

Remarks of Deputy Assistant Secretary Gomez at PSCR Demonstration Network Stakeholders Meeting

Topics/Subtopics:

“A Public Safety Broadband Network Built To Last”

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**Remarks of Anna M. Gomez, Deputy Assistant Secretary
For Communications and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
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PSCR Demonstration Network Stakeholders Meeting
Broomfield, Colorado
-As Prepared for Delivery-**

Thank you Dereck.

Kudos to the Public Safety Communications Research program for organizing this important stakeholder event.

It couldn't have come at a better time.

First, congratulations to all of you on the passage of the legislation. Second, Chris Moore did a good job last night recognizing those who contributed to the legislative effort. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the team at the Commerce Department: Dereck of course, Jeff Bratcher, Milton Brown, Gina Harrison, Lance Johnson, Bernadette McGuire-Rivera, Daniel Meyerson, Sara Morris, Emil Olbrich, Laura Pettus, Danielle Rodier, and Andy Thiessen.

And White House Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Telecommunications Tom Power is here with us today. Tom continues to bring the innovative policies of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to bear in achieving a single, nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network.

These folks have been working since before the legislation was passed, and it should come as no surprise that they are now working harder than ever.

I also would like to thank our federal partners at the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice. Our work was a true partnership, and we look forward to continued collaboration.

Finally, thanks to all of you for your enthusiasm and dedication. We look forward to continuing to work together.

It is great to be, as Vice President Biden said, making good on an “overdue promise” to get first responders the technology they need to stay safe, do their jobs – and do them superbly.

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 carries out some recommendations made back in 2004 by the 9/11 Commission. It also opens a new vista for public safety communications. A vista with the promise of fulfilling all that broadband technology has to offer.

NTIA, my agency, is both humbled and privileged to serve the first responders, carriers, manufacturers, and state, local and Tribal governments that all have a role in creating the single interoperable public safety network the statute envisions.

We are *humbled* because our first responders work so tirelessly and fearlessly in their rescue, law enforcement, and medical missions — and even with such intense “day jobs” have stayed so true to the pursuit of a new state-of-the-art public safety broadband network. *They* are why we are all here today, eager to talk about, and to get rolling on, the new statute and to follow through on the Act’s enabling of a single nationwide public safety broadband network.

NTIA is *privileged* to be involved in creating this new public safety broadband network, because together we can set a brand new standard for public safety communications. I’m talking not only about the state-of-the-art LTE technology the network will use. I also mean the way we as a community go about the business of ensuring reliable and first-class interoperable communications for first responders. A new standard, resting on a single, cutting-edge, and nationwide network, will be part of President Obama’s vi-

sion of an “America Built to Last”— a new standard that sets aside smaller differences in favor of a single unified approach and a blueprint for single national network architecture. A blueprint that will have ample state and local input - no doubt about that - but that never loses sight of the goal that brought us to this point: a single nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network.

The new law gives public safety the D Block and a total of twenty megahertz of prime spectrum, seven billion dollars to be funded from auction proceeds (without adding to the deficit), and a new way for doing the business of running and operating the public safety broadband network.

So, what is the plan for getting this done?

For starters, we can expect the Federal Communications Commission to stand up the Technical Advisory Board for First Responder Interoperability very soon. I don't say this to speak on the FCC's behalf, but rather because the new law says the FCC must do so within 30 days—which is this month.

The “Interoperability Board” will recommend, within 90 days, minimum technical requirements for a nationwide level of interoperability for the network. And the FCC wants nominations for the Board by March seventh—tomorrow.

Within six months — that would be by sometime this August — NTIA must establish the Board for the First Responder Network Authority, or “FirstNet”.

FirstNet, an independent authority housed within NTIA, will hold the public safety broadband spectrum license and “take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of the public safety broadband network,” in consultation with state, Tribal, and local public safety entities; a standing public safety advisory committee; the Federal Communications Commission and the Commerce Department's National Institute of Standards and Technology.

FirstNet is charged, at a minimum, with ensuring nationwide standards for the network; issuing open, transparent, and competitive requests for proposals for building, operating, and maintaining the network; encouraging these RFPs to leverage, to the maximum extent economically desirable, existing commercial wireless infrastructure to

speed deployment of the network; and overseeing contracts with non-federal entities to build, operate, and maintain the network.

FirstNet's Board will have 15 members. The U.S. Attorney General, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Secretary of Homeland Security will be on the Board, and the Secretary of Commerce will select the twelve other members.

These members must have some relevant expertise: public safety experience, technical expertise, network expertise, or financial expertise. This is a Board charged with making the public safety broadband network a reality, so expertise counts.

At least three Board members must have served as public safety professionals, and at least three members must represent the collective interests of states, localities, Tribes, and territories.

Finally, in making appointments, the Secretary by law should also seek to ensure geographic and regional, and rural and urban representation.

Also within six months, NTIA, in consultation with FirstNet, must issue requirements for a State and Local Implementation Grant Program.

The law requires FirstNet to consult with regional, state, local, and Tribal jurisdictions in planning and deploying the network. This program will enable state, regional, Tribal, and local jurisdictions to identify, plan, and implement the best way to use the nationwide broadband public safety network to satisfy their unique needs, including coverage and siting.

But NTIA's activities will only succeed with input from all stakeholders. To that end, we already are working with our federal partners, particularly with the Office of Emergency Communications at DHS, to look for opportunities to further engage the community.

And all of this only in the first six months!

As 9/11 taught us, seamless, first-class communications among first responders are critical to fulfilling their missions. The goal of interoperability underpins the law from the outset, beginning with the directive that the nationwide public safety broadband net-

work be based on “a single, nationwide architecture.” This concept of an overarching network architecture is a vision the Administration has long espoused.

FirstNet as its *first duty* must ensure nationwide standards for use and access of the network. Its requests for proposals must take into account minimum interoperability standards. And *FirstNet* must require open, non-proprietary standards in its equipment and ensure any public safety entity can use network equipment, and that multiple vendors can manufacture it.

Let me be clear. Creating *FirstNet* as an “independent authority” within NTIA to build and run a single nationwide public safety broadband network does *not* mean that responders will lose control of their communications. Local public safety agencies are key stakeholders.

That significant local role plays out in Board representation, in the Board’s standing public safety advisory panel, and in the state and local grant program. And there are several other examples of the local role in the law:

- *FirstNet* must address special considerations for areas or regions “with unique homeland security or national security needs.”
- Deployment must factor in substantial rural milestones and maximize cost-effective public/private partnerships to speed rural build out.
- And in developing requests for proposals, *FirstNet* must consult with regional, state, local, and Tribal jurisdictions.

Local control is critical to effective emergency response. You know it. NTIA knows it. We just need to keep building from the same blueprint and toward the same goal of nationwide interoperability.

But we must achieve that goal in the real world, with real-world constraints. And budgetary constraints come to mind immediately.

Under the statutory model, however, uniform technical standards and requirements—part of the blueprint for interoperability—will enable the network to achieve economies of scale in equipment purchasing never before possible in legacy, patchwork systems. Hopefully, by creating economies of scale, *FirstNet* can push the prices for public safety

devices—that are traditionally way above what commercial users pay— down.

Achieving our goals in the real world will also take creativity. It will mean leveraging assets public safety has now, such as existing towers, as well as commercial network infrastructure. The money we save can be ploughed into a bigger and better nationwide network. And the statute provides for public/private partnerships.

These partnerships can be a win-win that harnesses the infrastructure, business savvy, and innovation of America's outstanding telecommunications sector to help drive a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network.

The Administration and Congress have made a serious investment (seven billion dollars and ten additional megahertz of prime spectrum), provided general time frames, and slipped us a crib sheet for how to solve some of the trickiest questions.

Now it's up to us—all of us: the first responders that will use this network, industry, manufacturers that will make this fantastic new technology work for our first responders in a cost-effective way, and those of us in the Administration charged with making the statutory blueprint concrete.

It's up to us to make this network part of the President's vision for the country—a public safety broadband network that is "built to last."

I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward. Thank you.