

## **Essex County Proposes Community-Driven Plan to Stabilize EMS System New EMS Model Utilizes Short-Term Rental Tax Revenue to Support Local Services and Relieve Property Tax Burden**

**Elizabethtown, NY** — Essex County has unveiled a comprehensive and forward-thinking plan to address the escalating Emergency Medical Services (EMS) crisis by proposing a community-led, incentive-based funding model that supports local EMS agencies while expanding critical Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage across the region.

The plan—crafted in response to growing staffing shortages, rising operational costs, and increasing call volumes driven by tourism and special events—leverages revenue from the newly enacted Short-Term Rental (STR) Sales Tax to stabilize and expand EMS services throughout the County. With over 10 million visitors traveling through the Adirondack Park each year, the plan recognizes the need for visitor-driven funding to meet the growing demand on emergency response services.

“This is a community-driven approach to solving the EMS crisis,” said County Manager Michael Mascarenas. “It allows local communities to dictate their EMS future based on their own unique needs. It also provides a level of property tax relief by utilizing the short-term rental sales tax collection to fund these essential services. With over 10 million people visiting the Park annually, it’s only appropriate that some of those funds be allocated for that purpose.”

“This proposal is a thoughtful, forward-thinking response to the EMS crisis affecting every corner of Essex County,” added Ken Hughes, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee. “By offering targeted support and incentivizing local solutions, we’re not only strengthening emergency care, we’re reinforcing the principle that community-led services—backed by smart County investment—deliver the best outcomes. It’s a balanced, forward-thinking approach that meets the moment.”

Jim Monty, Vice Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, voiced strong support, saying, “I fully support this innovative idea and look forward to the final document being prepared.”

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### **Key Components of the EMS Stabilization Plan:**

#### **1. Local Empowerment Through Incentivized Funding**

- Towns that fund their own EMS operations are eligible for County matching funds at a 1:2 ratio, up to \$100,000. For example: If a locality is investing \$200,000, they will receive an additional \$100,000.
- An additional \$25,000 will be provided for towns that offer ALS-level service.
- This model encourages municipal ownership, supports local EMS jobs, and fosters resilience within each community.

#### **2. County-Wide ALS Fly Car Expansion**

- The current limited County-operated fly car system will expand to provide 24/7 ALS coverage, ensuring second-call protection and back-up support for local agencies.

### **3. Contingency for County-Operated EMS Services**

- In cases where a local agency is unable to operate, the County may temporarily assume EMS operations—provided vehicles and startup equipment are available and towns agree to cover staffing salaries.
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### **Financial Overview:**

- **Estimated Total Program Increase:** \$1.8 million
  - **Projected Revenue from STR Sales Tax:** \$1.8 million annually
  - This structure is designed to reduce the burden on property taxpayers while ensuring all residents and visitors receive timely, high-quality EMS care.
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### **Accountability and Oversight:**

- Towns must meet a 95% response rate standard.
  - Agencies failing to meet performance standards for three consecutive months will be required to submit corrective action plans and face possible funding reallocation.
  - Strict financial disclosure requirements, annual reporting, and coordination through the County EMS Coordinator will ensure consistency, transparency, and efficient use of public funds.
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### **Next Steps: Community Engagement and Budget Deliberations**

Essex County will spend the remainder of 2025 engaging local EMS agencies, town governments, and residents to gather input, fine-tune implementation strategies, and build consensus. Final decisions regarding funding allocations will be made during the 2026 County Budget sessions.

“This is not a one-size-fits-all solution,” said Shaun Gilliland, Chairman of the Essex County Board of Supervisors. “We’re giving towns the tools and incentives to build the system that works best for them—while providing a countywide safety net for the most critical, life-saving services.”