News Brief

District of Columbia Partners with PSCR on LTE Tests for Public Safety (2/1/10)

The District of Columbia's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) formed a partnership with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Public Safety Communications Research (PSCR) program to evaluate the next generation of wireless communications for public-safety agencies. The project will develop public-safety requirements and test interoperability among multiple vendor systems in the District and at the NIST facility in Boulder, Colo.

Public-safety agencies need an independent facility to test, develop and demonstrate the capabilities of the technologies that commercial carriers are deploying and that public safety is pursuing, an OCTO statement said. Engaging operators on public safety-specific requirements will open an avenue for inclusion of those requirements in commercial-scale equipment manufacturing, thus greatly reducing the cost of the interoperable national network.

"To achieve the goal of national interoperability, we need to deploy a single technology everywhere, and public safety has identified Long Term Evolution (LTE) as that technology," said Bryan Sivak, the District's chief technology officer. "Without careful testing, we cannot be sure that commercial technology offered to the public meets the needs of public safety. This project is about making sure it works for public safety."

"NIST looks forward to our partnership with OCTO and to leverage their expertise in running their own 700 MHz public-safety system," said Dereck Orr, program manager for NIST's PSCR program. "This urban environment will be excellent for first responders to test the performance of these new technologies."

OCTO and NIST envision the project to include multiple vendors' equipment, as well as the interoperability among different carriers' networks and different vendors' equipment, including end-user devices. Public-safety practitioners nationwide — local, state and federal — will be involved in the project.

In 2008, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) partnered with OCTO on a radio over wireless broadband

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(ROW-B) project. The National Capital Region (NCR) awarded a contract in early 2007 to Alcatel Lucent for an EV-DO Revision A network at 700 MHz.

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