

NOTES FROM GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

December 10, 2008

9:30 a.m., NCTCOG OFFICES

TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL ROOM

The Governance Committee meeting was opened by Chairman Gerard Eads who welcomed new and continuing members.

The chairman reviewed the history of the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant that was approved by the state for NCTCOG in behalf of the region. The chairman expressed appreciation to the Council of Governments staff for obtaining and managing the grant to date. He explained that the region applied for a grant and did not receive the requested amount. The region received \$2.9 million to develop an overlay system. Some of these funds were used to hire RCC Consultants, Inc.

A smaller Technical Work Group reviewed the various interoperability options and provided direction to RCC as to the different solutions available. Several agencies have been mentioned as potential agencies to host parts of the system. The meeting was turned over to RCC for presentation.

Jim Baron, RCC Consultants, provided committee members a PowerPoint presentation. See website, RCC Presentation 12/10/2008.
<http://www.nctcog.org/cs/radio/interop.asp>.

Questions During Presentation:

Jim Baron-What is the status of the 700 MHz regional Plans?

The chairman advises it has been submitted to the FCC and NCTCOG is awaiting approval.

Pam Palmisano- What does the concept cover? (Referring to the Agency Overlay Model)

Jim Baron- The concept provides coverage to the agencies' primary area with handheld coverage and then mobile coverage in the areas served by the Overlay sites

Chairman Eads-Can you explain the Inter-Sub System Interface (ISSI)?

Jim Baron- Allows the connecting of two different types (brands) of P25 systems to allow automatic roaming of units between systems

Chairman Eads-What is the status of ISSI?

Jim Baron- It is being quoted and sold today. So it is available for use.

Jeff Haislet-Would these be stand alone switches or would they be redundant?

(Referring to the switches the different agencies have or will procure)

Jim Baron-(answering for Plano)-there will be two geographically separated switches for the Plano System

Bill Bowens-DFW Airport will also have geographically redundant sites.

Ron Goldsmith-Can you touch on the Vendor Neutrality of this proposal?

Jim Baron- P25 has open standards-over the air open standards. There is a conventional station open standards. ISSI is open standards. There will be a console subsystem interface CSSI that will be an open standard. But the trunked connection to a master site is proprietary so this system here is a Tyco System (referring to DFW Airport's system) so these trunked sites here (referring to the Overlay sites controlled by the DFW Airport switch) will be Tyco sites. If Plano is Motorola, then these sites (referring to the Overlay sites connected to Plano switch) are Motorola.

Harry Hettinger- Is this that you are suggesting P25 Phase 1 or Phase 2?

Jim Baron- it will support Phase 1 and Phase 2. Systems are being planned and proposed right now across the country that support both.

Chairman Eads-What happens if a T-1 goes down or you lose connectivity?

Jim Baron-If the connection goes away, the system goes into what is called Site trunking. You lose your wide area trunking. Also, the console has to revert to backup control stations.

Harry Hettinger-Are those control stations RF Control stations?

Jim Baron-Yes

Harry Hettinger-Is there a way to have an in-house server or another solution because of the limitations of the fire departments etc, if a connection is lost?

Jim Baron-Yes, but it is an expensive solution.

Questions and comments after the presentation

Bill Swan-Of these two options, have either of them been tested in a real world disaster/operational situational?

Jim Baron-They are both very reliable. There was an article in a recent Mission Critical Communications magazine about how well the Harris County system worked during Hurricane Ike.

Pat McMacken-From a funding and grants point of view, the money is going to go south of us to the big regional operations until this region gets a regional governance board or organization in place to take the grant funds. Legislation needs to be initiated to complete this. Even though interoperable communications is number one for REPAC, they will be reluctant to fund "stovepipe" or individual programs.

Jeff Haislet added that he is hopeful that this region will get together and pull together a regional system or authority to bring in funding and also the interoperability that the state plan is now requiring. He said he hopes that with this new option that ETMC is able to participate with their counties around the metroplex to prevent any problems when they go to a major disaster or incident.

Fred Keithley pointed out that timeliness is very important because of the April 2010 deadline. Some agencies are further along than others. Also, fiscal responsibility is very important. **Using existing equipment versus repurchasing the same equipment shows**

fiscal responsibility. Also, when using the PSIC funds, it is important that the NCTCOG allow any company to compete.

Harry Hettinger asked if other cities are seeing an increase in the bond rate. Pat McMacken answered that the current economic situation is going to increase the bond rate. He further suggested that the Committee consider using the Austin or Harris County switches. Lastly, he suggested having someone, perhaps UASI, approach the legislature about legislating the development of a board or governance committee.

Ron Goldsmith pointed out that the region would be hard pressed to connect the Harris or Travis County's equipment especially given the backhaul links involved in that. We should consider ISSI connections to them. The final version suggested gives us a lot of open doors, sharing master switches, and allowing agencies to be their own masters if they choose.

Jeff Haislet pointed out that the State and Texas Radio Coalition did not want this region to connect to the other big switches. They wanted this region to bring a plan together for the region, so they can be recognized as a "player" in the radio world.

Chairman Eads said that in reference to REPAC (Regional Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee) that very little money goes to Communications mostly because we have not worked together. The UASIs would probably support a legislative item if that was pursued.

Chairman Eads also asked about T-1s and if there was a way to have redundancy when using T-1s.

Jim Baron advised that you can use multiple routing or alternate routing.

Chairman Eads also asked if we had to change the application for the money. CJ Holt stated we should not have to.

Fred Keithley asked if the proposal we are looking at would shut out any vendor or would it be vendor neutral.

Jim Baron answered that it would be vendor neutral because agencies that go out for bid are going out for open bid. Furthermore, an agency which already has a switch will still go out for bid with the understanding that it would be connecting to the agency's existing switch.

Kevin Reynolds asked how that would affect the console.

Jim Baron answered that the consoles in a P25 system are all VOIP and use packet data. There will be a Console Subsystem Interface which will be vendor neutral. Kevin then asked what impact that would have to the existing consoles. Jim explained that some gateways can be connected to a P25 system via a console type gateway box and it will in essence make the console P25 capable.

The Governance Committee was asked to vote on which concept was supported.

The Overlay as originally defined was supported by Pam Palmisano and Craig Rudolph.

The following Governance Committee members supported the new Agency Overlay Model:

Roger Deeds
Bill Swan
Pat McMacken
Bill Bowens
Lynn Chaffin
Dan Scrivner
Noe Flores
Paul Siebert
Thomas Gray
Barry Gill
Kathy Morris
Jeff Haislett
Ron Goldsmith
Jimmy Roland
Harry Hettinger
Mark Weathersby
Alan Williams
Perry Bynum

No abstentions

Not Voting- Charles Cinquemani

A motion was made by Bill Swan to use the Agency Overlay model for the region. This was seconded by Pat McMacken. Vote-18 Aye, 2 Nay, 0 Abstain

Bill Bowens pointed out that a communications authority of some type is very important to the region. He explained that he felt we need to begin discussing how to create this discussion. CJ Holt explained that one portion of the PSIC Grant was to prepare a recommendation for a Communications Authority Model.

Fred Keithley added that the information RCC will provide will also encourage the members to go to their local elected officials to explain the importance of a Communications Authority. Also, he mentioned the need for promotional material that would help local elected officials fully understand the role and importance of the Communications Authority.

Chairman Eads asked if there was a committee within the COG which could have this information presented to them. Fred Keithley explained that the Council of Governments Executive Board is who the authority the Committee must report back to and they are only one of many such committees or boards. Pat McMacken also advised that there is the EPPC (Emergency Preparedness Planning Council) which has elected officials. He also advised that he thought that Mike Eastland held an annual city managers/county judges meeting.

Charles Cinquemani asked if there were existing models in the State of Texas that exist today. Jim Barron advised that there were not in Texas, but there were boards and authorities they could examine.

CJ Holt discussed the CASM (Communications Assett Survey and Mapping) Program and that information must be entered completely by December 2009. More Information will follow.

A Motion was made by Ron Goldsmith, seconded by Lynn Chaffin, that the Governance Committee adjourn.