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## News Brief

### Task Force Works to Define 700 MHz Broadband Requirements (7/21/09)

By Sandra Wendelken

The National Public Safety Telecommunications Committee (NPSTC) broadband task force met last week to hammer out technical, operational and governance requirements that regional 700 MHz broadband networks must adhere to. The meeting, held at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) facility in Boulder, Colo., was focused on defining requirements for state and local networks to ensure interoperability in a systems-of-systems approach to a national broadband network.

Several cities and regions, including Boston, New York City, San Antonio, Seattle and others, have filed waivers with the FCC requesting use of the 700 MHz broadband public-safety spectrum currently licensed to the Public Safety Spectrum Trust (PSST). FCC rules require early deployments be held until the paired commercial frequencies are auctioned and a nationwide public/private partnership is in place. The jurisdictions said the requested waivers of the 700 MHz public-safety broadband early deployment rules will allow them to deploy a network now, with integration into a nationwide network later.

Harlin McEwen, chairman of the PSST, was the most vocal of the nearly 70 participants during Thursday's meeting, reminding the technical, operations and governance work group chairs that expectations should be the same across the nation and that the group's goal is to create a minimal set of requirements that each jurisdiction should adhere to to ensure nationwide 700 MHz interoperability. "There should be a national, central role overseeing these things — roaming, pricing — so each city doesn't have to work out separate agreements," said McEwen.

The discussions covered different roaming categories, such as roaming between 700 MHz public-safety LTE networks and between private 700 MHz public-safety networks and a future D block public/private network. Officials also asked device vendor representatives at the meeting if they are willing to add band class 14 —the 700 MHz public-safety band class — to current 700 MHz devices to allow public safety to gain economies of scale from future 700 MHz commercial devices. "There are a lot of unknowns around band 14, so until it's resolved, we don't know for sure," said an Ericsson official.

The group also discussed what applications would be most requested and whether to include applications in the requirements. New York City, for example, wants voice as a required application; most other jurisdictions are more

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focused on data-only applications. "It's in our best interests to provide for voice; that day is coming. It would be short sighted not to include it," said Jim Hassett, radio repair operations manager for the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Most of the technical group's work will be specific to Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology, endorsed by NPSTC and other public-safety associations as the preferred standard for the development of a nationwide 700 MHz interoperable broadband network.

A decision from the FCC on the waiver requests is pending, and Jeff Cohen, an FCC representative attended the Boulder meeting.

NPSTC's member organizations provide public-safety input to the task force, while NIST brings independent technical expertise and a structured standards development process to the effort. The project is expected to be completed in the fall. The July 16 – 17 meeting was the first face-to-face meeting, while the majority of the work has been done via weekly conference calls.

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