

ARMER Task Force August Meeting Agenda Notes

1. MEETING DETAILS

Date: Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Time: 12:30–3:30 p.m.

Format: Hybrid via [Zoom](#)

Location: MnDOT Training and Conference Centers, 3725 12th St. N., St. Cloud, MN 56303 ([map](#))

Facilitators: Marcus Chaffee, Sara McGarraugh, and Taryn Mortimer of The Improve Group

Meeting Support: Minnesota Department of Public Safety; Minnesota Department of Transportation

Meeting Purpose: Provide Task Force members with a shared understanding of the ARMER system, its current operating environment, and the information needed to develop informed and actionable recommendations.

Time	Agenda Item
12:30–12:45	Welcome, Meeting Purpose, and Task Force Business
12:45–2:00	Understanding ARMER: Past, Present, and Future
2:00–2:10	Break
2:10–2:50	Task Force Discussion: What Else Do We Need to Know?
2:50–3:00	Next Steps and Closing
3:00–3:30	Optional: Site Tour

Note: These notes are intended to summarize the discussion and decisions from the meeting. To request a correction or clarification, please contact ARMERTaskForce@theimprovegroup.com

2. ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present

- Shane Chatleain, Office of Statewide Radio Communications, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Brent Christensen, Minnesota Telecom Alliance (*virtual*)
- T. John Cunningham, Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- Kristine V. Elwood, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Mike Gamache, Anoka County
- Dona Greiner, Stevens County (*virtual*)

- John Huot, Minnesota House of Representatives *(virtual)*
- John Jasinski, Minnesota Senate
- Bruce Lawrence, Pennington County *(virtual)*
- Sara Miller, Gibbon Police Department *(virtual)*
- Micah Myers, City of St. Cloud *(virtual)*
- Elliott Payne, Minneapolis City Council *(virtual)*
- Jake Lestock, CTIA *(virtual)*
- Jonathan Rasch, Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association *(virtual)*
- Jill Rohret, Metropolitan Emergency Services Board
- Eamonn Schmitz, Statewide Emergency Communications Board
- Nate Smolinski, Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Terry Stier, Minnesota House of Representatives
- Jake Thompson, Hennepin County
- Eric Wallen, Lyon County Sheriff's Office *(virtual)*
- Melissa Wolf, Minnesota Cable Communications Association *(virtual)*

Task Force Member Absent

- Ron Latz, Minnesota Senate

3. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Task force chair Representative Terry Stier called the meeting to order. The Improve Group facilitated a brief opening on the following topics:

- Best practices for hybrid meeting participation.
- Overview of meeting agenda, including the purpose of developing a shared understanding of the ARMER system and how it relates to the task force's legislative charge.
- Task force business, including proposed member agreements and meeting structure of future meetings.

4. UNDERSTANDING ARMER

Task force members from Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) facilitated a high-level presentation of ARMER. A recording of the presentation can be seen [here](#).

The presentation covered the following topics:

ARMER's Purpose and History

- Why ARMER was developed, including emergency events in which public safety agencies needed to communicate across legacy radio systems.
- The role of metro-area agencies in developing a region-wide interoperable radio communications system starting in 1994.

- The legislative history of a statewide radio communications system starting in 2001, and the roles of MnDOT and Department of Public Safety (DPS) in developing the proposal for ARMER.
- The mandate to ensure 95% coverage, by county, of mobile radio systems to operate with ARMER.

MnDOT's role as the operational backbone of ARMER

- MnDOT's Office of Statewide Radio Communications maintains ARMER operations.
- Operations consist of 24/7/365 monitoring of sites to ensure continuous operability, including backup operations in case of outages.
- Sources of existing funding that currently maintain MnDOT's operation of the ARMER backbone.

Table 1. Revenue Sources for MnDOT ARMER Backbone Maintenance and Operations (from presentation)

Revenue Sources for MnDOT ARMER Backbone Maintenance and Operations			
Source	Estimated Carryover to FY27	FY 2027 Appropriated	FY 2027 Available
911 Fee Legislative Appropriation		\$10,384,000.00	\$10,384,000.00
Trunk Highway Funds (MnDOT Appropriation)		\$4,587,613.82	\$4,587,613.82
Lease Receipts (Estimated)	\$500,000.00	\$1,900,000.00	\$2,400,000.00
Total	\$500,000.00	\$16,871,613.82	\$17,371,613.82

Local enhancement ecosystem

- The role of counties, local or state agencies, and private entities in utilizing the ARMER network for localized and statewide public safety purposes.
- The role of these local entities in making enhancements to the ARMER network (i.e., adding sites or increasing capacity/coverage to existing sites) depending on local needs.
- The agreement between local entities and MnDOT to maintain the interoperability of these local enhancements within the ARMER network.

Limited shared knowledge of local investments and future costs

Presenters and task force members both noted the significant gap in shared knowledge about funding, specifically:

- Historical investments made by local partners to build and maintain ARMER sites.
- Estimated costs that local partners carry to for ongoing operations and maintenance.
- Estimated costs for future maintenance, enhancements and/or replacements of ARMER sites.

Gathering data about these local partner costs is a critical need for this task force to develop recommendations.

5. QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION NEEDS

Task force members asked questions throughout and at the end of the presentation. MnDOT and DPS presenters answered technical and operational questions about ARMER. Task force members raised key questions about gaps in knowledge, including:

- How much investment local entities have made to building and/or enhancing ARMER sites.
- Current costs carried by local entities to operate and maintain ARMER sites.
- What is the shared vision for the future of a statewide interoperable radio communications system.

Facilitators captured questions in a [Padlet](#). If answers were provided during the presentation, they were included in the post. Task force members can post questions and provide responses to others' questions.

6. NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING

The Improve Group facilitated questions for the remaining time of the meeting. In-person attendees participated in an optional tour of an ARMER tower.

The Improve Group and DPS will:

- Prepare and distribute meeting notes, materials, and recording.
- Collect task force members' signatures on the member agreement via email.
- Finalize remaining meeting schedules.

Task Force members will:

- Sign the member agreement.
- Contribute to the [Padlet](#) with key questions and responses to move towards a foundation of shared knowledge.

Next meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Time: 1:00pm-4:00pm

Format: Hybrid

Location: TBD