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Metro-York recommends police efficiency study

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In the next few months, regional policing will be up for discussion across part of York County as municipalities get a chance to participate in a new police study.

Metro-York, an initiative of YorkCounts, has recommended that York City and adjoining municipalities look at consolidating police forces to fight crime more efficiently. Though some York area municipalities are part of regional police departments, others have their own forces.

Representatives of Metro-York will present the idea of a police study to various municipalities over the next two months or so. Those that agree to participate would provide information about their police services once the study gets under way, said Carl Anderson, co-chairman of Metro-York's public safety committee.

But first, Metro-York will look to secure state funding for the study and find a consultant to conduct it, Anderson said. What happens after that depends on the results of the study itself.

"We're not asking anyone to endorse a consolidated police force," Anderson said. "We're not predisposed even to recommend it. We're

talking about studying the issue."

Survey support: To support the need for a study, Metro-York is citing the results of an

e-mail survey, in which 81 percent of respondents said municipalities should study regional public safety approaches if they could lead to greater efficiency and cost savings.

The survey was completed by York County voters who were contacted through e-mail addresses they had registered with various Web sites, including online news sites. More than 25,000 were given the opportunity to participate, and almost 800 responded, said Eric Buxton of Govercom LLC, the company that completed the survey.

The survey shows there is strong support for the idea among respondents, said Bonnie McCann of Triad Strategies in Harrisburg, which oversaw the survey. But she said the results might not reflect the way county voters feel as a whole, since it included only those who made the effort to participate.

"You're obviously going to get the people who are most interested in one way or the other," McCann said.

A number of York-area police chiefs took a look at regional policing after Metro-York began examining it last year, but they said it would be up to municipalities to decide whether the idea was worth pursuing.

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Spring Garden Township Police Chief George Swartz said a police study is what the township would need to find out what effect a regional police force would have on costs and services.

"Once the study has been completed, we'll be in a position at that time to make some sort of concerted decision on what this may mean for Spring Garden Township and our residents," Swartz said.

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Public safety survey

Opinions to questions asked are from a May 2008 e-mail survey of 794 York County registered voters, which was conducted for YorkCounts.

- Are you concerned about increased crime in your area and your police department's ability to protect public safety?

Yes	65%
No	35%
- Do you currently live in a municipality (a township, borough or city) where the police department serves only the residents of your municipality?

Yes	50%
No	41%
Don't know	9%
- Considering such issues as response time and quality of service, do you feel that police protection in your municipality is adequate?

Yes	62%
No	26%
Don't know	11%
- If a regional approach to public safety might result in more efficient service and could head off certain future cost increases, should local officials study the idea?

Yes	81%
No	9%
Don't know	10%

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