board agreed to fund the study. Speaking on behalf of the board's Chiefs, Randy emphasized that the board is interested on direction for the study from this Task Force.
- Paula Taylor reported that the two LCOG studies will consist of the following sections: 1) research and issues on statutory authority; 2) examples of other districts with existing service providers/other models that information could be gleaned from; 3) information about those existing service providers, including who they are, what services they provide and what are the costs associated with that service; 4) the economic feasibility of a new taxing district; 5) the formation process; and 6) a public awareness component, which will include identifying interested parties and developing possible scenarios to determine the best way to get the information out to the public. She said part of the research will be to review ORS Chapter 198, which governs the special district formation process. She will be looking through statutes for existing structures that allow ambulance services to be provided (e.g., fire districts are able to provide ambulance services). She stated it will take more research to identify the issues with forming an ambulance service taxing district. She said Lane County has done a remarkable job on the process for receiving boundary change applications, and explained that the county board is the decision making body for boundary changes and annexation. She added that more information will be provided in the report.
- Councilor Dave Ralston asked for an example of a special district in Lane County, to which Paula replied that Western Lane refers to themselves as an ambulance taxing district.
- Councilor Dave Ralston then asked how a taxing district would affect compression. Paula replied that for any new tax, if there will likely be places that will go into compression, that information will be included as part of the economic feasibility analysis. Randy Groves clarified that compression could be different per taxing area. He noted that developing a taxing district would not be a short-term solution, but could provide the long-term stability he feels the system needs. He said Western Lane rates are approximately 25 cents per thousand. Following-up on Councilor Ralston's question, Commissioner Rob Handy said he is interested in an entry-level analysis on compression issues. In his opinion, it would be advantageous to have information upfront, before

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looking into this option further. Byron Vanderpool said one difficulty that needs to be understood is that it first needs to be determined what area we are looking at. He stated that each taxing district has a different rate and while some are well below compression, others are at or close to compression. Larry Hill added that property tax rates are applied to taxable assessed value rather than real market value. Commissioner Rob Handy stated that it is important to establish a baseline, to determine if it is possible for us to add to the tax base and meet the need. Randy Groves said that if the area is only going to include Central Lane County, an ambulance taxing district would not be putting us into compression. However, if it were expanded county-wide, compression could be an issue. Dennis Murphy asked about legislative authority for an ambulance taxing district, and Paula replied that the 2007 statute list of special districts does not show specific legislative authority for an ambulance taxing district.

- District Board Director Kevin King expressed his concern with splitting up funding, and the impact on dual-role firefighters.
- Councilor Mike Clark said that based on his rough calculations, 25 cents per thousand could produce roughly \$10 million county-wide. Randy Groves added that Lane County has eight ambulance service areas. Councilor Clark asked for a definition for a health district, to which Paula replied that she needs to do more research.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz inquired if economic feasibility was a component of the LCOG study, to which Randy Groves explained that it was not. She then asked if it could be added. Randy Groves explained that the study is being funded by the Lane Fire Defense Board. He said the study will get us a long way towards a potential long-term solution and we could possibly look at this as an additional step in the process. Councilor Ortiz then asked when the report will be complete, to which Paula Taylor replied that the goal is to take a preliminary draft of the report to the Lane Fire Defense Board next month, and then form a smaller sub-committee to do some follow-up work. Randy Groves added that in 2008, the three Fire Chiefs asked the Lane Fire Defense Board to delay starting the ambulance taxing district study until after the JEO Summit in January of 2009. He said at the summit the elected officials then agreed to form the ATS JEO Task Force. He added that the board gave LCOG the launch sign to continue with the study only last week, and he invited LCOG to today's meeting to talk about the scope of the study and discuss what the Task Force can anticipate getting out of the study.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said that she, Councilor Clark and Councilor Ralston serve on the JEO Metro Sub-Committee that is looking at the Metro Plan, and she is concerned with staff doing a lot of work on the ambulance taxing district option when it might not come to fruition. Due to some discussions at the JEO Metro Sub-Committee, she expressed concern with Springfield being uncomfortable with having to come to Eugene. Councilor Dave Ralston said that he was encouraged by end of the last JEO Metro Sub-Committee meeting that things like ambulance and (basically) land issues will be looked at separately, which should alleviate some of Councilor Ortiz's concerns.
- Mayor Sid Leiken confirmed that the memorandum outlining a proposal is only for Eugene. In reference to Councilor Clark's earlier comment, Mayor Leiken confirmed he heard the figure of \$10 million for Eugene (from Councilor Clark). Mayor Leiken then

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confirmed with Dennis Murphy that Springfield's ambulance operating costs are approximately \$4.8 million, and confirmed with Dale Borland that operating costs for Lane Rural are approximately \$1.5 million. He said that we should be looking at \$15 million. Randy Groves stated that there will still need to be a fee for service even if we end up forming an ambulance taxing district. Mayor Sid Leiken asked if FireMed expands out to Lane Rural, and when does FireMed come into play? He then asked if the \$15 million, plus FireMed is even feasible. Dennis Murphy made reference to the three legged stool. He provided a brief history on Western Lane, stating that they used to be Western Lane Hospital district. Western Lane has a taxing authority, user fee rates and a membership program called Life Care (which is the same as FireMed). Dennis said the Task Force is now taking a look at an ambulance taxing district as the third leg of the stool, and looking to balance with some form of tax dollars. He estimates the whole Eugene/Springfield/Lane area at \$5 million to \$6 million annually, from the 25 cents per thousand. He emphasized that it is a public policy question. Mayor Sid Leiken said he appreciates Councilor Ortiz's concerns, as the Metro Plan work started when he was in his 20s. He believes overall, that people could come to an agreement on emergencies and ambulance service, as long as they are getting where they need to go. Commissioner Rob Handy said he also appreciates Councilor Ortiz's concerns, and that he sits on the JEO Metro Sub-Committee as well. He said it is an autonomy issue, and Lane County Commissioners are interested in whether the outcome will be a service or a district. He then cited street repairs as an example, emphasizing the importance of helping people understand what is being proposed as we go along. Councilor Mike Clark asked that the Task Force create multiple ways to communicate information to the public. He still thinks ambulance service is a core service, and is willing to hear information on and discuss the option of an ambulance taxing district. Randy Groves said that part of the overall plan was to develop a series of public forums, one in each of the three jurisdictions, to solicit public feedback in addition to taking written comments. The Task Force might also consider adding a public comment portion to the Task Force's reporting meeting back to the full JEO.

- Randy Groves confirmed that the Task Force is interested to see what an ambulance taxing district would look like. He said that he will inform the Lane Fire Defense Board of today's discussion at next Thursday's meeting.

General Fund Support:

- Dennis Murphy said that regular General Fund support is one solution he is looking at. He said the cost could be equitably spread out over the total user group that we serve, and added that a special out-of-city fee could be introduced.

Rate and Mileage Increases:

- Randy Groves pointed out that preliminary updated information on Eugene's rate and mileage increase is included in the memorandum to the Eugene Budget Committee. Eugene is considering a rate increase to \$1,600 base rate and \$20.00 per patient mile, which would bring Eugene in line with Springfield. He said estimates have been based on a history that does not include Rural Metro Ambulance taking calls. Julie Lindsey cautioned the group that the projection does not take into account further reductions in

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the public using the service or if insurance companies start capping their payments. Randy Groves said he is not sure if increased rates are going to solve the problem, but right now, Eugene needs to try to get as much lift as possible to buy time while developing solutions for the longer term. He referenced the article by Santa Clara Fire Chief Randy Wood of an anecdotal story of a 40+ year old male who was experiencing acute chest pain, and refused to be transported because of the cost. The story demonstrates the cost of excluding people from receiving care who really need it. He said that Eugene is starting to see a decline in transports, and that Washington County is experiencing the same trends as we are – it is not a localized problem. Denise Giard added that it is anticipated that runs will continue to decrease, because of the sub-contract with Rural Metro Ambulance and another provider taking calls that Eugene has taken in the past. She said it is a liberal estimate of runs, with the estimate being an average. It is a picture of a point in time that is constantly shifting. Julie Lindsey stated that reserves are gone for the FY09 budget, and \$300,000 is dedicated to the replacement fund for the FY10 budget. Randy Groves said that the primary reason the system is in financial trouble is due to Medicare capitated payments. He noted that the estimates are our best guess as of today.

- Dennis Murphy stated that people that who are saying they cannot afford to be transported are also saying they cannot afford \$52 for a FireMed Membership. He reported that Springfield has not experienced a decrease in runs since implementing the rate increase. He said that if the whole state goes to a rate of \$1,600, there could be push-back by the insurance companies. He stated insurance companies pass third-party payments onto ratepayers. He added that rate increases are not a long-term total solution to the problem. Dennis said Springfield does not have money, will not have money, and rate increases are not a sustainable practice. He noted that a rate increase is one way to take the immediate pressure off the General Fund, and that Springfield already made that decision.

Reconfigure ASA Boundaries – Redeployment of Ambulances:

- Denise Giard and Chris Heppel (Lane Rural Fire/Rescue) distributed information on the reconfiguration of ASA #4, Zone 3. Denise reported that Eugene and Lane Rural have been looking into the reconfiguration/reassignment of Zone 3. She said that while this option may assist Lane Rural, Eugene cannot afford to do this at this time, because it only addresses the capacity issue, and not Eugene's financial shortfall. She asked Task Force members to review the report, and said it includes information on overall call volume, calls for service and patient transports, and provides a breakdown of calls for Zone 3, which are predominantly in Lane County Fire District #1's response area. She noted that if this reconfiguration is implemented, Eugene will lose FireMed members as well, which amounts to further reductions in revenue. She then asked if anyone had questions.
- Chris Heppel reported that this option is feasible for Lane Rural, because they have the personnel and equipment, the capacity to expand, and can implement the reconfiguration rapidly. He said their department is looking at placing a 24-hour medic unit at a location closer to Zone 3 should Lane Rural assume responsibility for that area. He stated that this option may be a concern to Lane Rural's current constituents, as the district would

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need to push themselves out further to accommodate the new response area. Lane Rural would also hire two full-time paramedics if this option were to be implemented.

- Randy Groves added that for the long-term, it makes sense to have more of an urban/rural split, but emphasized that for the short-term, there was still a deficit in Eugene's ATF that would need to be addressed. He also said that the constituents in Zone 3 would not be abandoned, although the provider could change under a reconfiguration of the ASAs.
- Councilor Mike Clark said that he does not see the financial impact to Eugene. Denise Giard said that the information can be found under the *Financial Impact* section of Eugene's report, and noted that for FY08, the estimated net revenue for those patients transported from Zone 3 was \$345,034.

Develop New Membership Initiatives/Programs:

- Councilor Dave Ralston asked if there was more information on the mobile health care proposal yet. Dennis Murphy replied that there will be an application to the Federal government for funding, and noted that it is a long-term solution.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said Eugene has on-street mental health-based counseling with CAHOOTS, and expressed concern with a mobile health care model. Dennis Murphy said it is up to City Councilors to decide if there is an interest in the mobile health care model for each jurisdiction.
- Councilor Mike Clark said he inquired earlier on forming a health district. He said a lot of people value the CAHOOTS model, which he believes could be enhanced to include a health response component. Randy Groves noted that CAHOOTS is often credited for helping Eugene Police, when in fact, they also help Fire & EMS personnel. Dennis Murphy confirmed that the article on mobile health services was distributed, and again encouraged everyone to read it.

Responders Assessing and Triaging Calls for Service:

- Councilor Dave Ralston asked if there was any additional information on the responders assessing and triaging option. Randy Groves responded that field triage already takes place in the form of upgrading or down grading ambulance response by the on scene first responders. He also added that calls are triaged at the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) when someone calls 9-1-1. Councilor Andrea Ortiz stated that this is the service that CAHOOTS provides, except that CAHOOTS does not provide treat and release services. She said many of the people who work for CAHOOTS have PhDs and are EMTs.

General Discussion on Potential Solutions:

- Dennis Murphy asked for a prioritization on short-term, intermediate-term and long-term solutions. He also asked that the Task Force focus on short-term solutions now, and come back in the fall to focus more on intermediate-term and long-term solutions. He added that preliminary information can be provided on intermediate-term and long-term solutions.
- Councilor Mike Clark said that short-term solutions can be handled by jurisdiction. He does not want to delay until fall, and does not want to postpone resolution for too long.
- Dennis Murphy emphasized that he really wants to prioritize what is on the list, so that the work is more clearly laid out. Councilor Dave Ralston asked if Dennis was looking

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for an answer right now. Dennis said he would like an answer at the next Task Force meeting.

- Randy Groves said up to now, the Task Force has been working on identifying options. Now, the Task Force needs to further refine the list so that energy and valuable time are well spent, as well as to bring the group's work to some level of closure.

8. JEO Meetings

- Councilor Andrea Ortiz asked if the ATS JEO Task Force is scheduled to present at the June 1, 2009 JEO meeting, to which Randy Groves replied that the City Manager asked for some level of update from the ATS JEO Task Force at the June 1st JEO. He then asked how the elected officials want the update presented. Commissioner Rob Handy suggested that the three Fire Chiefs provide an updated report, and the elected officials provide their comments. Randy Groves stated that the Chiefs' reports will be high-level.
- Randy Groves stated that he is still trying to determine how long it will take to complete this process, and asked for elected officials' preference on presenting information to the full JEO group.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz suggested that the Task Force refine the options and present recommendations to the full JEO group.
- Councilor Mike Clark said he is comfortable coming up with recommendations from the ATS JEO Task Force to present to the full JEO group.
- Commissioner Rob Handy asked for other Task Force members' opinion on holding a Lane County Commissioners Work Session before going to the full JEO group. Randy Groves said that our job is to educate and make sure that elected officials have the information needed to make good policy decisions.
- Dennis Murphy said it is important to categorize the solutions by short-term, intermediate-term and long-term. He said short-term solutions could include General Fund support, FireMed and ambulance fees. He added that the ambulance taxing district could be an intermediate-term solution. The individual jurisdictions will have to decide how best to live within their means.
- Councilor Dave Ralston highlighted that the Task Force decided at the April 27th meeting that rate and mileage increases are short-term, consolidating/merging departments is short-term, reconfiguring ASA boundaries is short-term, and all short-term options could be implemented right now while working on intermediate-term and long-term solutions.
- District Board Director Kevin King asked when the LCOG report is expected to be complete, because the Task Force needs to digest the information before making a recommendation to the full JEO group. Byron Vanderpool and Paula Taylor said they will complete the work as soon as possible.
- Randy Groves said he is concerned with pushing the timeline out too far, because the system is in trouble now.
- Councilor Mike Clark said that Eugene is currently reviewing FY10 budget presentations, and asked if a resolution would need to be made before the second week in June.
- Randy Groves said Eugene Fire & EMS is processing a rate increase in-line with Springfield, because there are no other available options that will give the department a

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lift. He added that he is not comfortable with this because of the impact on the public at a time when many people have lost their health care insurance, but he sees no other immediate solution.

- Councilor Mike Clark confirmed that each jurisdiction will have to develop their individual short-term solutions, he also suggested looking at a differential for out-of-county rates. Randy Groves responded that this would be a part of Eugene's rate increase like Springfield.
- Councilor Dave Ralston said he has already seen Springfield's budget, which includes taking General Fund dollars to support ambulance service. Dennis Murphy added that there is a fixed amount of General Fund money for Springfield's FY10 budget to fund ambulance service through June 2011. Councilor Ralston stated that the next two years for Springfield are mapped out.
- Randy Groves said that regardless of what we implement on a short-term basis, we will still need to develop a series of long-term solutions to stabilize the system.
- The group agreed on reserving a date to make the recommendations to the full JEO group before the Eugene and Springfield summer Council Breaks. That meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 21, 2009 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

9. Additional Issues

- No one brought forward any additional issues to discuss.
- Randy Groves thanked everyone for making time to work on this issue, and the meeting was adjourned.

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Adopted Issue and Objective Statement

ISSUE STATEMENT

The central Lane County area's ambulance transport system is experiencing a financial crisis attributed largely to the federal government's decline in Medicare and Medicaid payments. At the same time, the system is experiencing an increase in utilization of services by that representative demographic as well as the uninsured and under-insured population. This situation has been exacerbated by the global economic recession and all three regional providers are projecting deficits.

TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES

The ATS JEO Task Force shall develop a set of recommendations for stabilizing the ambulance transport system in the Central Lane County area currently served by Ambulance Service Areas (ASA) #4, #5 and #8, as defined by Lane County Code, Chapter 18.02(4), (5), (8). These recommendations shall take into consideration adequacy of funding, adequacy of capacity and response, and the overall quality and sustainability of the ambulance transport system. These recommendations shall then be presented in a joint elected official format to the Board of County Commissioners, Lane Rural Fire/Rescue Board and the City Councils of Eugene and Springfield.