

Proposed Issue for NSTAC Examination: National Public Safety Broadband Network

September 2, 2011

The Obama Administration is harnessing advanced technology to design and deploy a nationwide public safety broadband network (NPSBN) to enhance emergency communications. In February 2011, President Obama released the *Wireless Innovation and Infrastructure Initiative*, which emphasized the Administration's commitment to creating such a network by calling for a \$10.7 billion investment to the NPSBN. Given the breadth of the issue, including resolution of the 700 megahertz "D Block" of spectrum, the Administration is collaborating with Congress; Federal, State, and local stakeholders; and the private sector to ensure that the network is cost-efficient, secure, and reliable.

In June 2011, the Executive Office of the President (EOP) indicated an NSTAC examination on the proposed NPSBN would assist the Government's NPSBN planning efforts. After some initial scoping activities, the NSTAC's Designated Federal Official (DFO) and Department of Homeland Security leadership determined there were specific security and policy aspects related to the network's deployment that could be isolated from the unresolved issues (e.g., spectrum allocation) for the NSTAC to investigate. The NSTAC's DFO hosted three sessions with the NSTAC member points of contact (POC) on July 20, 2011, August 8, 2011, and August 19, 2011, to further refine the topic and determine where the NSTAC's unique perspective would be of greatest value. The DFO also arranged for participation by representatives from the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) to provide subject matter expertise on this issue.

As a result of the three meetings, the NSTAC POCs determined the following questions/issues would be appropriate for NSTAC examination:

Network Infrastructure

1. How should the USG approach the operation and management of the NPSBN (inclusive of an expanded user base of Federal and secondary users) while supporting local and State public safety users?
2. How does the NSTAC recommend deploying the NPSBN and on what timeline? What are the key technical and operational considerations? How should commercial carriers be leveraged in the network's build-out?
3. What activities should be undertaken to facilitate public safety's transition from land mobile radio (LMR) to long-term evolution (LTE)?
4. What is the optimal approach to balance fiscal reality with the required level of geographic and population coverage? Should or how should non-terrestrial solutions be leveraged to make the NPSBN more resilient to regional disruptions?
5. Should the design and deployment of the NPSBN be structured so as to provide opportunities for public safety traffic to roam onto commercial networks, and in turn, for commercial traffic to roam onto the NPSBN (in situations where there is excess capacity available on that NPSBN infrastructure)?
6. Are there lessons learned from the implementation of the smart grid that the Government could apply to the development and deployment of the public safety network? If so, could the NSTAC provide advice on current and/or missed opportunities?

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Technology (including Devices and Applications)

1. What is NSTAC's perspective on how technology (including wireless services and commercial networks) will evolve over the next 5-10 years? What types of investments and planning activities should public safety officials consider to stay current with technological change?
2. How can emergency responders leverage multi-mode devices (e.g., LTE/CDMA/GSM/Wi-Fi/bluetooth) in a public safety environment?
3. Is there a reasonable understanding of what is meant by mission-critical communications for public safety? Is there a need for more dialogue with the public safety community? Do NSTAC members have a role in facilitating this?
4. How can the public safety user community bring scale and volume purchasing to the device OEMs to minimize costs and ensure operability/interoperability?
5. How can public safety users harness the power of existing consumer-centric social media applications to support mission critical day-to-day operations?
6. Is industry conducting research and development efforts public safety communications-related technologies and if so, how can this help inform the work of the National Institute for Standards and Technology?
7. Regarding interoperability with military communities (e.g., the National Guard), are there gaps that the Government must address to allow military personnel access to the network on an as-needed basis? Additionally, will first responders be able to use equipment designed for the NPSBN when responding to events on military bases?

Governance

1. Determine whether best practices exist to assist in the effective establishment and governance of the proposed Public Safety Broadband Corporation.
2. What are the recommendations to integrate private sector participation into State planning and governance activities?
3. Is the current definition of public safety, as defined under Section 337 of *Communications Act*, adequate for the anticipated uses of the NPSBN?
4. Would/should Section 202 of the Telecommunication Act apply to the capability to prioritize public safety communications on wireless broadband networks?"