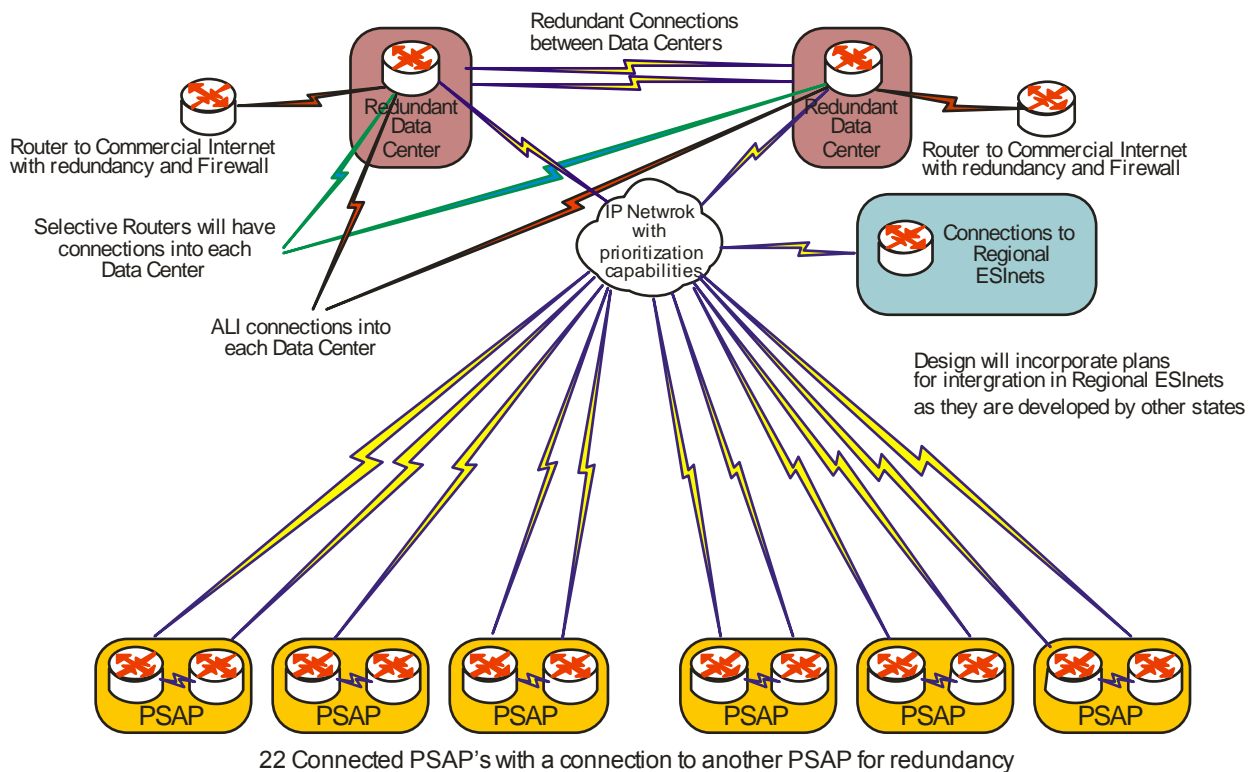


NEXT GENERATION 911 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota’s current 911 network, as those of all other states, was designed to rapidly answer traditional landline telephone calls for emergency medical, fire, and law enforcement assistance. Creative call routing allowed this network to manage cellular calls, but the continued deployment of new communication services is setting the stage for the ultimate replacement of this legacy network. This future network, built on a broadband Internet Protocol (IP) backbone, is being referred to by the federal government as “Next Generation 911” or “NG911”.

The North Dakota 911 Association, and its member counties and cities have dedicated almost \$100,000 for the assessment of our current statewide 911 network, and the development of a Master Plan for NG911 across North Dakota. This assessment and master plan was developed by L. Robert Kimball and Associates, one of the foremost emergency communication consultants in the country. The master plan includes a generalized design (below) of the future network to serve North Dakota’s NG911 needs.



This design incorporates the visions of the various national agencies and organizations that have been charged with conceptualizing this new system. Building on the work of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the Network Reliability and Interoperability Council (NRIC) (an advisory group to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) NG9-1-1 Initiative, the NG9-1-1 concept envisions a

systematic transition to a new system. The new system will accommodate a flexible services infrastructure where existing and new emergency communications applications of all types can be implemented without requiring major overhauls to existing network elements. For North Dakota and its public safety answering points (PSAPs), implementation of and transition to NG9-1-1 may have far-reaching impacts such as:

- Call handling processes and procedures,
- Personnel issues – including staff with new skills and training on new systems,
- New and expanded data sources,
- Calls including audio, video, and telematics that can enable new sources of information for decisions about handling calls and dispatching and coordination of resources,
- Methods of transferring and coordinating information among PSAPs, emergency operations centers, and other public safety entities beyond that currently provided for the public switched telephone network, and
- Greater interconnectivity among local PSAPs, regional, state, and national agencies for coordination of emergency responses.

The current 911 network was designed by local phone companies and funded by the local 911 fee on telephone service. The incorporation of wireless 911 technology was largely successful through statewide project management and the coordination of all local governments through a single purchasing agreement. The successful transition to NG911, as indicated by the US DOT, will require even greater investment and cooperation – involving national, state, regional, and local coordination. The Master Plan suggests a 5-7 year phased-in process.

Success of NG911 will require North Dakota to address issues such as:

- Governance of the NG911 project and the future network,
- Uniform, statewide standards of answering, transferring, dispatching and managing calls,
- Project management and consulting services,
- Staff recruitment, training, and retention, and
- Funding of the transition and the network's ongoing costs.

The federal government has recently released draft rules for a nationwide grant program for NG911 – to be made available by September 2009. North Dakota's share of this funding is (at a minimum) \$500,000 – with the requirement of a statewide matching investment of an equal amount.

North Dakota's local governments are looking to the Legislature for assistance in taking the current Master Plan to the next step by assisting in the development of a governance body, authorization of the receipt of available federal funding, dedication of the necessary matching funds, and the policy development assistance to make the project successful.