



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION  
FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY  
**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 10, 2021 COMBINED BOARD AND COMMITTEES  
MEETING VIA WEBEX**

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) held an open public meeting of the FirstNet Authority Board and its Committees. The meeting took place via WebEx on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 and began at 11:00 AM EST. An audio recording and transcript of the meeting, as well as the archived presentation, are available on the FirstNet Authority website: [www.FirstNet.gov](http://www.FirstNet.gov).

## **INTRODUCTION**

Board Chair Robert “Tip” Osterthaler opened the meeting by welcoming all who virtually joined the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) Combined Board and Committees meeting. In his opening statement, he recapped information from the December 2020 Board meeting on the new 2021 Board meeting schedule, with meetings in February, May, August, and November. He went on to mention key members of the Board from the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Due to the recent change of the presidential administration, Jessica Renier is no longer the OMB Federal Board Member designee. A new designee will be appointed to represent the agency. In the meantime, Austin Turner and Peter Hoy will continue to represent OMB’s interests.

Chair Osterthaler mentioned the top priority for the FirstNet Authority being the December 25, 2020 Nashville, Tennessee bombing attack that destroyed the AT&T central office. While the FirstNet infrastructure was not directly damaged, it still caused a network service outage that affected users in the local area as well as other parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama. AT&T was able to quickly restore the network for public safety users with FirstNet deployables serving as key assets in the reestablishment of communications. Since then, Chair Osterthaler, Vice Chair Richard Carrizzo, and members of the Market Engagement Team held meetings with public safety users who were directly impacted by the explosion to discuss the effect it had on the network and to gather feedback that will allow the team to develop lessons learned and future planning to assist in such events.

The main focus areas of the meeting were the approval of the December 9, 2020 Combined Board and Committees meeting minutes; updates from the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) from PSAC Chair Todd Early; updates from the Advocacy, Network and Technology, and Finance Committees; and closing remarks from FirstNet Authority Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Edward Parkinson.

### ***Roll Call***

Robert “Tip” Osterthaler (“Chair”), Richard Carrizzo (“Vice Chair”), Billy Bob Brown Jr., Welton Chase, Neil Cox, Brian Crawford, Billy Hewes, Karima Holmes, Edward Horowitz, Darrin Jones, Paul Patrick, Matt Slinkard, and David Zolet. A quorum was present for the Board and Combined Committees.

### ***Conflicts Statement and Reminder***

Prior to participating in the FirstNet Authority Combined Board and Committees meeting, Board Secretary Janell Smith provided Board members with the meeting agenda and Conflict of Interest Guidance that applies to the Board members. All Board members responded prior to the meeting that they did not need to recuse themselves from participation in any portion of this meeting, therefore indicating no conflicts of interest, and the meeting proceeded.

### ***Votes Taken***

Prior to proceeding with the business of the day, Chair Osterthaler requested a motion to approve the minutes from the December 9, 2020 Combined Board and Committees meeting. Billy Bob Brown Jr. made the motion. Paul Patrick seconded, and the Board unanimously voted to approve the December 9, 2020 Combined Board and Committees meeting minutes to be available to the public following the meeting.

## **MATTERS DISCUSSED**

### ***PSAC Update***

PSAC Chair Todd Early provided information on the 2020 accomplishments from the December 2020 Virtual PSAC Business meeting; Identity, Credential, and Access Management (ICAM) Strike Team; Telehealth Strike Team; and an update on the Tribal Working Group (TWG). At the virtual PSAC Business meeting on December 17, 2020, PSAC members received updates from FirstNet Authority leadership and strategy teams, as well as an update on the AT&T FirstNet momentum and PSAC Users Working Group overview. In addition, Scott Agnew from AT&T presented an update on the ICAM Strike Team, which included a detailed overview of the FirstNet Network ICAM solution and roll out strategy.

In 2019, the Telehealth Strike Team developed as an introductory product that provided a mid-level view of telehealth and its ability to effectively be used in public safety. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services selected several telehealth agencies across the nation to pilot the *Emergency Triage, Treat, and Transport* model which was delayed to January 2021 due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The Strike Team has developed a project statement and will be working with a larger group of participants, including the National Emergency Medical Services Physicians Association PSAC representative Dr. Weiss, to highlight success stories and lessons learned from using the technology at both ends of the telehealth process.

In January 2021, the TWG agreed to focus on updating tribal outreach and education materials, which has begun in February 2021. Chair Early went on to announce the departure of the TWG Chair Danae Wilson and thanked her for leadership in Indian Country, with FirstNet, and PSAC initiatives. The TWG will be working with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

for her replacement. The TWG is fixated on the development of podcasts and blogs around the members' experiences using and advocating for the FirstNet network as well as the development and expansion of more tribal-specific products in 2021.

In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 enacted by the 116<sup>th</sup> United States Congress provides new sources of tribal broadband funding that can assist in mitigating the effects of the digital divide across Indian Country. The Department of Commerce and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) are dedicated to expanding broadband deployment in unserved areas and promoting digital inclusion. The Act directs NTIA to make grants available to eligible entities within short timeframes. The TWG met with NCAI to discuss the \$1 billion Tribal Grant Program currently in the works.

### ***Advocacy Committee Update***

Committee Chairman Carrizzo shared the accomplishments of the Market Engagement teams, who conduct virtual engagements by participating in round table discussions on numerous topics and continue to gather feedback from stakeholders to improve the FirstNet experience for public safety. He then yielded to Market Engagement Office (MEO) Acting Director David Buchanan to provide an update on MEO Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 First Quarter engagements.

Mr. Buchanan provided information on the FY2021 First Quarter (Q1) engagement accomplishments and an update on the MEO's focus in 2021. In Q1, MEO continued its effort to engage with stakeholders for feedback on the network and ways to advance the FirstNet experience by holding 310 public safety engagements, of which 93 were national events and the additional 217 occurred across the states and territories. These engagements included input from all levels of government – local, tribal, state, and federal, as well as input from public safety disciplines such as law enforcement, fire, EMS, and ECC community emergency managers who understand the needs and operational use of the FirstNet network. More than 10,000 stakeholders were reached through these engagements, and the team was able to collect 398 feedback items ranging from operational needs and current challenges. In addition to these engagements, another way of gathering input from stakeholders is through focus groups. So far there have been 23 focus groups from 33 states conducted with public safety in Q1 to gather information on location-based services and in-building coverage.

He went on to give an update on MEO and provided three ways the office can be successful in 2021. These three areas are focused on *Engagement*, *Collaboration*, and *Performance*. *Engagement* is focused on the communication with stakeholders on the various topics and how to best engage with them in the different market areas such as industry, academia, public safety, and government. *Collaboration* efforts are focused on understanding how agencies use the FirstNet solution and how to help advance the FirstNet experience, as well as help stakeholders improve their operational needs through conducting Roadmap engagements, use cases, and any additional feedback to improve the network. *Performance* determines how to improve the performance of the network and ensure that stakeholders are informed as priorities evolve.

### ***Network and Technology Committee Update***

Committee Chairman Cox provided an update on the January 2021 Committee briefing that enabled the Committee to receive an overview of the spectrum landscape in the United States

and provide strategic guidance into the focus of the FirstNet Authority on a host of spectrum initiatives and opportunities. Chairman Cox yielded to Chief Network and Technology Officer, Jeffery Bratcher, to provide updates on the FirstNet network and technology.

According to Mr. Bratcher, AT&T announced in January 2021 that the network now has more than 1.9 million connections serving more than 15,000 public safety agencies and organizations. The expansion of Band 14 coverage remains ahead of schedule with approximately 80% completion of the promised deployment dates. In 2020, FirstNet supported and deployed over 700 assets for planned and emergency events for public safety. In order to continue to meet this demand, the FirstNet Authority plans to increase its fleet of 72 dedicated deployable network assets, three flying Cells on Wheels (COWs), and a purpose-built aerostat. COWs can be deployed by a single person in a matter of minutes that provide public safety the coverage and solution to take the network with them on short notice. In addition, AT&T has announced that public safety agencies can now purchase their own deployable network assets through the availability of the innovative Compact Rapid Deployables (CRDs).

Mr. Bratcher also highlighted new capabilities that AT&T announced in January: FirstNet MegaRange, LMR Interoperability for Push-To-Talk Solutions, and Z-axis Solution.

Next, Mr. Bratcher provided technology updates on the global standards; devices available for public safety users; applications and solutions to operational issues faced by first responders; and the progress in advancing public safety technology through *Collaboration*. The first item of discussion was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), which is the primary global standards body for 4G and 5G wireless networks. The 3GPP Release 17 work continues and is focused on enhancements to the building blocks for the mission-critical services to 5G, additional device-to-device direct and relay modes, multicast broadcast capability, enhanced location-based services, and the non-terrestrial network support within 3GPP with a completion date set for March 2022. Many agencies across the globe co-signed two contributions authored and led by the FirstNet Authority to emphasize the importance of the Release 17 features. He then mentioned the involvement between FirstNet Authority staff, AT&T, and others alongside the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions and the Telecommunications Industry Association, who are key standards-setting organizations in North America working the functions and standards for the Land Mobile Radio (LMR) Long-Term Evolution networks to the long-term 3GPP and 5G networks.

On the devices update, there are now over 256 FirstNet devices in the ecosystem, of which 193 directly support the Band 14 spectrum. Mr. Bratcher noted that adoption and support of Band 14 is linked to the FirstNet Mega Range devices that he highlighted earlier in the meeting. MegaRange can significantly improve connectivity at the edge of network coverage, solving a common challenge of difficult coverage spots. The stronger signal may better assist those connecting from hard-to-reach areas, such as parking garages, elevators, basements, and stairwells, helping first responders communicate inside and out. In addition, the FirstNet network is the only network where public safety can take advantage of the High-Power User Equipment (HPUE) class signaling available in the United States following 3GPP and FCC Standards. This HPUE is unique to the FirstNet network and exclusively on Band 14.

Moving on to the applications update, Mr. Bratcher mentioned the 166 applications and user solutions in the FirstNet app catalog. Mr. Bratcher emphasized that FirstNet Authority heard from public safety that enhancing situational awareness was important for first responders as they perform their jobs. He noted that the Z-axis capability offers vertical location mapping capabilities. It will help fire departments and other disciplines locate a downed firefighter in a multistory building to within a plus or minus three-meter accuracy. This capability provides a new level of indoor spatial awareness not previously available when using traditional GPS-based location methods.

Lastly, Mr. Bratcher discussed *Collaboration* efforts, which were also highlighted in the December 2020 Board meeting, of the FirstNet Authority's role in providing program and technical assistance to the National Institute of Science and Technology Public Safety Communications Research Division (PSCR) to launch a \$1 million grant program to advance technological innovation in the two key verticals – *Response* and *Resiliency* (R2 Network), which consist of three pillars - R2 Learn, R2 Portal, and R2 Connect. Specifically, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) is providing up to \$750,000, and PSCR is providing up to \$250,000 in funding. The awardees continue their efforts to develop, build, and launch new resources and tools for stakeholders, with an initial focus on resources for entrepreneurs and vendors.

#### ***Finance Committee Update***

Committee Chairman Brian Crawford reported that, based on a briefing provided to the Finance Committee, the FirstNet Authority is within its targeted operational boundaries of the approved Board budget. He then yielded to Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Kim Farington to provide a brief update on the results of the FY 2020 operations and a look into FY 2021.

CFO Farington stated the cumulative spend-to-date was \$17.6 million through the end of December 2020, with an annual operations budget of \$83.5 million. The annual budget represents the cumulative obligations budget plan for the year, and the FirstNet Authority has not exceeded the Board approved plan, and therefore is on-track through Q1 FY2021.

#### ***Closing Remarks***

CEO Parkinson thanked the Board for its continued leadership and support for the FirstNet Authority and its public safety mission and went on to mention the Nashville bombing being a top priority for the organization in 2021. Since the Christmas Day 2020 attack, the organization and AT&T have been working closely together along with local, state, and federal public safety agencies that were impacted by the service outage to help coordinate response and recovery efforts and to better understand the event. With the help of public safety, the FirstNet Authority's goal is to develop an after-action review of the event and the impact it had on FirstNet services, and then develop lessons learned and recommendations to minimize the risk of future outages on the network. In January 2021, a series of meetings were held between the FirstNet Authority and public safety users in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama to get direct and clear information from them on their experience during the bombing event last year. CEO Parkinson went on to thank the PSAC and its Chair, Todd Early, for their participation and advisory support of the Nashville event review that will continue as the organization goes through the process. Since the incident occurred, several statements have been released by the

FirstNet Authority and the organization will continue to update and inform the Board, the public, and end-to-end users of new information.

Next, CEO Parkinson spoke on recent announcements made by the team and reminded attendees that 2021 marks the 9<sup>th</sup> year since the creation of the FirstNet Authority, as the legislation creating the organization was signed into law on February 22, 2012. March 2021 marks the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization's relationship with AT&T, and three years since the network was moved into production with the network deployment task orders and the buildout of the individual state plans. Today, 80% of the network is deployed with nearly 2 million subscribers. AT&T also announced the launch of additions to the FirstNet services with the feedback received from public safety and consultation through the FirstNet Roadmap.

Mr. Parkinson briefly spoke on the FirstNet MegaRange being a solution that provides HPUE capabilities that extends the coverage of the network nationwide especially in critical augmenting coverage in rural and remote areas. This is unique to Band 14 and no other network offers this capability. He also talked about the CRDs that allow public safety to take the network with them on short notice and are a smaller version of the SatCOLT, that can be purchased directly by public safety agencies. In addition, the new long-awaited enhanced situational awareness solutions such as the Z-axis have come to the market, which gives public safety the ability to locate personnel in high-rise buildings. First responders are now able to connect their LMR with users on the FirstNet push-to-talk that will allow these individuals to work together by taking advantage of the communications capabilities available for use, which will help save costs by continuing to use state and local LMR infrastructure. Lastly, he stated that the continued progress on the new solutions is just the beginning and will lead to more innovations in the future. He then yielded to Chair Osterthaler.

***Board Adjourned***

Chair Osterthaler requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Karima Holmes made the motion, Matt Slinkard seconded, and the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.