

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response**

Hearing Entitled: “The State of Emergency Communications Along the Texas Border”

Tuesday, February 19, 2008, 10:00 a.m., Room 116 of the Western Hemispheric Trade Center, at the Texas A&M International University, Laredo, Texas

Testimony of Peter Collins, Representing the Texas Radio Coalition

“Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee Members:

My name is Peter Collins. I am the Chief Information Officer for the City of Austin, Texas, but I am appearing today before this body in the capacity of Chairman of the Texas Radio Coalition, also known as the TxRC. This group is composed of individuals from various agencies and associations that represent public safety and critical infrastructure first responders from both urban and rural areas across the State, thus allowing TxRC to serve as a voice for that community in Texas.

Governor Rick Perry appointed the TxRC as the governing body for the Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan. TxRC’s primary purpose is oversight of public safety communications interoperability in Texas, and the development and on-going revision of the Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan. Responsibility includes, but is not be limited to, making official recommendations to the Governor of Texas, the Texas Homeland Security Director, and the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management. Recommendations concern interoperability technology procurement, training, exercises, standard operating procedures, implementation, and funding of same.

In a news conference on April 11, 2007, Governor Perry announced a partnership with the TxRC with respect to statewide interoperable communications planning. In May, 2007, Texas Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw formally requested the TxRC to develop the new Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan, as required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Working with the Texas Association of Regional Councils of Governments and the Sheriffs’ Association of Texas, TxRC oversaw a statewide communications assets survey process, 27 regional and special Focus Group Sessions, and a Statewide Strategic Planning Session that led to the development of the 141-page *Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan*. A copy of the Plan has been submitted to the Subcommittee with my written remarks, along with an appendix entitled the *Texas Statewide Interoperability Channel Plan*.

Although we have interoperability needs in every region, from its inception, the TxRC has placed improvement of Texas border interoperable radio communications as its top priority. Toward this goal, TxRC sponsored the formation of the Texas Border Communications Project, which brings together federal, state, local, and tribal agencies in the five Councils of Governments' regions along the Texas border with Mexico. The Project Oversight Team has been meeting on a regular basis since the fall of 2007 to coordinate the planning and build-out of an integrated, "standards-based" radio communication capability from El Paso to Brownsville. The funding approved by Congress in the form of the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program was the catalyst that kick-started this project. Once grant funding draw-down is approved this Spring, the Project will launch this summer, with the PSIC Grant Program performance period to end August 31, 2010. This piece of the Project will cost close to \$10-million. However, complete build-out of the infrastructure, upgrade of certain existing mobile and portable radios, and acquisition of needed additional subscriber units, will put the total estimated Project cost in excess of \$150-million, most of which is unfunded. Additional federal assistance will be needed for successful Project completion.

On behalf of the TxRC, and the 24-million Texas residents served by our interoperability planning efforts, I thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to discuss our activities and plans today. We are truly appreciative of the program and funding support to date from Congress, as we move steadily toward building a statewide standards-based radio system by January, 2015. The enormity of this undertaking is such that on-going Congressional support will be critical to our success.

I will be glad to answer any questions."

SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response

Hearing Entitled: “The State of Emergency Communications Along the Texas Border”
Tuesday, February 19, 2008, 10:00 a.m., Room 116 of the Western
Hemispheric Trade Center, at the Texas A&M International University, Laredo, Texas

Witness: Peter Collins (Representing the Texas Radio Coalition)
Chief Information Officer
City of Austin, Texas
Communications and Technology Management
625 E. 10th Street, Suite 900
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 974-2344, Cell: (512) 848-8753

Summary of witness comments/recommendations:

Governor Rick Perry appointed the TxRC as the governing body for the Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan. TxRC’s primary purpose is oversight of public safety communications interoperability in Texas, and the development and on-going revision of the Texas Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan. Responsibility includes, but is not be limited to, making official recommendations to the Governor of Texas, the Texas Homeland Security Director, and the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management. Recommendations will concern interoperability technology procurement, training, exercises, standard operating procedures, implementation, and funding of same.

The TxRC has placed improvement of Texas border interoperable communications as it top priority Project, with total estimated cost expected to exceed \$150-million, most of which is unfunded.

Continued Congressional funding support is critical to moving Texas to a statewide standards-based radio system by January, 2015.

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT
Required by House Rule XI, clause 2(g)

1. Name: **Peter Collins, Chief Information Officer, City of Austin, Texas**
2. Business Address: **625 E. 10th Street, Suite 900, Austin, TX 78701**
3. Organization you are representing: **Texas Radio Coalition**
4. Any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which **you, personally**, have received since October 1, 2006, from Federal Agencies under the purview of the hearing, the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

NONE

5. Any federal grant or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were received since October 1, 2006, from Federal Agencies under the purview of the hearing by the **organization(s) which you represent** at this hearing, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:

The Texas Radio Coalition is a voluntary association (not incorporated) of multiple governments, agencies, and other entities; the Texas Radio Coalition itself has not received any such federal grants, contracts, subgrants, or subcontracts. However, a number of the Texas Radio Coalition member governments likely have received federal grants, contracts, subgrants, or subcontracts in the name of their respective government entities, but not in the name of the Texas Radio Coalition.