

THE WASHINGTON AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM

PREPARED BY:

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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S E C T I O N

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AN OVERVIEW OF WALES DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS WALES?

The Washington Area Law Enforcement System (WALES), owned and operated by the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia (MPD), is a computerized information system dedicated to the purposes of the administration of criminal justice. WALES is one of the many State<sup>1/</sup> law enforcement computer systems that are linked to exchange information through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems (NLETS). WALES has the ability also as a "state" system, to make inquiries to the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC). In addition to acting as the District of Columbia's state law enforcement computer system, WALES was initially designed and developed to serve as the Metropolitan Washington regional law enforcement information system, serving the many city, county and federal agencies in and around Washington, D.C.

It should be noted that the Northern Virginia suburbs served by WALES are also served by Virginia's State law enforcement computer system, the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN). Likewise, in Maryland the Maryland Interagency Law Enforcement System (MILES) serves the Maryland suburbs. It is a significant fact that WALES is the only State system also serving as a regional system in a tri-State area. There is at least one other criminal justice computer system operating across State lines for one SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area), in Scott County, Iowa-Rock Island County, Illinois. The region served by WALES includes the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's and cities therein, and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and cities and towns therein, and the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

A listing of agencies served by WALES is appended to this paper.

The sharing of information commonly needed by both MPD and suburban users benefits all concerned by having only one computer system to operate and maintain, thus keeping redundancy in administration, operating personnel, and equipment at an absolute minimum. If the message-switching function becomes a reality (MPD is working on this subject presently), MPD and all users will benefit from its capability to act as a "teletype" among the various agencies. If user charges are established (a charging system is presently being developed), MPD will benefit greatly by having the operating and maintenance costs MPD pays significantly reduced; that is, MPD's computer system will cost MPD much less than MPD having its own smaller computer solely for its own use.

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<sup>1/</sup> The District of Columbia is, in this instance, considered to be a "State".

## BACKGROUND

In the early 1960's it became apparent that the demand for information by law enforcement agencies could not be met by the existing manual information systems. Various approaches by each State to this problem were developed. States had begun to give direct access to their division of motor vehicle (DMV) records to police agencies, utilizing a central computer from remote terminals in order to determine if outstanding "wants" or warrants were listed to the vehicle or owner in question.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) through its Law Enforcement Committee, determined that there was a need for a feasibility study concerning a regional law enforcement systems design. The Systems Science Corporation of Bloomington, Indiana, completed this study<sup>2/</sup> February 1, 1966. The study was funded through a grant from the Urban Renewal Administration (\$30,000 total) and prepared for COG.

A few months later, in May, COG and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) matched their funds to an Office of Law Enforcement Assistance (OLEA) grant totaling \$287,000. The purpose was to develop and demonstrate an integrated information system for the Metropolitan Washington Area.

A COG committee was formed in 1967 to address issues that developed as the system developed, and to keep all member agencies informed of the progress, changes, stage of implementation and other developments of WALES. Captain E.G. Columbus, Director of Planning and Research for Fairfax County Police, served as the first WALES coordinator responsible for chairing the WALES committee. This committee was an important factor in decision-making and establishment of policy concerning WALES during the early years of implementation. The committee allowed for user influence in owner-operator planning.

Initially the operations of WALES were designed to be placed on the District of Columbia's SHARE computer, a system used by many D.C. Government agencies. However, there was some dissatisfaction with this because of the minimal hours this computer was operational each day. Although a second computer was added to SHARE, the system fell far short of the expected operational and functional requirements and expectations of suburban users. Because law enforcement is a 24-hour-a-day operation, and SHARE was an 8-hour operation, an alternative was sought.

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<sup>2/</sup> Available for \$7.00 from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia, 22161; Document No. PB-169-906, entitled A Regional Law Enforcement Systems Design.

By the end of 1971, the amount of down times, the fear of out-of-date or inaccurate information in the computer, the capability to enter data only by hand-carrying it to MPD, the uselessness of certain information because officers could not cross State lines for traffic or misdemeanor offenses, and the recently established statewide computer systems in Maryland and Virginia caused a diminution in the cooperative spirit that had characterized the development of WALES. A Washington Post report appeared on December 19, 1971, concerning this problem. The article noted WALES was out of service for as much as 20% of the time; suburban users had to hand-carry information (computer punch-cards) to Washington for entry into the computer; much of the data in WALES pertained to traffic or misdemeanor offenses for which police have no authority to cross State lines for arrests.

Inspector Theodore E. King, of MPD, discussed the ten points of this article at the January 28, 1972 meeting of the WALES Subcommittee, noting that the article had facts that may have been true in the past, but at that time were unfounded.

Actually, in early 1971, a new senior programming staff was added in order to more rapidly develop and expand the usefulness of WALES.

By late Spring of 1972, MPD had its own IBM 370/155 computer, and by early Summer there were several new features, including a new auto status file. Cathode ray tube (CRT) terminals which make capable the entry of data to the computer directly from the CRT site were being ordered for all MPD district stations by the end of 1972. However, it was not until about March, 1974 that the suburban jurisdictions were offered the capability to have CRTs.

It was at the March 1974 COG Police Chiefs Committee meeting that a new sense of appreciation of WALES capability was developed. At that meeting, each State law enforcement computer system of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia was fully discussed. The obvious conclusion from that meeting seemed to be that WALES was a necessary tool, in addition to and in conjunction with a State system, for the suburban users.

A Memorandum of Understanding was recommended by a consensus of the Northern Virginia users to have in writing the rights and responsibilities of both the users and MPD. The work of developing the Memorandum of Understanding began to enter the approval processes of local governments shortly thereafter. By the fall of 1974, an agreement developed for the Northern Virginia users was shared with COG to allow for entry of Maryland suburbs into the Memorandum's development.

The final draft form of this Memorandum of Understanding was developed in February, 1975. However, this Memorandum contained an attachment which specified that there would be no user charges for WALES services, except certain reasonable line, terminal and

modem costs, although it recognized that additional charges might, in the future, be necessary and offered some alternatives regarding funding actions to be considered at that time. Because WALES usage was becoming more extensive, not only because of increased access, but also because of increased volume of D.C. records kept in WALES (called data base), the topic of user charges began to be discussed in the Spring of 1975. Chief Cullinane sent a letter on May 1, 1975, to Chief Holihan, Chairman of COG's Police Chiefs Committee to inform Chief Holihan that the Memorandum of Understanding was unacceptable, mainly due to the clauses concerning expenses for WALES use.

Although MPD has been able to obtain additional core storage and disc drives to decrease response time and increase efficiency, there is still a requirement under the May 20, 1975, Department of Justice Order No. 601-75 to have a dedicated system which, in the case of WALES, means purchasing or leasing a dedicated back-up computer.

The Memorandum of Understanding is presently undergoing revisions to include a system of charging user agencies and to include provision for a "User's Group" to have at least an advisory status regarding WALES policy matters. MPD is looking toward the future by discussing a study to determine all regional uses for WALES to include all elements of the criminal justice system in the region. COG is presently coordinating both the development of the Memorandum of Understanding and the discussions surrounding the future of WALES as a regional Criminal Justice Information System.

S E C T I O N

T W O

A REGIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION SYSTEM:

STATE OF THE ART

## PRESENT STATUS

Discussions of the past few months with Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) representatives and several Washington, D.C. area suburban police departments concerning the Washington Area Law Enforcement System (WALEs) have centered primarily upon a reasonable system of financing for WALEs services provided, regional uses of WALEs for corrections, courts and prosecutors, and expansion of uses for law enforcement.

The present paper is designed to describe the various implications of these recent discussions and, in addition, to present by inference or suggestion, the possible directions in terms of regional criminal justice planning in which WALEs could move. There are, of course, a great number of options available to all parties interested in obtaining the information available from WALEs. Primarily these options are alternatives in the location and configuration of a regional Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), and the options involving policy-making and systems management.

Of course, each of the three States involved, the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, has its own State computer system, WALEs being D.C.'s system. Maryland's and Virginia's systems, generally, will not be considered in this paper. However, such State systems are important in considering viable alternatives in regional information systems concepts.

Reviewing and analyzing the numerous factors involved in determining possible approaches and impacts of the options involved has brought forth the following topics as possible implications.

### POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

From recent discussions of WALEs and its future growth as a regional Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), the following implications may be derived.

- I. User charges and system improvements go hand in hand, and both are necessary to improved effectiveness of WALEs as a regional CJIS.

Discussion: The present momentum of increased usage of WALEs has recently caused an increase in response time during peak daytime hours. This is a decrease in efficiency which causes dissatisfaction in user agencies. Because WALEs can be utilized by Northern Virginia users to obtain access to Maryland's State system for motor vehicle records through a tie or communications link between the two computers (called an "interface"), it is used as the primary means of obtaining

Maryland information. However, increases in response time from the computer cause information to be processed more slowly and there is another means of obtaining the required data. This situation has caused some users to make primary inquiries to the Maryland Interagency Law Enforcement System (MILES) via the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS) rather than through WALES, which has an interface with MILES. NLETS is a State-to-State communications system, so that Virginia, in this case, can transmit its inquiries to Maryland.

However, this is accomplished by using the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) terminal rather than the WALES terminal. The problem with this action is that it forces persons to decide which terminal might be faster at a given time, based upon recent past performance. That choice may be wrong for a multiplicity of reasons.

Upgrading of WALES is also essential to continuing the interest of law enforcement users within the region, and to provide for added capacity to prepare for more users as the system expands into a regional Criminal Justice Information System.

- II. System expansion and improvements in both hardware and software can be expected from revenues collected as user charges, in addition to MPD monies.

Discussion: A fair-share policy of charging all users would produce revenues to MPD to maintain the system and provide necessary upgrading based upon an expected future stream of income from such charging. Since the demand for rapid access to certain kinds of information presently available from WALES is virtually inelastic, that is, necessary at any reasonable cost, it is probable that the "expected future stream of income" mentioned above will also be firmly established, thus giving MPD a solid basis upon which to continue efforts to develop new programs (software) and to physically expand the system (hardware). Benefits to users are many: reliability, excellent response time, expanded capabilities, and increased role in informed policy making both through meetings such as COG's Police Communications Subcommittee and through the business aspect of "dollar vote," that is, if payment is made for a service such as WALES, along with payment goes a right or voice to contribute requests as to the direction in which the service should be headed. This is, simply, the economic concept of supply and demand, taken one step further.

- III. Users other than MPD have stated requests for use of files presently available to MPD but not to others, and for additional files for regional purposes. Such files should be developed for regional use.

Discussion: It is obvious that MPD cannot be expected to respond instantaneously to requests. However, one fact that MPD should consider in systems development is that of formulating methods to respond as quickly as is possible to regional requirements as they appear. Additional permanent staff may be required. User charges would pay for such staff increases. If there is an option to create a Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Information System (NoVaCJIS), the direction taken within this concept would vary only slightly from the points noted. The difference will not be explained herein. However, such a development could add the ability to interface WALES with VCIN.

- IV. Although there are individual requirements of some users, there is adequate basis to begin a system to standardize within the region as much as can be within State, local and federal laws and regulations.

Discussion: It is obvious to anyone who has worked in the areas of law enforcement and information systems that one of the more difficult tasks is standardization of different agencies' information formats. Any committee dealing with WALES issues will have to address this point on an on-going basis, as a joint effort with MPD. Other than by a committee, standardization could occur by a consensus of the user group. This common usage and reporting should allow WALES to provide useful statistical information, both locally and regionally, on crime rates and other related analytical reports.

- V. As WALES grows both in numbers and types of users, it is probable that some form of Policy Board or committee will be established to advise MPD on current issues and future directions for WALES.

Discussion: It is reasonable to infer from recent conversations between and among various members of the Police Communications Subcommittee and CJ-III<sup>3/</sup> staff that some type of committee will be established once other criminal justice agencies of suburban jurisdictions utilize the system. It has been indicated that MPD may possibly accept the idea of that committee having policy powers, or, at least, strong advisory capability, acting at a level under the Chief of Police, MPD, and just over the Deputy Chief of Operations, Planning & Data Processing (OP&DP) Division. COG could and should continue to act as the forum for this important regional activity.

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<sup>3/</sup> CJ-III is an abbreviation used to denote the Regional Criminal Justice Planning Grant (third year) in COG's Department of Public Safety.

- VI. Due to the requirements of certain federal agencies to work frequently with the local law enforcement agencies in the region, they should be given consideration and an opportunity to become users of WALES and members on the Police Communications Subcommittee.

Discussion: There has been interest by the Federal Protective Services (FPS) in WALES, due to the responsibilities FPS has in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. With the Bicentennial nearly upon the area, it would seem appropriate that this agency, and possibly several other federal agencies, become WALES users.

- VII. In the areas of privacy and security, both the Memorandum of Understanding, presently being developed and federal laws and regulations will have some effect upon the data being stored in WALES.

Discussion: The integrity of any computer system is the responsibility of all agencies which have access to its data. This point has been frequently addressed by the Police Communications Subcommittee. Because there is heavy involvement by the U.S. Congress and State legislatures in these areas, the major thrust of present activity has been to insure the security of data presently being stored in WALES.

- VIII. The example set by jurisdictions in the greater St. Louis, Missouri, area of a separate joint commission managing and operating the Region's CJIS has strong merit as an alternative approach to the present WALES situation. Additionally, the Bi-State Computer Commission (Iowa-Illinois), noted in page I-1 of this paper, indicates that especially where there are multi-State interests in a regional CJIS, a joint commission is an appropriate response.

Discussion: The fact that the St. Louis approach, known as REJIS (Regional Justice Information System), is successfully fulfilling the needs of many diverse agencies and has received strong regional support is reason enough to give serious policy level consideration to that approach for metropolitan Washington. A listing of REJIS users is appended to this paper so that a comparison can be made with the WALES users listing, also appended to the report.

A P P E N D I C E S

A LISTING OF WALES USERS

(June 1975)

A LISTING OF REJIS USERS

(From REJIS Annual Report, 1974)

A LISTING OF WALES USERS - JUNE 1975

Metropolitan Police Department  
District of Columbia

Executive Protective  
Services

Alexandria Police Department

D.C. Department of  
Corrections

Arlington County Police Department

Fairfax County Police Department

FAA Police, National Airport

FAA Police, Dulles International  
Airport

Falls Church Police Department

Montgomery County Police  
Department

Takoma Park Police Department

Prince George's County Police  
Department

U.S. Capitol Police

Military District of Washington  
Police

U.S. Park Police

Armed Forces Police

D.C. Bail Agency

United States Marshal

United States Attorney

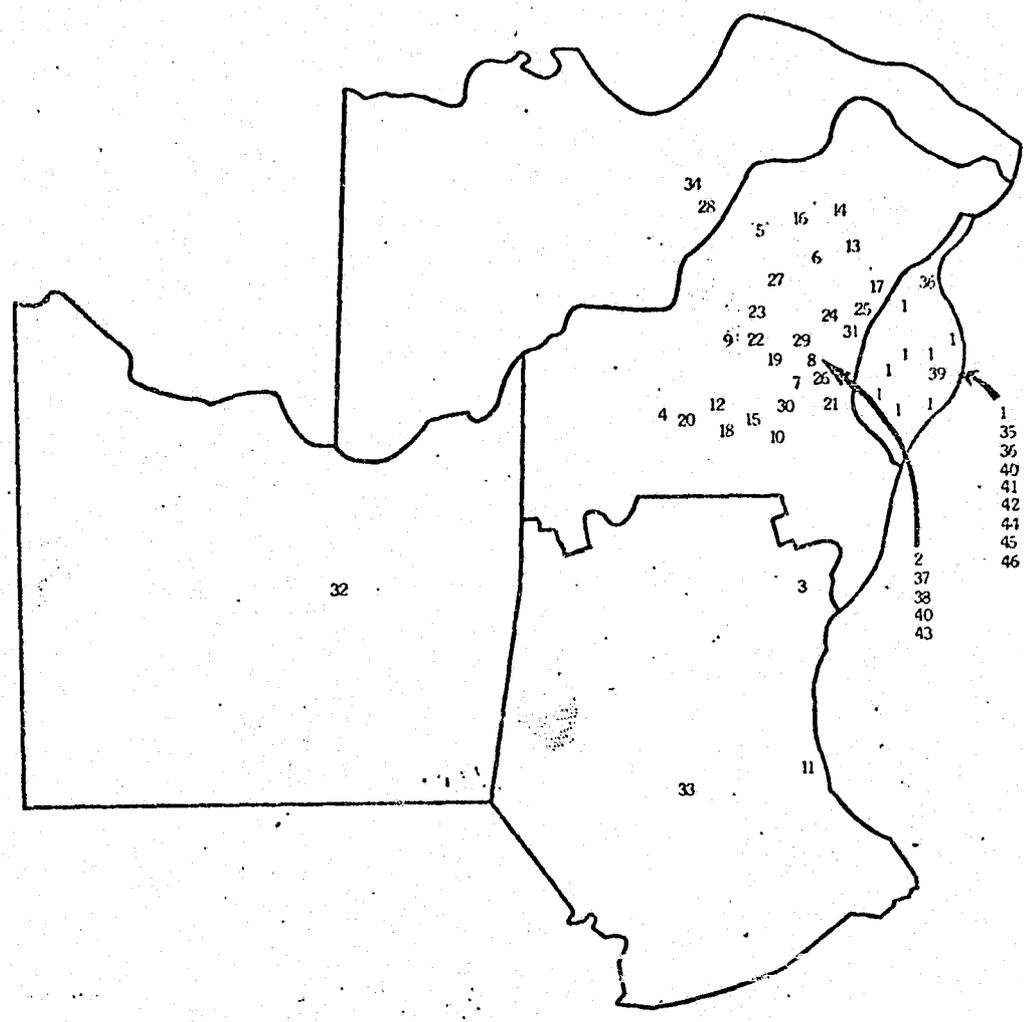
D.C. Superior Court

U.S. District Court, Alexandria

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administra-  
tion, Washington, D.C.

Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Washington Field Office

A LISTING OF REJIS USERS



**REJIS terminals:**

- 1. St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (30\*)
- 2. St. Louis County Police Department (10\*)

**Municipal police departments:**

- 3. Arnold
- 4. Ballwin
- 5. Bridgeton
- 6. Berkeley
- 7. Brentwood
- 8. Clayton
- 9. Creve Coeur
- 10. Crestwood
- 11. Crystal City
- 12. Des Peres
- 13. Ferguson
- 14. Florissant
- 15. Glendale
- 16. Hazelwood
- 17. Jennings
- 18. Kirkwood
- 19. Ladue
- 20. Manchester
- 21. Maplewood
- 22. Olivette
- 23. Overland
- 24. Pagedale
- 25. Pine Lawn
- 26. Richmond Heights
- 27. St. Ann
- 28. St. Charles
- 29. University City
- 30. Webster Groves
- 31. Wellston

**Sheriffs:**

- 32. Franklin County
- 33. Jefferson County
- 34. St. Charles County
- 35. City of St. Louis

**Correctional agencies:**

- 36. St. Louis Department of Welfare (3)  
City Jail  
Medium Security Institution  
Probation and Parole Office
- 37. St. Louis County Department of Welfare  
County Jail  
Adult Correctional Institution  
Probation and Parole Office

**Courts:**

- 38. Juvenile Court, 21st Judicial Circuit (11)
- 39. Juvenile Court, 22nd Judicial Circuit (9)
- 40. Regional Court Information System project, 21st and 22nd Judicial Circuits (2\*\*)
- 41. St. Louis City Courts (2)
- 42. St. Louis Court of Criminal Correction

**Prosecutors:**

- 43. St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney
- 44. Circuit Attorney, 22nd Judicial Circuit (2)

**Other categories:**

- 45. Federal Bureau of Investigation, St. Louis office
- 46. Impact Evaluation Unit, St. Louis Commission on Crime and Law Enforcement
  - \* Includes one remote job entry device (RJE)
  - \*\* Includes two RJE's

**President:**

Edward F. Tripp  
Director of Welfare, City of St. Louis

**Vice President:**

Gus O. Nations  
Chairman, St. Louis County Board of Police Commissioners

**Secretary-Treasurer:**

Carl Gaertner  
Assistant Chief Judge, 22nd Judicial Circuit (City of St. Louis)

**Directors:**

Franklin Ferriss  
Judge, 21st Judicial Circuit (St. Louis County)

Otto G. Heinecke  
Executive Director, St. Louis Commission on Crime and Law Enforcement

William J. Hennessey Jr.  
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**END**

7 tables/summary