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August 12, 2009

Mayor Bieter
Boise City Council Members
Boise City Hall
150 North Capitol Blvd.
Boise, Idaho 83702

Dear Mayor Bieter and the Boise City Council:

As members of the medical community, providing patient care to the residents of the Treasure Valley and beyond, we wish to express our concern regarding Boise Fire Department's efforts to provide ambulance transport. Decisions are being made that can drastically affect how that care is provided in the pre-hospital setting without comment from the medical community or the citizens at large.

This medical community (which includes hospital administrators, emergency physicians, trauma surgeons, cardiologists, neurologists and many other specialists working directly with the EMS system) has been instrumental in creating, developing, evaluating, and contributing to the success of the current EMS system. Specific procedures and protocols have been developed which have contributed to this standard. The current EMS ambulance transport agency is heavily integrated into existing hospital emergency services and as such has been instrumental in hospital accreditation for trauma, heart attack and stroke treatment. The current system allows us to provide quality pre-hospital care and continuity of care for the patient across all settings, rural, suburban and urban.

Those who have proposed changes have felt that adding Boise Fire Department, as an ambulance transport agency, would improve response times, making a significant difference in patient care. The EMS system performance is more than response times (or how quickly we get to the scene). It also includes scene time, transport time, time to in-hospital care, quality of medical care, and the overall hospital emergency care. A joint effort is required to optimize patient care at all levels. The current use of non-transport agencies as first responders optimizes response times, and their training allows paramedics of non-transport agencies to provide the same initial care on scene as their transport counterparts.

In order for a 9-1-1 pre-hospital emergency system to function adequately it requires a tax subsidy, as expenses far exceed revenues generated. The taxpayer is entitled to appropriate and accountable services when we use these finite dollars. It makes no sense for two government agencies to tax its citizens for duplicative services when no improvement can be projected. This double taxation issue requires a full disclosure of the economic impact. It should not be forced on the public without the right of public input and vote.

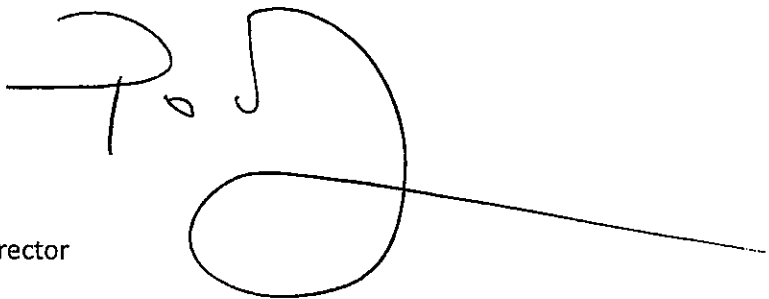
Since Ada County Paramedics provides county-wide EMS services for all government entities, including Boise City, we fail to see why this efficient, consolidated service needs costly duplication by the Boise Fire Department. Taxpayers count on Boise City and Ada County to be wise stewards of their tax dollars. In fact, we are surprised that such a significant impact on the countywide EMS system would be allowed to occur without the input of the medical community and the public.

We support the continuation of a coordinated EMS system that includes Ada County Paramedics, all fire departments, Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, emergency physicians and the rest of the medical community. Further, we feel that EMS systems must be driven by a medical focus, not political expediency. We expect all the agencies to work together to improve training opportunities and meet consistent education goals with unified medical oversight, including joint training and ideally staffing agreements to give non-transport EMS providers the opportunity to work on Ada County Paramedic ambulances to help maintain their skills and proficiencies.

We recognize that all systems can and should improve. We have identified problems in the past and have successfully worked together to resolve them. We did not use them as an excuse to create a duplicate system. We strongly recommend that the Boise Fire Department not pursue providing unilateral ambulance services unless reviewed by the medical community with proven demonstrated benefits to its patients and the EMS system. Further, that the Boise Fire Department works with the medical community and Ada County Paramedics to optimize the care provided within the existing system for the citizens of Boise and its surroundings.

Cordially,

Po Huang, M.D.
Chairman and President
Idaho Emergency Physicians, P.A.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Po Huang', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Cc: Dia Gainor, Idaho State EMS Director
Ada County Commissioners
Fred Tilman
Sharon Ullman
Rick Yazquirre
Idaho Statesman