

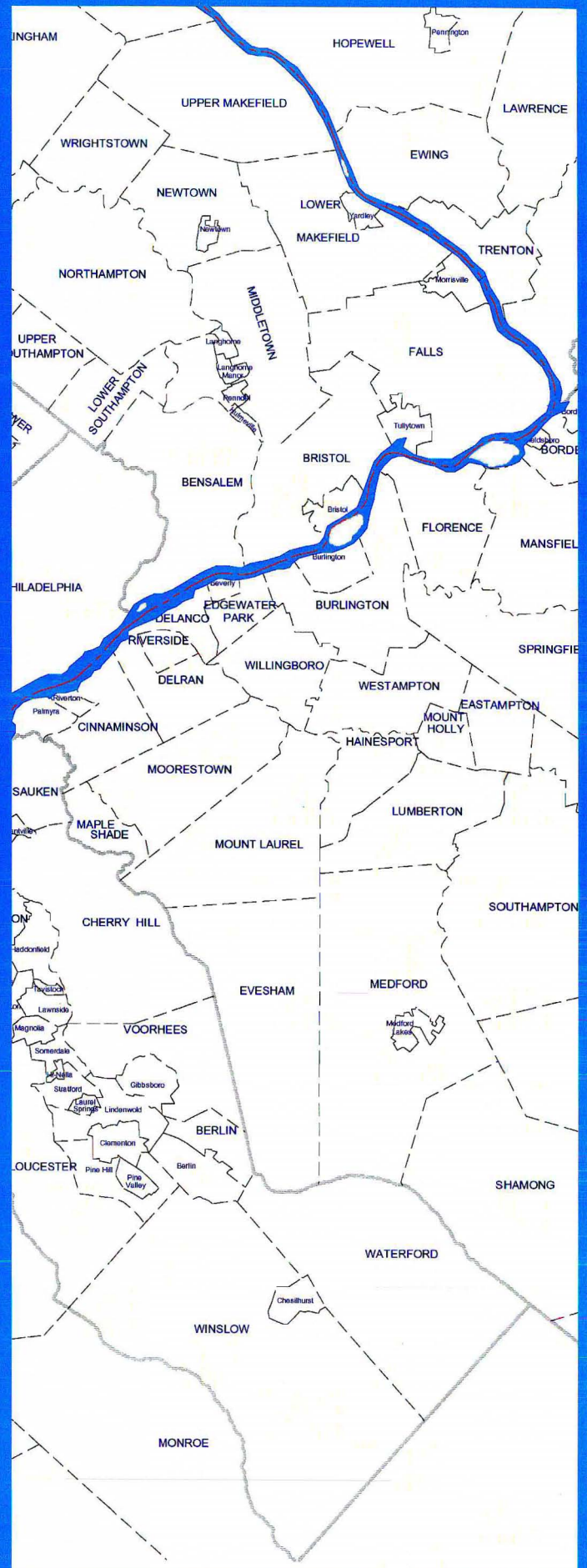
Inter-Municipal Cooperation Alternatives

Report 3

Inter-Municipal Police and Emergency Services

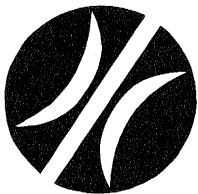


**Delaware
Valley
Regional
Planning
Commission**



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Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate intercounty and intercity agency which provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning for the orderly growth and development of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties as well as the City of Philadelphia in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey. The Commission is an advisory agency which divides its planning and service functions between the Office of the Executive Director, the Office of Public Affairs, and three line Divisions: Transportation Planning, Regional Planning, and Administration. DVRPC's mission for the 1990s is to emphasize technical assistance and services and to conduct high priority studies for member state and local governments, while determining and meeting the needs of the private sector.



The DVRPC logo is adapted from the official seal of the Commission and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River flowing through it. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey. The logo combines these elements to depict the areas served by DVRPC.

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Inter-Municipal Police and Emergency Services



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

The Bourse Building

111 South Independence Mall East

Philadelphia, PA 19106-2515

[Http://www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

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INTRODUCTION

There are 353 cities, townships and boroughs in the nine-county Delaware Valley region, each exerting its own form of local authority. At times, this desire for local control may conflict with other important goals such as improving local services or reducing taxes. Many elected and appointed officials now realize that a way to overcome common issues is for neighboring municipalities to work together. While joint ventures are not always the answer to every local problem, under many circumstances municipalities can address cost efficiency and other benefits by working together with neighboring communities to improve service delivery.

As part of a continuing project to foster inter-municipal cooperation, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is preparing a series of short "How-to" guides for elected and appointed officials. The purpose of these guides is to demonstrate how local officials can launch specific cooperative ventures with their neighbors in adjacent municipalities to improve services and/or reduce costs. Key arguments in favor of cooperation with other municipalities include saving money and improving the delivery of services. The first and second guides, released in July 1997 and June 1998, describe how to create a regional recreational commission and plan for highway and transit corridors, respectively.

This is the third report in the series, and describes how municipalities can save money and increase efficiency through inter-municipal police and emergency services. Police and emergency service issues are often regional in nature and transcend local municipal boundaries; thereby, the region's communities are faced with common issues regarding these services. Issues such as growing residential demand for services and the rising cost of providing services have impacted many communities. Municipalities should, therefore, explore whether or not

working and planning with adjacent and neighboring communities can provide more effective and efficient police and emergency services while reducing costs.

Inter-municipal cooperation usually involves either area-wide agreements among several communities in a logical service area; or a bi-lateral agreement between adjoining municipalities related to municipal service functions. In New Jersey, this type of agreement is described as inter-local cooperation. Regional cooperation, on the other hand, is most commonly found in service sharing based on infrastructure functions such as water and sewer but not as prevalent in personnel functions (e.g. education and health care). In addition, regional cooperation may also require the creation of a separate administrative agency to manage the service function.

This report includes an overview of regional and inter-municipal police and emergency services, municipal incentives to facilitate their creation and two case studies related to regional police and inter-local emergency services. Although state police in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania supply coverage to those communities that do not provide police services, this report focuses on municipal efforts to address such services on the inter-municipal or regional level.

What are Regional and Inter-Municipal Police and Emergency Services?

Police and emergency services are classified as regional or inter-municipal if they involve two or more municipalities working together under some type of formal agreement to provide these services. In New Jersey, a Department of Community Affairs survey lists 18 inter-local agreements between 39 communities within the DVRPC region involving inter-municipal or regional police and emergency services. In Pennsylvania, a Governor's Center for Local Government Services survey reports there are currently 24

municipalities within the DVRPC region involved in some form of regional or inter-municipal cooperation with regard to police services. **Maps 1 and 2** illustrate regional and inter-municipal police services in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Regional or inter-municipal police and emergency services, one alternative to solving the many administrative and operational problems facing communities, have been present in the region for many years. These services typically evolve around existing services. They can range from: (1) a mutual aid agreement between communities and service providers; (2) contracted services, such as police or ambulance services; in which one community provides services to an adjacent or neighboring community; or (3) consolidated services such as regional police departments and emergency dispatching centers.

Some regional police or emergency services may involve only two jurisdictions, usually a large township and a small borough or two small boroughs. In Camden County, Haddonfield Borough with 11,633 residents provides police service to tiny Tavistock Borough with a population of 12. In contrast, the Westtown-East Goshen Police Department, Chester County, currently serves three townships collectively totaling 26,206 people. A study was recently completed evaluating the addition of two more townships and a borough.

Applicable State Legislation

In Pennsylvania, Act 180 - the Inter-Municipal Cooperation Act of 1972 - provides the enabling legislation regarding regional police and emergency services. This act permits municipalities to enter into inter-municipal cooperation agreements for any function, power or responsibility that a municipality may have under the Pennsylvania Constitution. Agreements enacted under the provisions of the act are essentially legal contracts among two or more municipalities. The terms of the agreement can be whatever is negotiated among the participants, subject to the general requirements of the law.

In New Jersey, there are a number of state acts that support inter-municipal or interlocal cooperation in police and emergency services. The Interlocal Services Act enables a local unit of government to enter into a contract with another local unit(s) or an existing authority, commission or board, upon consent of the governing body, for the joint provision of services. An agreement is established by ordinance for local units of government or resolution for all other entities. An accompanying contract specifies the provisions and standards of any service agreed upon, which the participating units are legally able to perform.

The Interlocal Services Aid Act promotes municipal consolidation and the consolidation of services through state funding. This includes police and emergency services. Any local unit of government or any quasi-governmental agency may receive funding based on a state-sponsored feasibility study. The Act finances program costs for a new service or additional administrative and operating costs for an existing service provided jointly by two or more municipalities.

Finally, the Local Health Services Act permits local units of government to choose between four approved options in providing health care services to residents: county-wide, regional, inter-municipal contract or continuing existing local services. This act is important in planning and establishing regional or inter-local emergency services.

Why Cooperate?

There are two general arguments in favor of cooperation: cost savings and the improvement of services.

Cost Savings

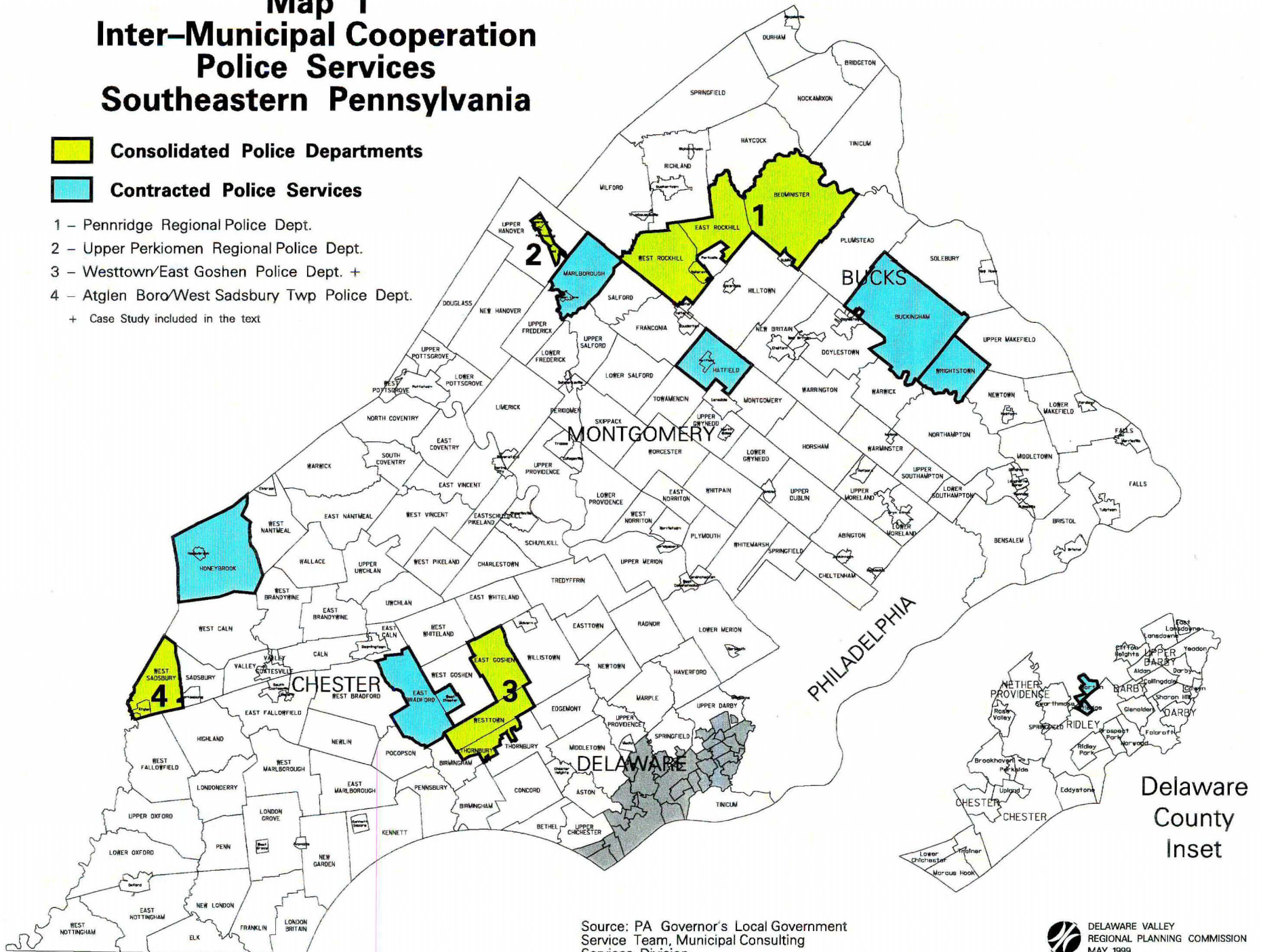
Cost savings can be viewed in several ways. First, cooperation allows municipalities to distribute the costs of police or emergency services over a larger population base. A fixed cost is an expenditure that does not vary directly with the size of the operation. For example,

Map 1 Inter-Municipal Cooperation Police Services Southeastern Pennsylvania

 Consolidated Police Departments

 Contracted Police Services

- 1 – Pennridge Regional Police Dept.
- 2 – Upper Perkiomen Regional Police Dept.
- 3 – Westtown/East Goshen Police Dept. +
- 4 – Atglen Boro/West Sadsbury Twp Police Dept.
- + Case Study included in the text



Source: PA Governor's Local Government
Service Team, Municipal Consulting
Services Division

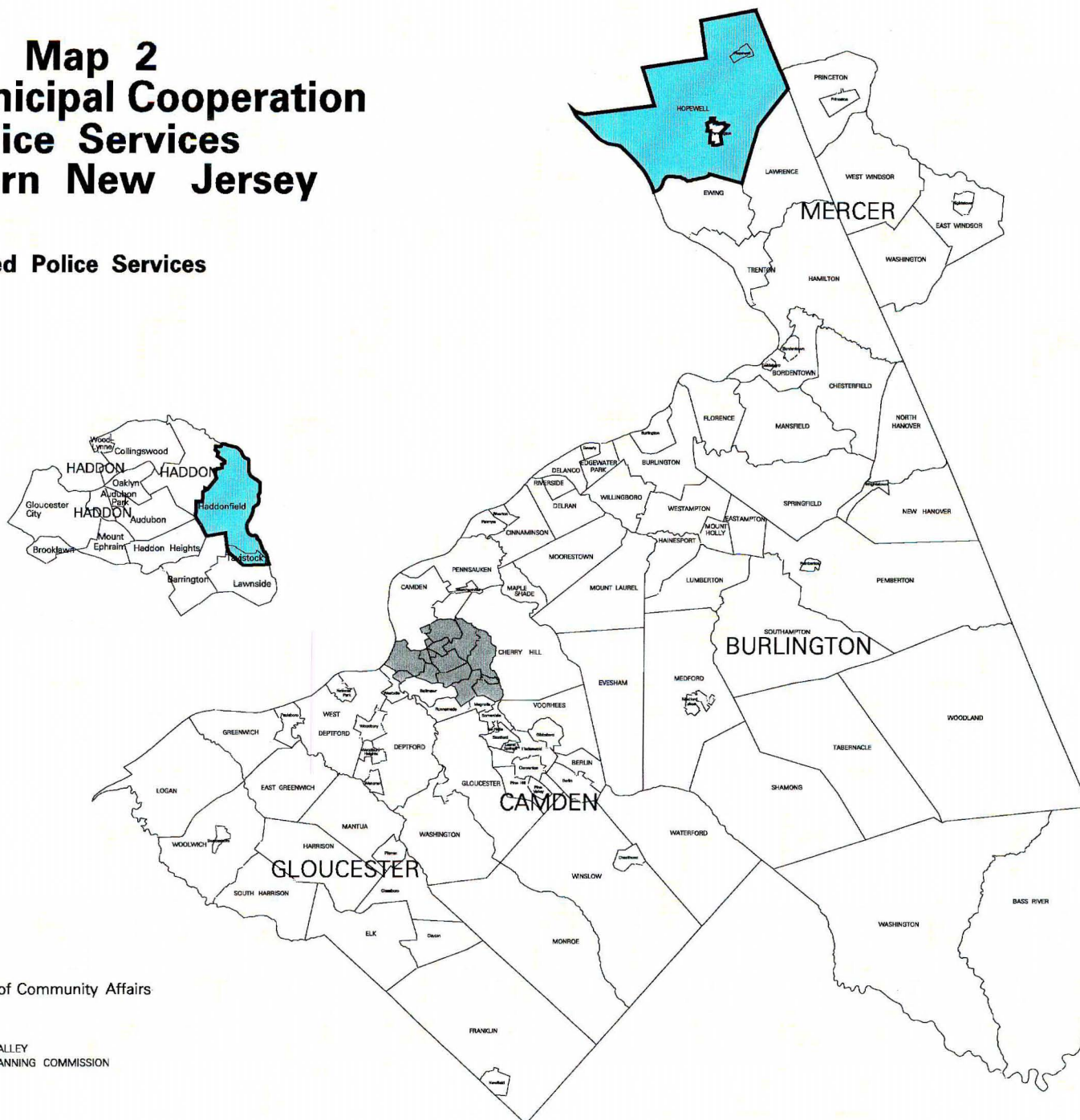


DELAWARE VALLEY
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MAY 1999

Map 2 Inter-Municipal Cooperation Police Services Southern New Jersey

 Contracted Police Services

Camden
County
Inset



Source: NJ Dept of Community Affairs

police chief salary and benefits, central administrative costs, and computer hardware are all examples of fixed costs. Region-wide services can spread these expenses over a larger tax-paying service area, which effectively reduces the burden on any single municipality.

Other savings can be found through *economy of scale*. For example, bulk purchases are usually priced more competitively than small orders. Regional police and emergency services have the ability to negotiate lower prices on everything from service uniforms to vehicles. Reducing duplication is another area of potential savings. For example, it would be considered less expensive to develop a billing statement for an ambulance service to be delivered in three or four municipalities than to prepare three or four separate billing statements each delivered to a third or a quarter of potential recipients. By eliminating unnecessary set-up and processing charges, regional police and emergency services can benefit from a true economy of scale.

The actual amount of savings from cooperation depends on several factors, particularly, how much individual municipalities were spending and what level of services they were providing prior to establishing a regional effort. It may be assumed that given two adjacent municipalities, each with its own police chief or emergency services director, both municipalities could economize by consolidating operations and dividing staff and administrative costs. It may also be assumed that if neither municipality had a police or emergency services department, it would be less costly to develop a joint service than to create two separate departments with separate staff.

However, if only one of the two municipalities has a service to begin with, the cost implications are more complex. In this case, the municipality that is already providing services would likely reap some cost savings through collaboration. This may impact the municipality that previously did not provide any service, which may incur new costs. An acceptable funding formula would need to be

established between the two municipalities that fairly distributes these costs.

For municipalities that have decided to offer police and emergency services to their residents, it is generally more cost-effective to collaborate than to go it alone. By forming regional police and emergency services, individual municipalities can spread fixed costs among a larger population, take advantage of a favorable economy of scale and reduce duplication of services.

Improvement of Services

Cost savings may vary and depend on local circumstances. However, the variety and overall quality of services delivered nearly always improves under an inter-municipal or regional approach. When two or more municipalities join services, residents are presented with a wider range of options than were previously offered by the single municipality. Likewise, when municipalities cooperate to form inter-municipal or regional police or emergency services, residents benefit in the form of improved services that may not have been previously available. Service improvements include (1) the expansion of service delivery areas; (2) enhanced and specialized services; and (3) the flexible delivery of services.

In addition, while there may not have been sufficient support in a municipality for a specialized service, a larger, regional service area might provide the tax base needed to make the service viable. For example, a police K-9 unit or a special rescue team may require additional training and funding. Moreover, with a larger population base, it might be possible to provide such services in addition to traditional services. It is, therefore, hard to present an example where the quality of police and emergency services did not improve with the cooperative effort between two or more communities.

Obstacles to Cooperation

Major obstacles to successful inter-municipal cooperation and planning for police and emergency services in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania are municipal government structure and community identity. Regional or inter-municipal police and emergency services require cooperation between municipalities that are accustomed to making their own decisions with regard to these services independent of any other community.

- *Municipal Government Structure.* The desire for local self-government is probably one of the largest barriers to regional or inter-municipal police and emergency services. Intergovernmental cooperation in municipal policing and emergency services is probably more difficult to achieve than it is in any other area of municipal services. Cooperative agreements in solid waste disposal, sewage treatment, recreation, water services, purchasing and other services are commonplace throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania. However, until recently many elected officials, sensitive to the desires of their constituents, have been reluctant to go the way of regional police or emergency services.

- *Community Identity.* Citizens are often unsure what will actually result from regional police or emergency services. It is not easy to convince citizens that they have a stake in such organizations and that removing the community's name from their police cars or emergency vehicles, changing the location of police headquarters or a fire station, or changing the telephone numbers does not make police or emergency service units alien or unresponsive to the communities they serve. Consequently, public officials proposing to regionalize service often have a difficult sales job to win the support of their constituents.

INTER-MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL POLICE SERVICES

In a traditional method of providing police services to the political subdivisions of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the municipality establishes its police department, staffs and equips it, and gives it the legal responsibility for providing police services and law enforcement.

Types of Inter-Municipal or Regional Police Services

Methods of regional or inter-municipal policing are as follows:

- *Centralized Support Services/Decentralized Police Services.* Centralization of support services provides for consolidating records, investigations, recruitment and other personnel functions but leaves the patrol and traffic functions to individual municipalities. There are many examples of centralized support services in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the form of centralized records systems. This method would be considered a combination of a traditional method and consolidated police services.
- *Contracted Police Services.* Contracted police services are the most common method of regionalized police services in the region. A specific community provides police services to another community through a mutually agreed contract based upon certain cost factors. This method often evolves when a municipality that does not provide police services realizes the need for such services and negotiates a contract or agreement with a neighboring community to acquire services. In another example, a municipality may choose to abolish an existing police department and purchase police services from another police agency.
- *Consolidated Police Services.* Consolidation of police services requires ignoring municipal boundaries for police services and the unification of existing police forces into one regional police department. A distinctive characteristic of this method of

providing police services is the operation of the police agency outside the direct control of any single municipality. The department would be responsible to a policy board or police commission consisting of elected officials from each participating municipality. The board would be responsible for appointing the chief, evaluating his or her performance, setting policies and adopting a budget.

Advantages of Inter-Municipal or Regional Police Services

There are several specific advantages, summarized in **Figure I**, with police cooperation. These advantages may or may not result depending on the administrative policies established, the existing geographic and social conditions of the area, the organization and structure of the newly created agency or service and the procedures used in its implementation. The advantages are as follows:

- *Consistency of Police Enforcement.* Policy, regulations and local law governing police practices and performance often vary greatly from community to community. The implementation of a consolidated or regional police service requires the establishment of uniform policies and regulations covering administrative and field operations.
- *Coordination of Police Services.* It is not uncommon for five to six police departments and as many police officers to investigate the same series of criminal offenses when the investigation could be handled by fewer officers. It is also not uncommon for each of the five or six municipal police departments to maintain their own radio dispatch systems, records system and other support services. Inconsistencies in enforcement based upon local policies and procedures can be reduced or eliminated through regional cooperation.
- *Coverage and Distribution of Police Personnel.* Police personnel are assigned to duty according to police activity. If a large percent of crime and police activity occurs during a particular period of time each day (on average), a

large percent of the police patrol force should be deployed during that time. In a department employing a small number of officers, municipalities can do little more than place one officer on duty for each shift. Therefore, in an area with a number of small police departments and the need to have at least one officer on duty, several officers may be on patrol in an area that could be adequately covered by fewer officers. Regional police services can result in a more efficient use of police personnel.

- *Training.* Providing proper and necessary police training can be very difficult in smaller police agencies. Sending an officer to police training sessions often means not providing police patrol during certain periods of the day. Consequently, exposure to necessary training often does not occur. Properly trained police officers are much more efficient in their work and a higher quality police service results. Regional cooperation opens the door to improved training and efficiency.

- *Police Management and Supervision.* Because of limitations in time and personnel, many police chiefs in smaller police departments may function in the capacity of a patrol officer and are unable to devote the necessary effort to develop sound management systems. Accordingly, developing and implementing procedures which result in increased productivity for the amount of tax dollars invested may not take the appropriate priority. With regional cooperation, police chiefs have the opportunity to dedicate more time and effort toward increased efficiency in department management.

- *Reduced Costs.* The cost of providing a police service is lower in communities served by regional police services. This saving can be attributed to sharing of two of the costliest items, personnel and equipment. Lower costs result from the need for fewer officers, fewer ranking positions, fewer vehicles, less equipment and fewer police headquarters facilities. Such was the case for several municipalities in Chester County. Caln, East Brandywine, Highland, Honey Brook and New Garden Townships and

the Borough of Parkesburg, were recently able to work together to purchase a laser accident investigation system to map serious accident and crime scenes. Without the pooling of municipal funds, these municipalities would not have been able to individually justify the purchase of such an expensive system.

- *Career Opportunities for Officers.* A larger police agency provides greater opportunities for police officers to receive a wider range of training and to specialize in such areas as criminal investigation, youth services, traffic enforcement, and crime prevention activities. The potential for advancement and higher salaries is also greater in inter-municipal or regional police departments.

Figure I **Advantages of Regional Police Services**

- *Consistency of Police Enforcement*
 - *Coordination of Police Services*
 - *Coverage and Distribution of Police Personnel*
 - *Training*
 - *Police Management and Supervision*
 - *Reduced Costs*
 - *Career Opportunities for Officers*
-

Impacts Related to Inter-Municipal or Regional Police Services

Arguments against regional police services are basically the same, regardless of the manner in which the police agency is developed or the geographic conditions and social makeup of an area. **Figure II** outlines the impacts of

regional or intermunicipal police services. Impacts include:

- *Loss of Other Services.* Police officers within the region and elsewhere in the country perform many duties, which may not be considered police functions but are often part of an officer's duty in a community. Collecting fees from parking meters, delivering messages to municipal officials, or issuing licenses and permits are some of the services performed by officers. As a result, when municipalities decide to explore inter-municipal or regional police services these services are usually discontinued as a police function. Municipalities must find other ways to perform these services, usually through non-uniformed employees.

- *Loss of Identity and Control.* In the traditional law enforcement situation where a municipality creates and maintains its own police agency, the entire governing body is often directly involved in the day to day operation of the police agency. Public safety or police commissions often exist which establish policy, oversee budgeting and control finances. In some municipalities, a member of the governing body is designated *Police Commissioner* and is delegated the responsibility of overseeing the operation of the police department. In boroughs throughout the region, this responsibility is placed upon the mayor by law in both states. In inter-municipal or regional police departments, the municipality appoints one or more of its elected officials to a Regional Police Board or Police Commission, who is responsible for the effective operation of the police agency. The municipality's representative(s) is its liaison to the police department through which communications flow. Each community's control over the department is altered by the need to have general agreement on policies and finances.

- *Loss of Citizen Contact.* The development of inter-municipal or regional police service often requires the transfer of personnel from one jurisdiction to another because of a need to reestablish patrol zones and

districts. Thereby, a perception may develop that citizens of a participating municipality will not have a close relationship with the police department. However, if this does occur it should only be temporary and exist until such time police officers become acquainted with the new area.

Figure II

Potential Impacts Related to Regional Police Services

- *Loss of Other Services*
 - *Loss of Identity and Control*
 - *Loss of Citizen Contact*
-

Inter-Municipal and Regional Police Services Feasibility Study

Once it has been decided that a municipality may gain something through inter-municipal or regional police services, it will be necessary to determine if the existing conditions are appropriate to make such a proposal feasible. There are number of steps a municipality should follow in assessing the feasibility of inter-municipal or regional police services.

- *Establish a Police Study Committee.* The first step should be to establish a Regional Police Study Committee to oversee the process. Each municipal governing body should appoint one or more of its members to the committee. The basic tasks of the committee would be to (1) determine the specific procedures to be undertaken in a study; (2) gather the data and information that will be necessary from each municipality and its police agency (if one exists); (3) analyze the data and information to determine the feasibility of an inter-municipal or regional police service and to propose which method of regional policing (centralized support services, contract services, or consolidation of police

agencies) would be most appropriate; and (4) establish the procedure and timetable for implementation of the service.

- *Develop Study Procedures.* The mechanics of how the study will be conducted as well as the timing of the work and its completion are extremely important to the study's success. The committee should explore how it will (1) proceed with the information gathering process; (2) conduct a public opinion survey; (3) seek advice or assistance from other than local sources; (4) ensure completion of the study to coincide with municipal budget preparation, thus enabling implementation before financial data becomes dated; (5) guide public hearings, if necessary; (6) keep the public informed of progress; and (7) present the findings and recommendations to the municipal governments involved.

- *Gather Data and Information.* It is important to secure data from a number of sources during this process: the municipality, police departments, local agencies associated with the police departments, and other sources not associated with the municipal governments or police departments. Some types of information which should be secured are: population of the participating municipalities, size of the municipalities in square miles, total miles of road by municipality, and total operating costs for the municipality and its police agency.

- *Analyze Data and Determine Feasibility.* This is the most difficult step and little direction can be offered as to the precise procedure to follow in reaching conclusions. However, at this time all information is available to the committee on which to base a sound decision. The committee must decide whether a change to the current system of providing police services would be beneficial to all participating municipalities. If so, what type of change would produce the most benefits, and what would those benefits include. In analyzing the data, it should: (1) determine issues, goals, and objectives through issue identification and goal setting; (2)

develop and evaluate alternative approaches and designs, and predict the effectiveness and consequences of these approaches; and (3) compare alternatives and select the preferred approach by determining the means of ranking the approaches.

- *Establish the Procedure and Timetable for Implementation.* After a decision is made concerning the type of inter-municipal or regional police program that will be recommended, the framework for the program and timetable for implementation must be developed. Based on the outcome, this may be a relatively easy or an extremely complex process.

Developing Inter-Municipal or Regional Police Services

Once it has been decided that an inter-municipal or regional police service is feasible, a municipality should consider a number of issues in developing these services, as listed in **Figure III**. The first three issues are relevant to both contracted and consolidated police services while the last three are specific to consolidated police services.

- *Define the Type and Level of Service.* A clear definition should be made of the type and level of service to be established for police services provided. For example, patrolling, investigating complaints and answering requests for service are described as daily police activities. However, directing traffic may not be, and if a community deems this service to be important it should be defined.

- *Determine the Cost.* A cost determination, whether for contracted or consolidated police services, requires a thorough analysis of the current operating cost and the amount of service provided. Current costs of operation are established by adding all direct and indirect costs and eliminating those items that relate to only the individual community such as parking meter enforcement.

- *Develop an Agreement.* A legal agreement is essential and must be developed. It

would contain language granting authority to officers of contracted police services or authority to a regional police agency for consolidated police services to enforce the law and provide police services to the participating communities.

- *Select a Management Method.* For consolidated police forces, determining the proper method of managing a regional police force is difficult. Depending upon the number of municipalities, there may be many elected officials involved. Municipalities should explore a successful and workable solution for the management of the organization such as the creation of a regional police board or police commission.
- *Structure the Agency Organization.* Probably the most important aspect of the concept of a regional or consolidated police service is the design of the police agency. This is important if the new agency to be created is to be effective. Ideally, the new agency will be large enough to provide a full range of police services to the communities it serves.

Figure III

Developing Regional Police Services

- *Define the Type and Level of Service*
- *Determine the Cost*
- *Develop an Agreement*
- *Select Management Method*
- *Structure Agency Organization*
- *Establish Personnel Administration*

- *Establish Personnel Administration.* A key aspect of the management responsibility associated with a regional police force is that of personnel management. These responsibilities

include the handling of payroll, administration of pension plans and the maintenance of employee records and benefit programs.

Case Study

Westtown-East Goshen Police Department

In 1981, the Townships of East Goshen and Westtown, Chester County (see **Map 1**) met to discuss the formation of a regional police force based on a regional police study conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs. Prior to these discussions, East Goshen received police coverage from the State Police and Westtown had a small police force of seven full-time and six part-time officers. Both townships were looking for a way to increase police services without drastically impacting municipal finances. Taking into consideration that Westtown Township already had an established force, the townships agreed to build the force around the nucleus of this department, which became the Westtown-East Goshen Police Force.

A Regional Police Commission was established with one representative from Westtown, one representative from East Goshen and a representative mutually agreed upon by both municipalities. In addition, Thornbury Township, Chester County, contracted with the force in 1992 and now receives township-wide police coverage. The cost distribution method chosen by Westtown and East Goshen is based on a formula that divides the total cost between the townships by calculating workload and the number of incidents. By contract, Thornbury is assessed a general fee along with a fee for workload or incidents.

Cost savings experienced by a municipality are the costs usually associated with providing its own police services in comparison with a municipal share of funding for a regional force. These savings can also be reflected in the percentage of the total municipal budget dedicated to police expenditures over time. This is true of the Westtown-East Goshen Police Department, which operates at savings for both Westtown and East Goshen townships.

Service improvements in the delivery of police services could be defined as providing more with less; i.e., the number of officers required for 24-hour police coverage per 1,000 residents. On average, an individual police department requires at least two officers per 1,000 residents based on the rotation of patrol shifts. A regional department can provide service with fewer officers by means of patrol zones. Such is the case with the Westtown-East Goshen Police Department which currently has fewer officers assigned per 1,000 residents. This eliminates the need for extra personnel who are not actively assigned a caseload and represents the most costly item associated with police services.

Results to Date

In 1981, police services made up 60% of the total municipal budget or close to \$70,000 for Westtown Township. This included a force of 7 full-time and 6 part-time officers or an average of two officers per 1,000 residents. By 1989, the police budget had grown to nearly \$400,000, but represented only 13% of the total municipal budget for a force of 12 full-time and 8 part-time officers. Although the police budget experienced an increase between 1981 and 1989, the Township could associate the addition of 5 full-time and 2 part-time officers with a cost savings of approximately the same amount it had budgeted for this period had it been obligated to increase personnel apart from the regional department. Also during this period, service improved when the number of officers fell to .8 per 1,000 residents. In 1998, the Township's expenditures for police services were only 5% of the total municipal budget or approximately \$800,000. The force at this time had grown to a size of 17 full-time and 12 part-time officers. The resulting savings are equal to the budget and yield consistent police coverage of 1 officer per 1,000 residents.

In contrast, East Goshen did not budget for police services prior to 1981. According to Township Manager Louis Smith, residential demand for increased police coverage had reached a point where officials felt the necessity

to explore such services. In 1989, police services made up 23% of East Goshen Township's total municipal budget or approximately \$400,000. The cost savings to the Township were close to the same amount for 12 full-time and 8 part-time officers. The number of officers per 1,000 residents was also .8 for this period. The municipal and police budgets increased during the period between 1989 to 1998. The percentage of the municipal budget dedicated to police services also increased in 1998 to 26% or close to \$800,000. However, during this time period the Township was able to increase police services through the addition of 5 full-time and 4 part-time officers at savings approximately equal to the budget and at a cost increase of only 3%. Police coverage was also consistent at 1 officer per 1,000 residents.

Also in contrast, Thornbury Township, at the time it contracted with the force in 1992, had one full-time police officer serving the entire township. Coverage was limited to specific patrol times. Municipal expenditure for police services prior to 1992 was 30% of the total township budget. By 1998, the Township was able to increase its police coverage through the services of 12 full-time and 12 part-time officers and lower the expenditure for such services to 21% of the budget. This resulted in an improvement of service with 1 officer per 1,000 residents.

Michael Cotter, Westtown Township Manager, summed up the regional police force by saying it has been good for all involved. Currently, a study has been completed to evaluate the possibility of expanding the force to include two additional townships and one borough. Municipal discussions are continuing among the communities involved in the study. If implemented, this proposal has the potential to reduce municipal expenditures even further, while achieving positive effects on service levels.

INTER-MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

Unlike police services, emergency services may or may not be directly established by a municipality. Staffing and equipping of such services may be provided independently. Also unlike police services, a large portion of emergency service providers rely on volunteers. Like police services, however, there are three general methods for providing inter-municipal or regional emergency services in the political subdivisions of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Types of Inter-municipal or Regional Emergency Services

Methods of regional or inter-municipal emergency services are as follows:

- *Centralized Support Services/Decentralized Service Providers.* Centralization of support services provides for consolidating records, dispatching and billing but leaves the service functions to individual providers. There are many examples of centralized support services in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the form of countywide or regional 911 communications systems and centralized records systems. This method could be considered a combination of traditional and consolidated emergency services.
- *Contracted Emergency Services.* Contracting for emergency services is one of the most common methods of providing emergency services in the region. Emergency services are provided by a specific community or service provider to another community through a mutually agreed contract based upon certain cost factors. This method often evolves when a municipality that does not provide an emergency service recognizes a need for such a service and establishes a contract with a neighboring community or service provider to furnish the service. In another example, a municipality which may not have a paid professional fire department nor the ability to raise a volunteer company chooses to contract for fire protection

services from another municipality or service provider.

- *Consolidated Emergency Services.* When consolidation of emergency services occurs, municipal boundaries are ignored in providing emergency services and existing services are organized as one regional service provider. Distinctively this method of providing emergency services would be outside the direct control of any single municipality. The service provider may be responsible to a board of directors or commission possibly consisting of elected officials from each participating municipality. This board or commission may also be responsible for setting policies and adopting a budget.

Advantages of Inter-municipal or Regional Emergency Services

There are many advantages (see **Figure IV**) to regional cooperation in providing emergency services. These advantages relate to administrative issues, the operation of existing service providers, geographic and social conditions and the organization and structure of the newly created service provider to be established. The advantages are as follows:

- *Conformity in Emergency Services.* Regulations governing emergency service practices and performances are often complex and complicated. They may be interpreted differently from community to community. The implementation of regional or inter-municipal emergency services provides for the creation of consistent policies and regulations covering service operations.
- *Coordination of Emergency Services.* It is quite common for a number of emergency service providers to respond to the same call when fewer emergency personnel could handle the response. It is also common for each of these service providers to maintain their own emergency vehicles, record systems and other support services. Inconsistencies in providing services based upon local procedures can be

minimized or eliminated through regional cooperation.

- *Dispersion and Deployment of Emergency Services Personnel.* Emergency personnel are usually assigned to duty according to potential activity. If a large percentage of emergency calls occur during a particular period (day, week or month), more emergency personnel should be deployed during that time-period. In an organization consisting of a small complement of service personnel, service providers can do little more than place fewer personnel on duty for each shift. Regional emergency services can result in better deployment and dispersion of personnel to cover a larger service area, while avoiding duplication of service and over-staffing.

- *Training and Effectiveness.* Providing appropriate and essential training can be very difficult in smaller emergency service organizations. Attending a training session can often mean that fewer service personnel are on duty during certain periods of the day, week or month. Consequently, exposure to necessary training only occurs when there is a mandatory requirement, especially for service volunteers. Properly trained emergency personnel are much more effective in their work and the quality of service improves as a result. Regional cooperation creates opportunities for improving personnel training and effectiveness.

- *Emergency Services Administration and Management.* With limitations in time and personnel, especially volunteers, many emergency service managers and supervisors in smaller organizations may also provide services and can not devote necessary efforts to administrative and management functions. Correspondingly, developing procedures, which may result in improved services for the dollars invested, may not take an appropriate priority. With regional cooperation, emergency services managers and supervisors have the opportunity to dedicate time and effort toward increased efficiency in organizational administration and management.

- *Reduced and Shared Costs.* Costs associated with providing emergency services are lower in communities served by regional services. This cost savings can be attributed to sharing both operating and equipment costs. Lower costs result from more efficient operating costs, such as building maintenance and fewer emergency service vehicles.

- *Career Enhancement Opportunities for Emergency Services Personnel.* Larger emergency service providers offer greater opportunities for emergency service personnel to receive a wide range of training and to specialize in a number of areas such as EMT, fire investigation, bomb disposal and fire prevention activities. The potential for advancement and higher salaries is also greater in inter-municipal or regional emergency service organizations for professional personnel. An inter-municipal or regional emergency service organization comprising a larger area can also provide a greater opportunity for recruiting additional volunteers.

Figure IV **Advantages of Regional Emergency Services**

- *Conformity in Emergency Services*
 - *Coordination of Emergency Services*
 - *Dispersion and Deployment of Emergency Services Personnel*
 - *Training and Effectiveness*
 - *Emergency Services Administration and Management*
 - *Reduced and Shared Costs.*
 - *Career Enhancement Opportunities for Emergency Services Personnel*
-

Impacts Related to Inter-municipal or Regional Emergency Services

There are a number of reasons why inter-municipal or regional emergency services are not developed, including the manner in which such providers would be organized and the geographic and social makeup of the area. **Figure V** outlines those impacts related to inter-municipal or regional emergency services.

- *Loss of Community and Control.* In many situations, a municipality is often directly or indirectly involved in the operation of emergency services, from providing volunteers to staffing emergency management offices, public safety committees or fire commissions. For those emergency services not directly controlled by a municipality, many residents provide the workforce of needed volunteers to operate such services. Through this involvement, the service is identified or controlled by the community it serves. For those municipalities directly involved, they may establish policy, oversee budgeting or manage finances. In some municipalities, members of the governing body may be delegated the responsibility of overseeing the operation of certain emergency services. It is this loss of municipal control or perceived loss and the sense of community that may severely impact the creation of inter-municipal or regional emergency services. In inter-municipal or regional emergency services, however, the municipality appoints one or more of its elected officials to a Regional Emergency Management Committee or Fire Commission, who in turn are responsible for the effective operation of the service. Thus, a municipal representative provides a link between the emergency service and all municipalities involved.

- *Loss of Citizen Contact.* The development of inter-municipal or regional emergency service often involves the relocation of facilities and the shift of personnel, professional or volunteers, from one jurisdiction to another due to the need to reestablish service areas and districts. Subsequently, a perception may develop among citizens that they will not

have a close relationship with the service provider. However, even if this occurs, it should only be temporary until service personnel become familiar with the area they serve.

Figure V Potential Impacts Related to Regional Emergency Services

- *Loss of Community and Control*
 - *Loss of Citizen Contact*
-

Inter-municipal and Regional Emergency Services Planning

After a municipality determines there may be advantages to cooperation in inter-municipal or regional emergency services, it will be necessary to consider if conditions are appropriate to make such an approach a reality. There are planning steps a municipality should follow, similar to steps for evaluating regional or inter-municipal police services, to assess the likelihood that inter-municipal or regional emergency services can be established.

- *Appoint a Regional Emergency Service Committee.* The first step of the process to determine feasibility of an inter-municipal or regional emergency services should be to establish an oversight committee. Unlike regional or inter-municipal police services, the composition of such a committee could vary based on the type of emergency service to be studied. The basic tasks of the committee would be to: (1) determine the procedures to be utilized in the study; (2) collect necessary data and information from municipalities and emergency service providers; (3) analyze and evaluate the data and information to determine the feasibility of the proposed service and the method of service delivery (centralized support services/ decentralized service providers, contract services, or consolidation of emergency

services); and (4) establish a timetable for implementation.

- *Adopt Study Procedures.* How the study will be conducted as well as the timing are very important in its completion and eventual success. The committee should determine how it will (1) gather data and information; (2) direct public opinion surveys; (3) seek advice and assistance from outside emergency service providers; (4) for municipalities with direct control over emergency services, ensure that the study is available for budget preparation and provides current financial data; (5) guide public hearings; (6) keep the public informed; and (7) present the findings and recommendations to municipal governments and other parties involved, if required.

- *Collect Data and Information.* During the process, it is important for data and information to be attained from a variety of sources, such as: municipalities, existing emergency service providers, and local agencies and organizations associated with the emergency service. Types of data and information to be collected should include: current service delivery areas, municipal populations, square mileage of municipal areas to be served, total road miles by municipality and the total operating cost for the service.

- *Evaluate Data and Feasibility.* This part of the planning process can be very difficult. There is no prescribed method that can be proposed in reaching a conclusion. However, all information would be accessible to the committee and municipalities, and can be used to make a sound decision based on the available data. The committee must determine if changes to the present method of providing emergency services prove beneficial to the municipalities involved. If beneficial, what changes provide the most benefits and what would they involve? In evaluating data, the committee should: (1) identify issues and establish and prioritize goals and objectives; (2) develop and evaluate alternative methods of service delivery, anticipate the efficiency and outcome of selected

alternatives and perform an analysis of each method; and (3) compare selected alternatives and select the preferred method by means of ranking the alternatives.

- *Establish a Timetable for Implementation.* Once a decision is reached regarding the type of inter-municipal or regional emergency service, the extent of the program and timetable for implementation must be developed. Based on the outcome, this may be fairly uncomplicated or an extremely complex and difficult process.

Developing Inter-Municipal or Regional Emergency Services

Municipalities should consider a number of issues in developing inter-municipal or regional emergency services; these issues are summarized in **Figure VI**. Issues range from identifying the level and type of services provided to directing personnel administration. The following are areas to be considered.

- *Identify Level and Type of Service.* In establishing an inter-municipal or regional emergency service, municipalities should make certain that the level and type of service provided are precisely agreed upon. For example, if a community contracts with a regional emergency service provider for ambulance service, EMT support may not be part of this service. If the community believes this service to be important it should be negotiated.

- *Resolve Costs.* Costs should be resolved for contracted or consolidated emergency services through an evaluation of current operating costs and the amount of services to be provided. Current costs of operation should be the sum total of all direct and indirect costs. In developing the inter-municipal or regional service, all items that relate specifically to an individual community, such as hydrant maintenance, should be addressed.

- *Adopt an Agreement.* A legal agreement between municipalities is highly important and fundamental. It provides the basic authority for

emergency services providers, whether contracted or regional, to provide emergency services to respective communities. It also outlines the extent and level of services to be provided.

- *Determine a Management Method.* For consolidated emergency services, it is key to determine the manner by which it will be managed. Depending upon such factors as state law (New Jersey state law establishes fire districts), whether the service is under the direct control of the municipality and the number of municipalities participating in the service, there may be many local officials and citizens involved in the management of the service. Communities should investigate the creation of a regional board or commission to oversee the operation of the emergency service, such as a regional Fire Commission.

- *Develop the Service Organization.* This is the most important area if the newly created regional or consolidated emergency service is to be efficient and effective. The new service should be designed so that it is large enough to provide a full range of emergency services, depending on the type of service provided, to the participating communities.

- *Direct Personnel Administration.* This area is also significant in the management of the new service by the handling of payroll, pension plans for professional emergency service personnel and the maintenance of employee records and benefit programs.

Figure VI

Developing Regional Emergency Services

- *Identify Level and Type of Service*
 - *Resolve Costs*
 - *Adopt an Agreement*
 - *Determine a Management Method*
 - *Develop the Service Organization*
 - *Direct Personnel Administration*
-

Case Study

Clayton Borough Police Dispatching Service

In early 1989, officials from Newfield Borough and Elk Township, Gloucester County (see **Map 3**), met with Clayton Borough, also of Gloucester County, to discuss the possibility of Clayton providing police dispatching services. Newfield and Elk wanted to increase their capabilities with regard to this service and Clayton was looking to defray some of the costs associated with operation of the system. Taking into consideration the cost involved in purchasing new equipment required to effectively provide the service and the fact that Clayton already had an established dispatching service and costs relative to training and employing individuals to operate such a system, the two municipalities decided to enter into a contracted interlocal service agreement with Clayton Borough to provide this service.

According to Clayton Borough Police Chief J. Winters, the interlocal contract for providing dispatching services is working for all involved. Through this agreement, all three municipalities now receive police dispatching services that provide complete coverage of their respective communities. The service has

increased the ability of all communities to provide quick response to police calls through the effective dispatch of the nearest service unit, regardless of the municipalities involved. Through this effort, the service also provides support for the mutual aid agreement between all participating municipalities.

would take into consideration the total dispatches per municipality in addition to general fees.

The cost savings to each municipality can be viewed in terms of an initial start up cost and the cost associated with the annual operation of such a service. The initial cost for start up of this service can be estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for equipment and training of personnel. This factor alone can limit development of any new system. The annual operating cost for such a service may also be an impediment regardless of the initial start up cost. With an annual operating budget for the dispatching service in Clayton Borough of \$194,000, the cost of operating this system can be distributed to some degree with the two contracting municipalities.

Results to Date

Of the \$194,000 yearly operating cost for the system, Newfield Borough is responsible for an annual fee of \$3,150 or 2% of the annual budget (at \$1.97 per capita) while Elk Township is responsible for \$9,456 or 5% of the budget (at \$2.48 per capita). This would represent an annual cost saving of \$190,850 and \$184,544, respectively, if each municipality undertook to operate an individual system. Clayton Borough is responsible for the remaining \$181,394 of the annual budget (93%) at a per capita cost of \$29.47.

Although all three municipalities are highly satisfied with the regional agreement and the services provided, they agree that the cost for operating the system should be more equally distributed among all communities involved. Clayton Borough Administrator, Richard J. DeVillansanta recently stated that with an interlocal contract now in place and a successful working relationship between communities, it is time to negotiate with both the borough and the township to adjust fees based on a formula that

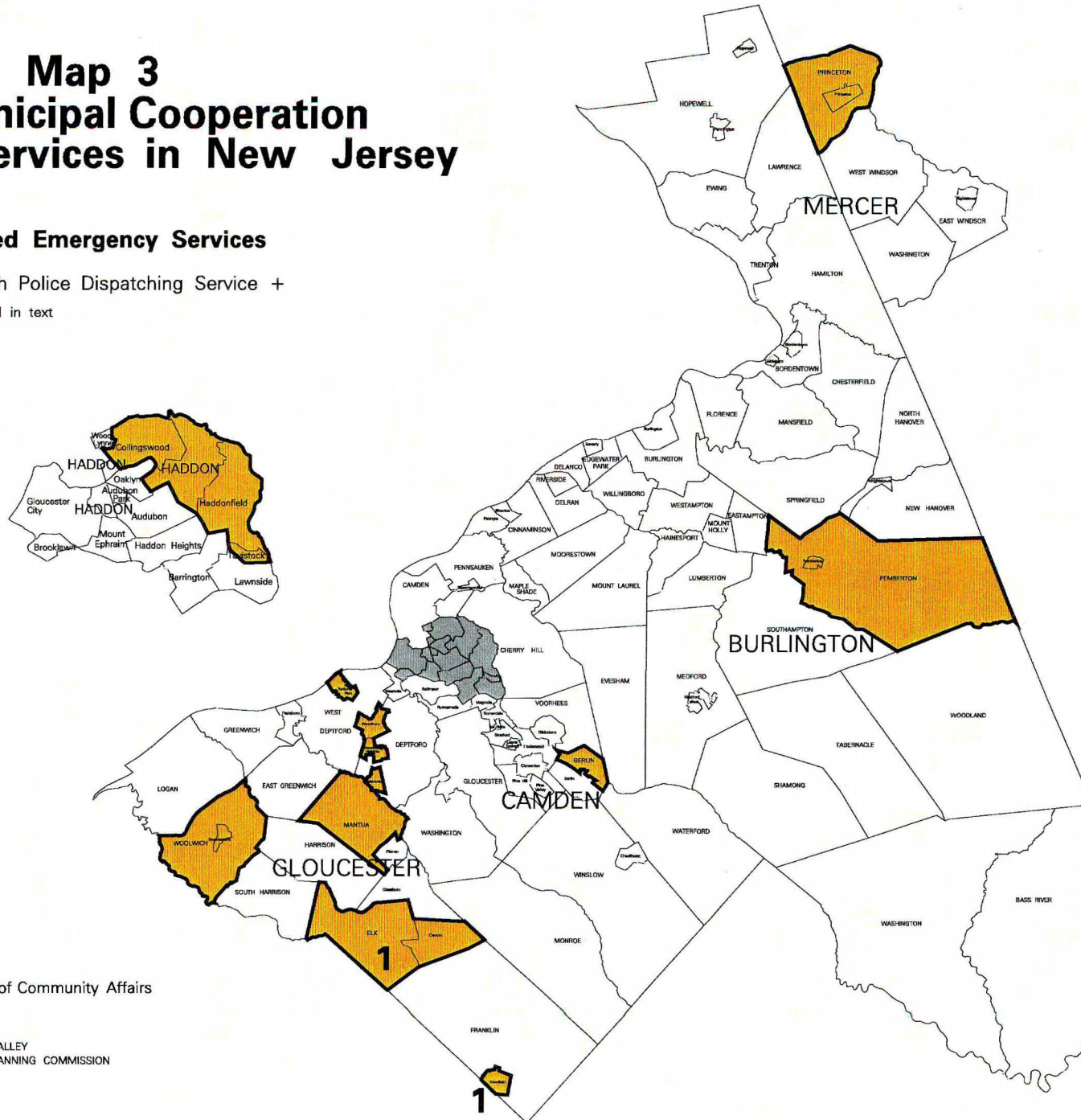
Map 3 Inter-Municipal Cooperation Emergency Services in New Jersey

 **Contracted Emergency Services**

1 – Clayton Borough Police Dispatching Service +

+ Case Study included in text

Camden
County
Inset



Source: NJ Dept of Community Affairs

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE INTER-MUNICIPAL COOPERATION

Funding and technical assistance for inter-municipal police and emergency services planning may be available from a number of different sources, based on current resources and priorities. Potential sources of funding and assistance that should be explored include:

Pennsylvania

- *Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor's Center for Local Government Services.* State funds may be available to assist in the initial startup costs of a regional police force. The regional police assistance program offers a limited number of grants of up to \$100,000, spread over a three-year period, to implement consolidated police departments. Priority is given to projects involving one or more distressed or at-risk communities under the Municipalities Financial Recovery Program, and also to departments with a minimum of ten full-time officers and a full-time chief.
- *Department of Community and Economic Development.* The Council of Governments/Inter-municipal Projects program offers grants to help defray the cost of joint municipal functions. Grant amounts are significantly smaller, averaging around \$5,000, but can be useful in paying for critical items necessary to get a regional police department operational. The Circuit Rider program assists in funding shared municipal personnel and can be used for police chiefs. Funding is spread over a three-year period with a declining state share.
- *Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities Piggyback Purchasing Program.* Regional police departments can purchase police cruisers from the state contract at the same price the state has contracted to buy state police vehicles.

New Jersey

- *Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services.* Interlocal Service Aid grants provide financial assistance to study the feasibility of a joint effort or to offset transitional costs when implementing a new interlocal program. Funds can also be used to help defray the costs of municipal consolidation efforts. Grants up to \$25,000 are available to reimburse local expenditures for pre-approved shared service efforts. Any two or more local governments may apply for funding.
- *New Jersey State Senate Bill 967 (proposed).* Known as the "Shared and Consolidated Services Incentive Act", Bill 967 would appropriate \$50 million to establish a state Shared and Consolidated Services Fund. The fund would be used to establish municipal grants to local units of government for shared service projects, such as police and emergency services. The grants would be for a period of five years and be used exclusively to reduce the county and municipal portions of the property tax levy. As of September 1999, the bill is in the Urban Affairs Sub-committee of the Senate.

Summary

Regional or inter-municipal police and emergency services are not the only form of regional cooperation. In some cases, the need for local control may preclude other considerations such as cost savings or increased service advantages. Informal cooperation between municipal police and emergency services can provide assistance in administering such services. Some communities may also agree to cooperate without the benefit of a binding legal agreement or regional board or commission. Such is the case with Pemberton Borough, Gloucester County, which provides fire suppression services to Pemberton Township, although no official agreement has ever been approved.

Finally, the benefits of cooperation illustrated in this guide are not designed solely for municipalities that want to create joint police

or emergency services. Other forms of cooperation can also result in cost savings and improved services. The issue, however, is that any benefit may prove to be temporary if one or more communities finds reason to stop cooperating with its neighbors. Through the creation of an inter-municipal or regional police or emergency service with a formula for funding, organizational structure and professional staff, communities will be able to achieve their needs and establish a commitment to provide cost-effective services to their constituents.

Additional information on intermunicipal police and emergency services is available from the region's two member states:

Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Southeast Regional Office
200 South Broad Street, 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Telephone: (215) 560-2374

**Department of Community Affairs
Division of Local Government Services**

CN 803
Trenton, NJ 08625-0803
Telephone: (609) 292-7842

Information on the case studies discussed in this report is available from:

Westtown-East Goshen Police Department

Chief, John M. Dumond
1081 Wilmington Pike
West Chester, PA 19382
Telephone: (610) 692-9600

Clayton Borough

Richard J. DeVillansanta, Administrator
125 N. Delsea Drive
Clayton, NJ 08312
Telephone: (609) 881-2882

The following documents were utilized in preparing this report, and can be referenced for further information:

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Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

The Bourse Building, 8th Floor
111 South Independence Mall East
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106
Telephone: (215) 592-1800
Fax: (215) 592-9125
<http://www.dvrpc.org>

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Publication Abstract

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Inter-Municipal Police and Emergency Services	Publication No. 99007

Geographic Area Covered: Nine-county Delaware Valley region, including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey.

Key Words:

Inter-municipal cooperation, regional police services, contracted services and mutual aid

ABSTRACT

As part of a continuing project to foster inter-municipal cooperation, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is preparing a series of short "How-to" guides for elected and appointed municipal officials. The purpose of these guides is to outline how local government officials can launch specific cooperative ventures with their neighbors in adjoining municipalities in order to improve services and/or reduce costs. This is the third guide in the series and describes how municipalities can increase their efficiency in providing services and reduce their costs through regional and inter-municipal police and emergency services.



For More Information Contact:

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Regional Planning Division
The Bourse Building
111 South Independence Mall East
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2515
Phone: (215) 592-1800 Fax: (215) 592-9125
www.dvrpc.org