

At the Crossroads

How the City of Cullman built an interoperable network without losing legacy radio.



A Legacy Network Reaching Its Limits

Nestled roughly halfway between Birmingham and Huntsville, the City of Cullman had relied on a legacy VHF system for years to support its public safety communications. Though functional, it lacked the reliability, flexibility and interoperability required to meet the evolving needs of its police department.

As those demands grew, so did the urgency to modernize. The city began exploring its options as it faced mounting pressure, both internally and externally, to invest in a traditional P25 system. But Daniel Hunt, Director of Information Technology for the City of Cullman, believed there was a better path forward.

A Seat at the Table

The City of Cullman had previously worked with Southern Linc in the early 2000s. Over time, Connie Stinnett, Senior Market Sales Executive at Southern Linc, maintained the relationship—sharing updates, innovations, and a vision for how their communications could evolve.

“I tell customers that I just want a seat at the table,” said Stinnett. “And Daniel called me up one day and said, ‘I want to give you a seat at the table!’”

That conversation marked a turning point. The police department needed a solution that could deliver reliable, mission critical performance while enabling interoperability with other agencies already on CriticalLinc™, Southern Linc’s mission critical LTE network, including Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA). Mutual aid talk groups were already set up across the state, offering an immediate advantage.

At the same time, the complexity and long-term cost of building and maintaining a P25 network raised important concerns.

A Different Path Forward

Rather than committing to a costly, infrastructure-heavy P25 buildout, the City of Cullman chose to deploy L3Harris LMR-LTE radios through Southern Linc.

The solution delivered mission critical push-to-talk (MCPTT), LTE voice, and immediate interoperability with state agencies already operating on the network. To ensure continuity, the City of Cullman also implemented a Catalyst Gateway, allowing existing VHF channels to be patched into the new system, bridging legacy infrastructure with modern capabilities.



A visit to Southern Linc's facility in Birmingham further reinforced the decision, giving stakeholders a firsthand look at the network's core capabilities.

The Police Department led the rollout, purchasing L3Harris LMR-LTE radios along with Catalyst IntelliLink™ console solutions, using available funding to accelerate deployment.

"The Police Department was the first to move forward," said Stinnett. "We were able to provide the coverage that he needed for the city, allowing future growth that would carry over into the Fire Department and later the rest of the county."

Ownership That Drove Adoption

Stinnett explains that the success of the deployment was a credit to Hunt's leadership: "He fought and was the only one fighting, so he gets all the credit. The police chief trusted him to make the right call."

Stinnett adds that Hunt's level of ownership played a critical role in driving adoption and ensuring the system delivered on its promise: "Daniel took on the delivery and training of his entire department. He really owned it."

Customizing the System with RPM

Beyond reliability and interoperability, what truly set this deployment apart was the level of control that the City of Cullman took over its communications environment.

"He bought the Radio Personality Manager (RPM2) and has really embraced it," said Stinnett.

RPM2 is the core software used to program and configure L3Harris two-way radios. It allows systems administrators to define exactly how radios behave across the entire network—setting channels, talk groups, frequencies, system types, and user controls.

Rather than relying on a static, out-of-the-box configuration, the city used RPM2 to tailor the system to its specific operational needs and continued refining those configurations over time.

Built for Interoperability

Interoperability with Alabama Department of Corrections, Alabama Pardons and Paroles, Alabama Emergency Management Services, Alabama Department of Transportation and other agencies was a key driver for the City of Cullman. Now the City no longer operates in a silo, but is part of a broader, connected public safety network.



The Results

With Southern Linc, the City of Cullman Police Department now operates on a network that provides:



Reliable, mission-critical performance officers can depend on every day



Seamless interoperability with state and regional agencies through shared talk groups



Cost-effective scalability without the burden of maintaining complex infrastructure



Greater control and customization through tools like RPM2

Most importantly, the department operates with confidence knowing their network will perform when it matters most.

A True Partnership

From early conversations to deployment, Southern Linc worked closely with the City of Cullman to deliver a solution aligned with their operational needs and long-term vision. A network built for today and equipped for what's next.