

TESTIMONY OF
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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
July 30, 2008

Public *En Banc* Hearing on Public Safety Interoperable Communications -- The 700 MHz Band Proceeding

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Larry Krevor and I am a Vice President at Sprint Nextel Corporation. I am honored to be here today on behalf of Sprint Nextel to discuss how the 700 MHz D Block can help bring interoperable communications to America's first responders.

Sprint Nextel provides communications services to millions of public safety users and remains the only carrier offering instant national and international push-to-talk capabilities. We are also the only carrier that has had a dedicated Emergency Response Team capable of deploying wireless voice and data communications to either supplement existing public safety networks or replace out-of-service systems on just a few hours' notice. Whether on routine patrol or responding to an emergency, public safety officials rely on Sprint Nextel to deliver an integrated communications strategy with top-notch support.

Sprint Nextel believes the Commission had the right goals in mind when it envisioned a public-private partnership in the 700 MHz D Block. Sprint Nextel

supports the Commission's goal of delivering a robust, technologically innovative broadband network to public safety users across the country. A public/private partnership determined through competitive bidding remains the best option for achieving nationwide interoperability in an efficient, cost effective manner. In revising its rules for the re-auction of the D Block, the Commission should use targeted bidding credits to create the commercial incentives that will ensure the construction of a nationwide, interoperable, broadband wireless network.

The Commission has at its disposal all the tools necessary to realize the value of a nationwide interoperable public safety network and to provide *a funding mechanism* to help offset the additional costs associated with a public-safety grade commercial system. Using bidding credits for discrete public interest goals will help bridge the gap between commercial reality and public safety imperatives.

In this case, the significant cost of constructing a public-safety grade network exceeds the costs of a typical commercial network. For example, as the Commission has noted, the original D Block population coverage requirement of 99.3% would increase D Block network construction costs by more than six billion dollars compared to a 95% population coverage requirement (which is already higher than the typical commercial network coverage of about 90%). To make the D Block commercially viable, and to promote widespread participation in the auction, the Commission should adopt a series of targeted bidding credits to

encourage carriers to offer specific features or characteristics desired by public safety users.

Under this plan, certain "core" D Block requirements – nationwide coverage, an interoperable network, and a robust broadband offering – would not change and would not be affected by the bidding credits. For other D Block public safety standards, the minimum requirement that the D Block licensee must satisfy would remain significantly higher than typical commercial standards, but would be adjusted downward somewhat from the current D Block targets to make the network more economically viable. That way, even if the bidding credits go unused, the resulting network would still be sufficiently enhanced for public safety use – what we are calling a “public safety baseline” network. Bidding credits would then provide incentives for the D Block licensee to agree to deploy the more demanding “target” goal for the network up to those the Commission sought during the first D Block auction. Auction participants could choose from the various bidding credit options, which could be aggregated for a credit against the gross winning bid amount.

The Commission has authority to adopt bidding credits to promote important public interest goals, particularly for goals related to public safety. The Commission has used bidding credits to promote other important public interest goals, including new broadcast entrants, the provision of wireless service to tribal

lands, and increasing diversity. Moreover, the Communications Act directs the Commission to promote “safety of life and property through the use of wire and radio communications,” a goal that a nationwide broadband wireless network for public safety use would unquestionably serve.

In its comments, Sprint Nextel proposed a series of minimum requirements and bidding credits for prospective D Block licensees’ public safety baseline network. Two of the most important are (1) network build out and (2) backup power. The D Block auction winner would – at a minimum – have to satisfy a build-out coverage requirement of 95% of the nation’s population by the end of the license term. For back-up power, the D Block auction winner would have to provide a minimum of at least eight hours of back up power at 50 percent of all transmitter locations. The Commission would make bidding credits available to encourage licensees to exceed these or other baseline public safety performance levels.

In conclusion, Sprint Nextel believes that the Commission has the legal authority and the ability to craft a new D Block auction using bidding credits that will result in a commercial/public safety interoperable, nationwide network. By establishing core requirements and using targeted bidding credits, the Commission can provide public safety users with the public-private network that they need to provide critical services to the country.

I want to thank you again for the opportunity to present our views at this hearing and look forward to your questions.