FirstNet in California

FirstNet State Plan Review Meeting – Palo Alto, CA

July 6, 2017

The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) held a FirstNet State Plan Review Meeting in Palo Alto, CA on July 6, 2017. There were 52 participants that signed in for the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Budge Currier, 9-1-1 Branch Manager, SWIC; coordinating FirstNet outreach for Cal OES

Budge Currier opened the meeting. Barry Fraser, Bay Area Regional Interoperable Communications System (BayRICS) lead and California First Responder Network (CalFRN) Board member, was present.

Attending from FirstNet and AT&T were:

- FirstNet: Kevin Nida, Jeanette Kennedy, Adam Geisler
- AT&T: Scott Andrews, Shane Harper, Barbara Winn

In addition to local attendees, public safety representatives from Santa Cruz, Monterey, and as far as Sacramento also participated in the meeting.

FirstNet Update

Kevin Nida, FirstNet Regional Coordinator

- Kevin Nida recently retired from the Los Angeles Fire Department after 37 years.
- FirstNet will be providing oversight of AT&T’s building and operating of the FirstNet network to “assure public safety gets what it needs.”
- Referring to AT&T’s 40,000 Wi-Fi hotspots, Kevin sees Wi-Fi as very a viable help to augment data coverage.
- Kevin noted that during wildfires, radio communications leaders (COMLs) and technicians (COMTs) sometimes have to “build a land mobile radio (LMR)” system in the area, due to lack of radio coverage. He said that AT&T’s deployables could act similarly in these remote areas.
- FirstNet will be vetting and testing public safety apps at its Boulder labs.
- The FirstNet public safety home page will include the ability to monitor network status, so public safety can see what cell sites are up, for example, during a hurricane or other major disaster.

The Role of Cal OES

Budge Currier, 9-1-1 Branch Manager, SWIC; coordinating FirstNet outreach for Cal OES

- Budge noted that California’s FirstNet single point of contact (SPOC) is responsible for collecting comments regarding the State Plan and providing them to FirstNet.
• He emphasized that FirstNet is not planning to supplant or change LMR. Budge also described the relationship between Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), computer aided dispatch, and the FirstNet network, which is responsible for getting public safety answering point (PSAP) data to the field so it can be acted upon.

• Budge estimated there are as many 300,000 public safety personnel in California, making it a challenge to get the word out regarding the State Plan, especially given the 45-day response period to FirstNet.

Q&A:

• Q: If the State decides to opt out, what needs to occur? Is [the network] mandated to be built?  
  A: There’s a 180-day period to provide an alternative plan if opting out. FirstNet has to allocate spectrum to the State, and there are many other steps. It’s an extensive and time consuming process.  
  A: Adam Geisler: The opt-in/out question really gets down to who pays to build and to operate the state radio access network (RAN) [i.e., FirstNet or the State].

• Q: Is the expectation that you will have direct access to California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) through FirstNet and not go through your agency’s approved interface to the system?  
  A: No. Scott Andrews will provide more detail during his presentation.

• Q: What’s the specs for coverage? Is it symmetrical?  
  A: Scott Andrews will answer.

• Q: Are the 6,000 in-building distributed antennas systems (DAS) for California?  
  A: No, it’s nationwide.

• Q: If at a local level, FirstNet services are inferior to what I currently have, then your statewide statistics will be skewed. So, do you want my feedback regarding both the state opt-in/out decision as well as agency FirstNet subscription?  
  A: Yes.

AT&T Public Safety Broadband Network Service

Scott Andrews, FirstNet Principal Consultant

• Scott Andrews said that FirstNet service is meant to be a companion to LMR service, not a replacement.

• He emphasized that, by leveraging AT&T’s existing spectrum portfolio, FirstNet service will be available at opt-in, rather than four or five years from now.

• AT&T cell sites have four-hour battery back-up and are moving to an eight-hour standard as a result of FirstNet.

• Local control allow you to enable and disable your devices for your agency.

• AT&T’s FirstNet dedicated security team is all United States (US) based.

• AT&T’s plan is to cover 99% of the population.

• AT&T will be supplying 72 dedicated FirstNet Long Term Evolution (LTE) deployables. Agencies can also purchase their own.

• Shane Harper said that FirstNet is the number one priority for AT&T as a company, from the very top management on down.

• FirstNet service plans will be on ValuePoint (Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA) – National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO)), General Services Administration (GSA), and eventually CALNET contracts, and in a matter of weeks, not months.
Questions and Answers / Public Comment

- **Q:** I heard you say that, to start, this is a data network. Will this be an LMR [i.e., voice network] in the future?  
  **A:** It’s meant to be a data network. However, future standards are there for mission critical voice. It will be up to agencies as to when they feel it’s appropriate to use voice on the FirstNet network.

- **Q:** A volunteer firefighter can have Primary User access, correct?  
  **A:** Yes. This is the way it’s been explained to us.

- **Q:** As the rest of network technology progresses, how will this network be kept up to date?  
  **A:** This is one of the beauties of this network. It will evolve at the same rate as the commercial network, because it’s a single network.

- **Q:** Will AT&T be using its current staff to support FirstNet?  
  **A:** AT&T will be setting up dedicated customer support centers. As of today, AT&T is using current engineers but expects to gain 10,000 employees as a result of FirstNet.

- **Q:** Are there further definitions for how priority will be handled for applications?  
  **A:** There is a hierarchy of priority levels. There can be priorities by user level as well as by application, such as video.  
  **A:** Budge: Cal OES works closely with AT&T regarding the 9-1-1 offices today. That same kind of dedication can be applied to FirstNet where we can help agencies working with AT&T should they run into problems. We see this as a role Cal OES can play in the future. We’re interested in your feedback as to how this should work.  
  **A:** Barry Fraser: I understand there will be a role for the State, but I believe there will also be local or regional agency decisions; for agencies that work side-by-side as well as with overlapping jurisdictions.

- **Q:** Do you see Band 14 becoming just a part of the standard chipset that comes out on all phones in the future?  
  **A:** Yes.

- **Q:** Can you run non-FirstNet apps? Are these locked phones?  
  **A:** On the cellular side, you need to be an AT&T subscriber.

- **Q:** Can I use FirstNet services, say via Wi-Fi, on a Verizon phone?  
  **A:** We’ll need to take that question back.

Comment: We’ve just deployed AT&T non-Band 14 devices to our users. We’ll need a migration plan and strategy for modem device management (MDM) so we can maintain our Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) certification when we migrate to FirstNet service.

- **Q:** How do you provide certification of an agency mobile virtual private networking (mVPN) application?  
  **A:** We’ll have to get back to you on those details, but I foresee you’ll be able to access all the apps you access today.  
  **A:** Jeanette Kennedy: It’s envisioned that there will be access to public safety applications regardless of which carrier you’re on.

- **Q:** Will the opt-in/out decision affect AT&T being the service provider?  
  **A:** If a state opts out, its network will still need to connect to and interoperate with the AT&T public safety network core.

- **Q:** Will there be FirstNet system managers hired by agencies, or is this “another duty as assigned” for agencies?  
  **A:** It will be up to the agency. There will be permanent priorities assigned at the start for users. We think it will be “another duty as assigned” for temporary priority assignments. It is planned to be a simple interface.  
  **A:** Kevin: Most of this is all automatic, all the time.

- **Q:** Where is security? Is it in the client? Or can you only get FirstNet through your [frequency] band? Can you unload the network onto other spectrum if you need to get out?  
  **A:** You’re
probably using NetMotion or similar today. This will be the same. It doesn’t change much from what you get today, it’s just that you get priority and preemption, too.

- Q: Does your Quality of Service, Priority, and Preemption (QPP) characteristics follow you as you move to distributed antenna systems (DAS) or Wi-Fi access? A: I’m told they’re working on DAS, but I don’t know about Wi-Fi.
- Q: Can you talk about adding sites? Our county doesn’t like to add sites (Santa Cruz County). A: Any advocacy you can provide is helpful. Barbara Winn works these issues.
- Q: Do these maps just display macro coverage? A: I don’t believe this includes in-building, [such as DAS]. So, yes, just macro coverage.
- Q: Is there another higher level of granularity of these maps that we can compare with our sites? A: Our radio access network (RAN) engineers have those but they’re not publically available. However, we can work with you one-on-one. Please let us know where you need coverage.
- Q: Are you talking about putting up sites just for FirstNet, or are they shared with commercial customers? A: They’re shared.
- Q: What’s needed for satellite coverage? Is it an Inmarsat brick that sets up a Wi-Fi hotspot? A: Yes, it’s similar.
- Q: Any contemplation of using other carriers’ Wi-Fi? For example, Verizon? A: I haven’t heard any conversations on that so far.
- Q: How many FirstNet deployables will be located in California? A: We’re still working on that. A: Barbara: We have hundreds of normal sites across the state that we use.
- Q: Are there requirements available if an agency wants to add FirstNet to an existing vehicle? A: Not yet, we’re working on it.
- Q: Does AT&T have a roadmap for DAS coverage? Is there a process for us to influence where DAS are placed? A: We need to have these conversations. A: Barbara: The small cells are coming out and that will be looked at together with DAS.
- Q: How do the individual agencies negotiate below rack rates? A: It will start with the major contracts mentioned, then, depending on the agency, there could be further negotiations. AT&T is building up a sales force to do this.
- Q: Do you have a pool situation for devices that can be added on an as-needed basis? A: We’re working on this.
- Q: Are you trying to turn this into a seat license sort of contract? A: Yes. We’re motivated to drive users on to this network, otherwise, we’re penalized. A: Budge: We can’t begin CALNET conversations until after the Governor’s opt-in decision. We’re already talking with them, though. Also, we may look at a more public-safety-centric contracting option that includes 9-1-1, since CALNET is more information technology (IT) focused.
- Q: Do you foresee an AT&T certified-for-use process for trunk mounted modems and similar devices? A: Yes. That is absolutely the plan. You can purchase through us or buy your own.
- Q: If I choose to move my organization to push-to-talk (PTT) over FirstNet, how would that work? A: We treat it like data.
- Q: Assume the Governor opts in, then starting next year, we can replace our current devices if we choose to; but can we even replace our mission critical LMR eventually as well? A: Yes, but it’s a decision you need to make. A: Kevin: [Use the] right tool for the right job. In the future,
you’ll see LMR radios with LTE capability, with the ability to switch between. I see this as a great thing for admin people, so they can use their phone instead of a dedicated radio.

• Q: Speak about the synergies between NG911 and FirstNet. So far I’ve seen the federal funding going to FirstNet. I’m concerned with the gaps. A: Budge: We’re at a decision point for 9-1-1, the system is aging and well past end-of-life. We want to keep Cal OES process the same for 9-1-1 to help you purchase your equipment and services. FirstNet gets your 9-1-1 data out to the field. I’d like to see FirstNet as a back-up to NG9-1-1 Internet Protocol (IP) delivery in case a backhaul digs up your wired connection.

Next Steps

Budge Currier, 9-1-1 Branch Manager, SWIC; coordinating FirstNet outreach for Cal OES

• Budge closed the meeting by encouraging attendees to provide their feedback. He will consolidate the comments and submit them to AT&T and FirstNet.
• He noted that Cal OES did a request for information (RFI), receiving seven responses. This information will be compared with the FirstNet State Plan and presented to the Governor for his decision.

Meeting adjourned.