



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2025

Subject: 2026 Land Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan Approval

Report #: 2025-1015-EMS-R07-JL

Purpose

To provide Essex County Council with background information and approve the recommended 2026 Land Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan (RTPP) for Essex Windsor EMS, as required by Ontario Regulation 257/00.

Background

Since 2012, and each year following, the *Ambulance Act*, O. Reg 257/00 (section VIII) mandates every municipality providing land ambulance services to submit a Response Time Performance Plan to the Director of the Emergency Health Regulatory and Accountability Services Branch (EHRAB) before October 31st.

In preparing the RTPP, data is extracted from the Ministry of Health via the Ambulance Dispatch Reporting System (ADRS). ADRS is a dataset containing details of all 911 calls received by the Ontario Land Ambulance Dispatch system and includes administrative and basic demographic data.

The Essex Windsor RTPP outlines the target response time for urgent responses, categorized by the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS). Ontario Regulation 257/00 establishes a six (6) minute response time 55% of the time for patients suffering a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), and an eight (8) minute response time 75% of the time for patients categorized as CTAS 1. The upper-tier municipality responsible for the delivery of land ambulance sets the response times for CTAS 2 through CTAS 5.

Table 1 – Canadian Triage Acuity Scale Levels

CTAS Level	Clinical Presentation
1 (Resuscitation)	Conditions that are considered threats to life or limb or have an imminent risk of deterioration requiring immediate aggressive interventions. These are patients that have arrested, or require active and aggressive resuscitation, or are pre-arrest or post-arrest.
2 (Emergent)	Conditions that are a potential threat to life, limb or function requiring rapid medical interventions and the use of condition-specific controlled medical acts. These patients have serious illness or injury and have the potential for further deterioration that may then require resuscitation.
3 (Urgent)	Conditions that could potentially progress to a serious problem requiring emergency interventions. May be associated with significant discomfort or affect the ability to function at work or activities of daily living. These patients have normal vital signs but their presenting problem suggests a more serious acute progress.
4 (Less Urgent)	Conditions that relate to patient age, distress, potential for deterioration, or complications that would benefit from intervention or reassurance. These patients will typically have stable vital signs and lower pain scales.
5 (Non-urgent)	Conditions that may be acute but non-urgent as well as conditions which may be part of a chronic problem with or without evidence of deterioration.

Discussion

Essex Windsor EMS has maintained the same RTPP since 2012, and Table 2 below contains the historical trend, including data up to September 20th, 2025.

Table 2 – Essex Windsor EMS Response Times

CTAS	Time (min)	Target	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Partial)
SCA	6	55%	62%	53%	44%	46%	59%	64%	46%
1	8	75%	77%	75%	69%	65%	69%	69%	69%
2	10	90%	85%	83%	83%	79%	80%	82%	80%
3	12	90%	87%	85%	88%	88%	88%	90%	90%
4	14	90%	91%	90%	86%	93%	92%	94%	94%
5	14	90%	90%	90%	86%	94%	93%	95%	95%

Note. 2025 includes data up to September 20, 2025.

While response times for CTAS 1-5 show minimal movement, we have lost some ground on Sudden Cardiac Arrest. In reviewing this decline, we have assessed several key factors, including down-staffing of ambulances, offload delays, codes red and black, call volumes, and resource enhancements.

Table 3 – Paramedic Down Staffing

Year	Unstaffed Hours
2023	10,528
2024	9,458
2025 (projected)	7,822

Table 4 – Limited Resource Notification

Year	Code Red (min)	Code Black (min)
2023	8,907	1701
2024	6,231	358
2025 (projected)	3,312	540

Table 5 - Offload Delays

Year	Hours
2023	19,319
2024	17,915
2025 (projected)	15,757

Table 6 - Call volumes

Year	Incident Response
2023	63,893
2024	65,513
2025 (projected)	68,386

Note. 2025 includes codes 3 and 4 only.

Table 7 - Resource enhancements

Year	12-Hour Shifts
2023	1
2024	3
2025	0
2026	2

Note. All 12-hour shift enhancements shown are transport ambulances. 2026 is pending 2026 budget approval.

In review of the above, unit down staffing, periods of limited ambulance resources (excluding code black), and offload delays are trending down. Conversely, call volumes are trending up. As call volumes continue to grow, resource enhancements will be required to maintain, and ideally, improve response times. Ongoing partnerships with local fire departments through our tiered response agreement and innovative initiatives such as our Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) program aim to find opportunities to improve our SCA times while adequate resource levels are secured.

Essex Windsor EMS conducted an audit of every SCA response time in 2025 to ensure accuracy, and where opportunities for improvement were found, they were actioned accordingly. Additionally, the count of “dispatch identified cardiac arrests” is low. Between January 1 and September 20, 2025, there have been 189 incidents. This data is further reviewed to only include those patients who were actually in cardiac arrest upon Paramedic arrival, which, within the same timeframe, is 37. Compare this to a patient who requires resuscitation from paramedics upon arrival, with a CTAS 1, which averages 1,200 patients per year. The low-quantity SCA data set is subject to volatility, in contrast to a large data set that may appear more stable.

It is important to emphasize that we fully recognize the critical importance of every second and take each case with the utmost seriousness. However, Council should be aware that with such a small number of cases, the statistical results can appear more volatile. As a result, even a few instances of response times exceeding the target by a single second—for example, arriving at 6:01—can give the impression of underperformance that does not accurately reflect overall service quality. EWEMS remains firmly focused on

consistently meeting and exceeding our CTAS 1 and CTAS 2 response time targets.

For further awareness, Essex Windsor EMS is scheduled to transition from the Dispatch Priority Card Index (DPCI) to the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) in February 2027. MPDS provides better accuracy in dispatching by reducing over-triaging, which keeps ambulances available for critical cases, such as sudden cardiac arrest. It is the international gold standard, used in much of North America and beyond. It is evidence-based, regularly updated, and much more detailed.

Council can anticipate a restructuring of our response times in October 2026, to align with the migration to MPDS in February 2027. The response times will align with the new MPDS' priority codes, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, and Echo, versus the DPCI priority codes of Code 3 and Code 4.

Essex Windsor EMS is not requesting a change to the current response time targets. It is recommended that the current response time targets remain in place until the implementation of MPDS, after which they will need to be restructured.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial impacts associated with approving the 2026 Land Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan, as this submission is a regulatory requirement under the Ambulance Act. Any future financial impacts related to resource enhancements to support response time performance will be addressed through the annual budget process and brought forward separately for Council's consideration.

Consultations

- Essex Windsor EMS Senior Leadership Team
 - Ambulance Dispatch Reporting System
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Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report 2025-1015-EMS-R07-JL and approve the 2026 Land Ambulance Response Time Performance Plan for Essex Windsor EMS as required by Ontario regulation 257/00 (as amended by regulation 267/08).

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Justin Lammers

Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

Concurred With,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
N/A	N/A