

To: Commissioners Court

From: Dudley Wait, Chief of EMS

Date: January 22, 2026

Subject: Development of a Paramedic Work Week Plan

Paramedics who work for Emergency Medical Services are highly diverse, highly trained healthcare professionals who are always available to care for the citizens and visitors to Fort Bend County, often at the worst times of their lives. Traditionally, the most efficient method of providing EMS coverage is to utilize a “56-hour” work week. A “56-hour” work week is traditionally achieved by a paramedic working 24 hours and then receiving 48 hours off which equates to 2,912 hours worked per year.

Over the last 15 years EMS employees everywhere have complained that 48 hours of recovery has a severe impact on their lives as it leaves very little time for personal and family activities. The paramedics state the first day off-duty is a recovery day where they can do very little except rest. Then the second day off-duty is occupied with preparations for returning to duty the very next day.

In 2016, Fort Bend County EMS made a change and combined 2 – 24 hour shifts (48 hours) which gave 96 hours (4 days) off. The desire was to recognize that the first day off would continue to be a recovery day but then the paramedic had 2 days off for personal activities before the last day when returning to work preparations would occur. This shift was extremely popular at its onset and continues to be popular to this day. Since 2016 however, EMS has seen a 72% increase in responses which has resulted in a 32% increase in workload per ambulance despite 31% more ambulances on the road.

This increase in workload with such a lengthy shift is creating significant issues related to fatigue, increased accidents and increased errors in patient care. Additionally, the work-life balance is continually difficult to maintain with only one option for scheduling employees.

To combat these significant work issues while attempting to create a more responsive environment for our paramedics, the EMS Department is seeking approval from Commissioners Court to perform an in-house study on how we could transition from a 56-hour work week to a 42-hour work week. We believe this will take 3-4 months to complete this plan and bring what we believe will be a multi-year plan back to the Court for approval.

EMS believes this transition will allow more options for our employees to work, will provide a better work-life balance and will help reduce the risks our employees face (both short and long-term) from high levels of fatigue.