

Austin-Travis County EMS Staff Recommendation Regarding Application for Non-Emergency Medical Transfer Franchise Submitted by Acadian Ambulance Service, Inc.

July 12, 2007

Background

In order for a private ambulance company to provide non-emergency transfer services within the Austin city limits they must be granted a franchise from the City of Austin. This franchise allows Austin-Travis County EMS (A/TCEMS) to regulate non-emergency transfers that begin and end within the Austin city limits. Non-emergency medical transfers typically occur between skilled nursing facilities, hospitals, and private residences and are usually prescheduled by medical personnel. Currently, two companies hold non-emergency transfer franchises in Austin, American Medical Response (AMR) and MetroCare Services-Austin, LP (MetroCare).

Acadian Ambulance Service, Inc (Acadian) submitted a franchise application to take over the franchise currently held by MetroCare. MetroCare's franchise expires on October 22, 2007 and Acadian plans to purchase MetroCare following City Council's approval of its franchise application. Acadian will then take over all operations currently being handled by MetroCare. The current MetroCare staff will be offered employment with Acadian. MetroCare's current medical director, Dr. Rhett Reed, will continue to provide medical direction for the new franchise. All of MetroCare's Austin facilities, fleet and medical equipment will be acquired by Acadian.

The City of Austin has set forth guidelines for the operation of non-emergency medical transfer services in Chapter 10-2 of the Austin City Code. Sections 10-2-1 through § 10-2-99 of the Austin City Code currently regulate:

- the process a Non-Emergency Medical Transfer Service provider must follow to obtain franchise rights in Austin-Travis County
- the criteria used by EMS and the City of Austin to evaluate franchise applications

Overview

All franchise application requirements have been satisfied. The application fee was paid in full at the time the application was submitted and the required performance bond and insurance coverage documents are in place. In accordance with the criteria set forth in Chapter 10-2 of the Austin City Code, A/TCEMS has evaluated Acadian Ambulance Service's application for franchise rights on the following parameters:

1. Past performance data
2. Operational and customer service documents
3. Customer satisfaction surveys
4. Corporate documents
5. Insurance documents
6. Sample Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Plan
7. Sample monthly response time compliance reports, including a proposed sample for reporting compliance in Austin
8. Vehicle fleet inspection
9. Verification of state certification of staff, and personnel review
10. Verification of state licensure for Acadian license #800153
11. Site visit audit to review operations including communications staffing, vehicle maintenance records, dispatching system and performance data collection system

Staff Findings

Acadian Ambulance Service is a well-established company with a proven track record in 33 Louisiana parishes, Jackson County Mississippi, and Orange County Texas. In operation since 1971, Acadian has been nationally recognized for their Hurricane Katrina relief work as well as for being innovators within the EMS industry. Employees receive a comprehensive benefits package that includes retirement and stock option plans.

Staff review of the health care personnel for the franchise confirmed that all have the appropriate certifications and are in good standing with the Texas Department of State Health Services. The fleet that will be used by Acadian met the franchise requirements for maintenance, mileage and equipment based on staff inspections. Acadian employs its own mechanics to ensure proper fleet maintenance and reliability. The number of fleet and certified personnel identified in the franchise application should be sufficient to meet Austin franchise service demands.

A survey of nine governmental and six health care agencies in Acadian's current service areas revealed satisfactory to exceptional performance in areas of response time, quality of care and professionalism. Acadian is currently licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services and is in good standing with the State of Texas.

Acadian's purchase of MetroCare Services will significantly improve the level of non-emergency medical transfer services that are currently being provided in Austin. Acadian is one of about 100 ambulance providers in North America to be nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS). Since 1995, they have maintained this accreditation in every market they have served. Extensive improvements that will be made to the existing MetroCare franchise operation include the implementation of comprehensive employee safety, training, quality assurance and customer service plans in accordance with Acadian's corporate standards. Technology and Communications Center upgrades are also planned, along with a backup center in Louisiana for disaster preparedness. Additional units will be added to ensure response time compliance and to meet service demand.

Staff and Advisory Board Recommendations

Based on the findings listed above, the Austin-Travis County EMS Department recommends granting a non-emergency medical transfer service franchise to Acadian Ambulance Service, Inc. for a five-year term. Such an award would result in two franchise holders in Austin, Acadian Ambulance Service and American Medical Response (AMR). On June 26, 2007, the Austin-Travis County EMS Advisory Board voted 4-0 in support of Acadian's franchise application, with one recused vote due to a conflict of interest.