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City Unveils Ambulance Proposal

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La Crosse city and county officials have been in talks to create their own ambulance service for months, and today they've finally released their plan. The plan was presented to officials from La Crosse's current provider, Tri-State Ambulance, for the first time Wednesday morning. They also unveiled their plan to the public on Wednesday evening.

"What were providing here is an enhanced system better than what we currently have," says Mayor Mark Johnsrud.

When a 911 call comes from La Crosse County, officials want to be the ones answering the phone. But they insist their proposed service will "co-operate not compete" with the existing service.

"Our dispatcher will see which ambulance is closest and won't care what liable is on the side of it, it will look at what is closest," says La Crosse County Board Chair Steve Doyle.

Tri-State officials aren't on board with the plan, which they say will jeopardize patient care. "Many systems around the country that have looked that this say maybe we don't want a whole bunch of paramedics, maybe we'd rather have a core group of paramedics who are well utilized well experienced," says Director Matt Zavadsky.

City officials insist they have a responsibility to take care of people within their boundaries. "We are going to be able to control, as a fire department the level of care that's being provided from the minute we get there. that's the most important thing. We control our own destiny and are not reliant on the private sector ambulance to determine the level of care the people in the city of la Crosse are going to receive," says Mayor Mark Johnsrud.

As part of the proposal, officials also want to create a "Joint Emergency Medical Services Commission". The commission would be composed of elected officials and hospital representatives, and would handle any future issue with the ambulance service.

Johnsrud says if the proposal is passed, residents will not see an increase on their property tax bill. He figures the amount of money spent on training and equipment will be covered within five years of when the service would begin.



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