



# South Metro Fire Rescue Funding Challenges and Needs

*Informational Presentation  
Spring 2025*



# About Us

**Full-service department providing fire and emergency medical response and community risk reduction services to residents and businesses.**

- 30 stations across 287 square miles
- 800 personnel across 8 divisions
- Serving 571,500 residents; will grow to 595,000 by 2029
- 12 Municipalities and 3 Counties (Arapahoe, Douglas, Jefferson)
- Centennial Airport, Lockheed Martin, Highlands Ranch, 4 Square Mile, and The Pinery





# Financial Snapshot

## Providing quality service for a significant value:

- Current mill levy has been in place since 2004, then expanded through fire district consolidations
- It's the **lowest comparable mill** for fire and emergency service providers in the metro area
- SMFR **operates without debt**, but continues to face rising costs
- **36%** of revenue is from **commercial** property, which continues to decline
- **64%** of revenue is from **residential** property, but recent increases in home values are not enough to offset decrease in commercial revenue



# Property Tax Comparisons



## South Metro Mill Levy: 9.25 (Established in 2004)

### Mill Levy Comparison

Fire District	Base Mill Levy
<b>South Metro</b>	<b>9.25</b>
West Metro	13.68
Arvada	14.81
North Metro	14.62

### FPD Mill Levy Reductions

Fire District	Base Mill Levy
<b>South Metro</b>	<b>9.25</b>
Parker FPD	From 13.97 To 9.25
Cunningham FPD	From 14.57 To 9.25

### Other Mill Levies

Taxing District	Base Mill Levy
<b>South Metro</b>	<b>9.25</b>
Arapahoe County	16.88
Cherry Creek Schools	47.56
Littleton Schools	64.79
Douglas County	13.98
Douglas Co. Schools	40.32

# Increase In Demand Over 6-Year Span



	Alarms	EMS	Fire	Other	Public Assist	Special Ops	Total
2019	4,355	27,810	587	3,079	6,924	271	<b>43,026</b>
2020	4,013	25,825	967	2,915	6,283	263	<b>39,870</b>
2021	4,338	29,442	740	2,695	7,303	262	<b>44,760</b>
2022	4,738	31,919	776	3,020	8,326	316	<b>49,095</b>
2023	4,791	33,015	552	2,740	8,505	287	<b>49,890</b>
2024	5,105	33,565	647	3,044	9,072	272	<b>51,705</b>

**20% increase overall  
and a 20% increase  
in EMS response**

**Demand continues  
to increase**

**EMS account for  
65% of all responses**



# Rising Costs

## Heat & Impact Resistant Helmet

2019 – \$299

Now – \$425

## 100 ft. Hose

2019 – \$658

Now – \$927

## Bunker Coat

2019 – \$1,757

Now – \$2,350

## Bunker Pant

2019 – \$1,202

Now – \$1,695

## Boots

2019 – \$405

Now – \$650

**40%  
INCREASE**





# Rising Costs

The **cost** to purchase an engine has **increased 79%** in **6 years**.

2019 – \$725,000

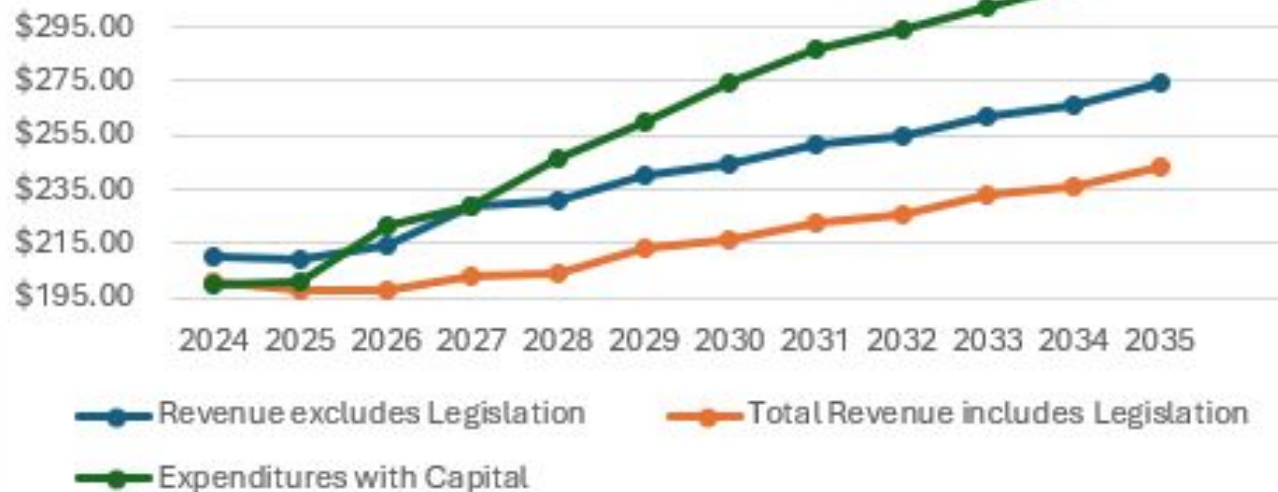
Now – \$1.3 million



# Revenue & Expenditures Over 10 Years



10-YR Forecast Revenue & Expenditures  
in (Millions)



**\$16 million shortfall\***  
starting in 2026

+

**\$34 million** needed to  
address increasing  
demands and costs, and  
future needs

=

**\$50 million** needed  
annually beginning in 2026

*\* Due to 2024 property relief  
legislation*



# Funding Priorities

## **Maintaining the quality of service our community expects and deserves:**

- Maintain sufficient response times
- Adequate staffing for effective response (fire & medical)
- Capital investments in existing and new (planned) stations and apparatus (vehicles & equipment)
- Health programs for the prevention and treatment of cardiac, cancer, and injury for our first responders
- Wildfire preparedness and response, especially where forests meet neighborhoods



# Our Funding Options



## Cuts To Services

- Cuts alone won't cover the revenue gap and could include reduced crews, delays in building needed new stations, cuts to health programs for first responders, and more

## Property Tax Increase – up to 3 mills

- The monthly increase for a home valued at \$750,000 is estimated at \$11.72

## New Sales Tax – up to 0.5%

- Would cost an extra \$0.50 for every \$100 spent



# Community Outreach

**Committed to an open and transparent process as we explore our options.**

- Interviewed **16 stakeholders** from 12 organizations
- Surveyed over **2,000 voters**
- Launched an interactive and **informational website**
- Will continue to **invite input** from all stakeholders and residents
- All data we collect will **help inform** the Board's decision later this summer



# What We Heard From The Community



Fielded a survey from Jan. 27–Feb. 4 with 2,003 responses

- **73%** familiar with South Metro's services
- **84%** approve of South Metro's fire and medical emergency response services
- **41%** say South Metro has the financial resources needed to provide adequate services
- **49%** think fire risk in the community has increased
- **67%** say needs for emergency medical response has increased
- **66%** support a sales tax | **57%** support a property tax



# Ongoing & Next Steps



- Stakeholder presentations
- Broad public communications
- Community outreach
- 2<sup>nd</sup> community survey
- Board and leadership discussions
- Dedicated informational and interactive website

# Interactive Website



The screenshot shows the EngageSouthMetro.org website. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Home, Funding Solutions, Community Discussion, FAQ, In the Community, and English. A search bar is on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image showing firefighters and a fire truck. The banner has the text "South Metro Fire Rescue" on the left. Below the banner are three main sections: "South Metro is Facing a Significant Budget Shortfall Starting in 2026", "New State Legislation Significantly Reduced Funding", and "Life-Saving Services Are at Risk". To the right of these sections is a "Quick Poll" titled "How concerned are you about wildland fire in your community?" with five radio button options: "Very concerned", "Somewhat concerned", "Neutral", "Not all that concerned", and "Not concerned at all". Below the poll is a "Submit" button. At the bottom right is a "Community Engagement Timeline" with four items: "January: Community Survey" (checked), "Ongoing: Board of Director Discussions" (star), "March - July: Community Input" (star), and "February - May: Community Presentations" (star).

**South Metro Fire Rescue**

**South Metro is Facing a Significant Budget Shortfall Starting in 2026**

South Metro Fire Rescue (South Metro) is facing an immediate and significant budget shortfall due to recent state legislation. Without additional revenue by 2026, we will not be able to maintain the high level of fire and emergency services our residents expect and rely on.

South Metro faces a choice — and we're asking for your input. We can either reduce essential emergency services or consider alternative funding to sustain them.

**New State Legislation Significantly Reduced Funding**

Last year, the state legislature passed [HB 24B-1001](#) to lower property taxes which significantly reduced funding for fire protection districts across Colorado — including South Metro.

As a result, South Metro expects to lose about \$16 million in 2026 and nearly \$270 million over the next 10 years — all while demand for emergency services continues to rise.

Since 2019, demand for our services has grown 19%, and it's not slowing down.

**Life-Saving Services Are at Risk**

South Metro is a full-service fire and emergency medical provider protecting 571,000 residents across 287 square miles. We serve parts of Arapahoe, Douglas, and Jefferson counties, including Centennial Airport, Inverness, Denver Tech Center, Meridian Office Park, and other major business areas.

We're focused on maintaining the reliable, high-quality emergency services our community depends on. Without stable funding, we may face tough cuts in areas like:

**Quick Poll**

How concerned are you about wildland fire in your community?

☐ Very concerned

☐ Somewhat concerned

☐ Neutral

☐ Not all that concerned

☐ Not concerned at all

**Submit**

**Community Engagement Timeline**

- ✓ January: Community Survey
- ★ Ongoing: Board of Director Discussions
- ★ March - July: Community Input
- ★ February - May: Community Presentations

## EngageSouthMetro.org

- Timeline
- Fact Sheet
- FAQs
- Discussion Forum
- Property tax calculator (coming soon)



## The logo for South Metro Fire Rescue is a shield-shaped emblem. At the top, a blue Maltese cross is centered, with two crossed axes (one red, one black) behind it. Below the cross is a grey mountain range. The main body of the shield is maroon, containing the text 'SOUTH METRO' in large, white, serif capital letters, and 'FIRE RESCUE' in smaller, white, serif capital letters below it. At the bottom of the shield, there is a stylized yellow and orange flame. Below the flame, the word 'COLORADO' is written in white, serif capital letters. The entire shield is outlined in gold.

## Community Discussion



**Jim Albee**  
**Board Chair**  
District 3



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# Questions & Discussion