**Update on Public Safety Broadband Early Builders**

April 13, 2015

There has been an extensive amount of press recently regarding the difficulties surrounding development of the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System (LA-RICS). Since this system is one of the public safety broadband “Early Builder” projects, we will take this opportunity to provide an update on the status of the all of the early builder broadband projects.

Prior to passage of the landmark 2012 legislation that created FirstNet and established the funding and process for the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), a number of public safety broadband projects were planned in the public safety 700 MHz spectrum in order to provide public safety agencies the opportunity to gain experience utilizing the technology and the applications it supports. Most of these projects were funded through grants as part of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), administered by the National Telecommunications Information Agency (NTIA). A total of seven BTOP grants were awarded in 2010 to the following recipients, who were also issued a waiver by the FCC to utilize the public safety broadband spectrum for these projects:

* Adams County, CO;
* Bay RICS (Bay Area, CA);
* City of Charlotte, NC;
* LA RICS;
* The State of Mississippi;
* The State of New Jersey;
* The State of New Mexico.

While each of these seven agencies began working on their respective broadband projects using the grant funding, they were all ordered by the NTIA to suspend activity in 2012 following passage of the broadband legislation. Since the legislation established FirstNet as the sole licensee of the public safety broadband spectrum, each of the BTOP awardees were required to negotiate a spectrum lease with FirstNet in order to continue their project. Of the seven agencies above, Adams County, LA RICS, New Jersey and New Mexico successfully negotiated spectrum lease agreements, while Bay RICS, Charlotte and Mississippi were unable to come to terms with FirstNet.

In addition to the seven BTOP awardees, Harris County, TX had previously been granted a waiver by the FCC to utilize the public safety broadband spectrum and had initiated a broadband project via Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds under the Port Security Grant Program. Harris County and FirstNet have subsequently negotiated a spectrum lease agreement, which allows the County to continue operating its network.

Therefore, taking into account the BTOP awardees that have successfully negotiated a spectrum lease agreement with FirstNet, and Harris County, a total of five agencies have been designated the “Early Builders”. A summary of the current status of the Early Builder projects is provided below:

* Adams County, CO: Currently operating with 16 sites.
* Harris County, TX: Currently operating with 11 sites, with plans for a total of 92 sites.
* LA RICS: Priority and QoS: A total of 232 sites planned initially - Construction delayed due to site acquisition issues.
* The State of New Jersey: In the process of procuring a total of 27 deployable assets (COWs and SOWs) in the three proof-of-concept areas (the Route 21 Corridor in north central New Jersey, Camden in southern New Jersey, and Atlantic City on the Jersey Shore.), and 10 assets in ready standby as necessary throughout the State.
* The State of New Mexico: In process of deploying a total of 12 sites to be connected to the Harris County core.

Other states and entities have requested or suggested to FirstNet that they can also act as pilot or trial systems, but FirstNet does not seem interested in supporting additional early builders.

Each of the Early Builders were required, as part of the spectrum lease agreement, to explore specific key learning objectives as part of their project. A summary of the key objectives for each of the five Early Builders is provided below:

* Adams County, CO: PS functionality; Devices; Act as Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) test-bed
* Harris County, TX: Data usage; Rural Coverage; Core Transition
* LA RICS: Priority and QoS: Utility Partnerships; Leverage Existing Government-Owned Property
* The State of New Jersey: Deployable Assets; Exercises and Training; NOC Operations
* The State of New Mexico: Hosted Core; Border Spectrum Issues; Federal and State Shared Usage

FirstNet and the Public Safety community expect to learn valuable lessons from these early builder projects, which we hope will guide development of the NPSBN and help ensure that the Network successfully supports the needs of first responders as it is deployed around the nation.