



Mark Gordon
Governor
K. Luke Reiner
Director

Wyoming Department Of Transportation

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes



Mark Harshman
Chairman
Telephone No.:
(307) 777-4015

I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met in the conference room of the Casper Police Department Dispatch Center in Casper on Wednesday, August 10, 2022. Chairman Mark Harshman presided, calling the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Paul Bertoglio, Commissioner	Monte McClain, Commissioner
Matt Carr, Commissioner	Dwane Pacheco, Commissioner
Mike Choma, Commissioner	Cindi Shank, Commissioner
Doug Frank, Commissioner	Luke Reiner, Ex Officio Member
Phillip Franklin, Commissioner	

Commissioners Forrest Williams, Jonathan Downing, and Owen St. Clair were absent.

III. Introductions

The following Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) staff and guests participated in the meeting:

Nathan Smolinski, Emergency Communications Manager	Mike Kahler, Senior Assistant Attorney General
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary
Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator	Garrett Doyle, FirstNet Market Manager
Richard Grant, Converse County Rural Fire Department	

Susan Elliott assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. Agenda Adjustments

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Pacheco, seconded by Commissioner Franklin, and unanimously carried to approve the May 11, 2022, business meeting and education session minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Frank, seconded by Commissioner Bertoglio, and unanimously carried to approve the application from Niobrara County Public Health.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Director Reiner presented his update.

Federal Updates

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan

The director reported that the NEVI plan has been submitted to the federal government. WYDOT requested a number of waivers in the plan, including on the requirements mandating stations every 50 miles and no more than one mile from the highway. The director will update the commission when he knows more.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

When the IIJA was passed in November 2021, it included the Build America, Buy America Act, which contained domestic preference requirements for IIJA-funded projects. The issue is that most American-made/produced materials that agencies are required to buy are not available. This could negatively impact project timelines.

Another issue for WYDOT is the rules proposed by the federal government on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector is a large producer of those emissions. However, most of Wyoming's transportation-related emissions come from truck and tourist traffic passing through the state, so WYDOT is limited in its ability to reduce emissions. While WYDOT tries to find alternate ways to meet these new standards, the agency is advocating for leniency in the new rules.

General Department Updates

Employee Compensation

The pay raise was applied to July paychecks. While it is a step in the right direction, the director is aware that more work is needed on employee compensation. Director Reiner expressed his hope that discussions continue with the Governor's office and the legislature on future phases in a tiered system.

State wages are not competitive in much of the state, and it is impacting the department's ability to recruit and retain workers. It is particularly difficult to recruit snow plow drivers at the current wages. Less snow plow drivers could impact winter road maintenance.

Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Vacancy

Director Reiner thanked Mr. Smolinski for his willingness to serve as the interim CTO while the department works to fill the position. If any commissioners are interested in being on the selection committee, please let Chairman Harshman know. The director

would like at least one commissioner to serve on the committee and to take part in the interview process.

Gas and Diesel Price Working Group

Director Reiner is serving on the Governor's Gas and Diesel Price Working Group, which aims to increase crude oil supplies and decrease prices. He feels that the main focus going forward will be on supply, rather than demand, since low supplies drive up prices.

Yellowstone National Park (YNP) Flooding

Director Reiner toured YNP last week with Malcolm Long, the director of the Montana Department of Transportation, and Cam Sholly, YNP superintendent, to oversee the ongoing recovery work, both in the park and in southwest Montana. He also spoke about the successful efforts of WYDOT District 5 employees to keep WY 296 open. Operators cleared debris fields near bridges and were prepared to take other measures to save bridges on WY 296.

Superintendent Sholly is optimistic about completing repairs and opening both the north and northeast park entrances by October 15, 2022. In order to assist with these efforts, WYDOT has agreed to assist with any necessary snow removal until October 15. This will ensure that residents of Cooke City, Montana have viable routes in and out of the town.

Commissioner Departure

The director recognized Commissioner Doug Frank on his last meeting during his service to the PSCC. He thanked Commissioner Frank for his years of service and his commitment to and advocacy for the WyoLink system.

2. Technology Division's Report

Mr. Smolinski and Ms. Binning presented a combined update.

General Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that the Transportation Information System (TIS) remains one of his major concerns. Responses to the request for proposals (RFP) are under review. Presentations will occur in September and October, with an anticipated award on October 17, 2022. Cybersecurity is another main concern for the division.

Additionally, the division is also concerned with decreased staffing levels. Mr. Smolinski shared that the division is currently down 12 employees, many of which are considered critical. Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Smolinski shared that he did feel some of the current vacancies are due to non-competitive compensation levels.

Next Generation 911 (NG911) Updates

Ms. Binning reported that the 14th 911 Annual Fee Report for 2021 was submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The report contains data submitted by each community's public safety answering point (PSAP). Ms. Binning reported that for the first time, the program had 100 percent compliance from the PSAPs statewide.

Data in the report includes: the number of PSAPs in Wyoming (31 primary PSAPs, 2 secondary PSAPs); total PSAP employment numbers (362); and total calls for service from landlines, wireless devices, and voice-over-internet-protocol calls (331,057 calls). There were also 682 texts to 911 in 2021.

Ms. Binning shared that the report makes clear the cost of 911 is increasing. The total cost to provide 911 service in Wyoming in 2021 was \$10,394,617.73. Thirty-one percent of that total was covered by local communities

Federal Legislative Update

Mr. Smolinski reported that on July 13, 2022, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce passed the Spectrum Innovation Act of 2022. This act will fund several key programs including FirstNet and NG911. The bill also establishes the Public Safety and Secure Networks Fund, which will direct a portion of spectrum auction proceeds to equipment reimbursement programs/efforts.

In order to position the state well for potential funding, Ms. Binning and Mr. Smolinski reached out to the five working groups who helped develop the NG911 plan. Two work groups in particular, technology and GIS, will help structure Wyoming's funding priorities.

Draft PSCC Newsletter

Mr. Smolinski presented the commission with a rough draft of a potential "newsletter" that will be published in WYDOT's *Interchange*. The topics in the report will cover some of the high-level items from each PSCC meeting. The PSCC report will appear quarterly.

Chairman Harshman requested that the newsletter be formatted in such a way that it could be easily shared by each commissioner with other interested parties. Mr. Smolinski assured him that would be possible.

3. Emergency Communications Program Manager's Report

Mr. Smolinski provided his update. The update also included information presented by Mr. Gardiner regarding WyoLink operations.

Mr. Smolinski shared that during Governor Gordon's recent visit to WYDOT, the governor was able to spend a few minutes touring the Emergency Communications and WyoLink offices. The team was able to educate the Governor on the WyoLink system and demonstrate its operation to him.

Commissioner Choma questioned if a similar tour might not be beneficial for legislators or other elected officials. Commissioner Frank also inquired how up-to-date the Transportation Commission is on WyoLink and its operations. Director Reiner shared that the commission receives updates on WyoLink at their monthly meetings and, overall, have been supportive of the system.

16 Tower Build-Out Report

Mr. Smolinski reported on recent activity at several of the WyoLink sites. The Rock Springs-Blairtown site is online as previously reported and has significantly improved coverage in the area. The new tower at Aspen Mountain has been completed to provide microwave services to the 14 Mile Hill site.

Construction resumed at the Ten Sleep-Meadowlark site at the end of July and is ongoing. This site has been impacted by the supply chain crisis; there are issues obtaining the needed shelter structure and generator. Construction is underway at the Northern Goshen County site. Mr. Smolinski expects it to be ready for turn-up in September or October.

Both WYDOT and the city of Newcastle have signed the lease for the Newcastle site. Mr. Smolinski is currently working on getting Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds transferred to the project. Once completed, construction will be scheduled, and Mr. Smolinski hopes that can occur before the end of summer. The site is a collocate with Union Wireless, so construction will not take as long as other sites.

Construction is also underway at Evanston, and the site turn-up is estimated for September or October. WYDOT and Sublette County have come to an agreement on a lease for the Bondurant site. It is currently at the Attorney General's office to be reviewed and signed

Following a question from Commissioner Pacheco, Mr. Smolinski shared that he is estimating a completion date of September or October for the Newcastle site. Following a question from Commissioner Shank, Mr. Smolinski shared that in ideal conditions, site construction typically takes three to four months to complete.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner reported that this is a busy time for the WyoLink technicians. Summer is a good time to climb towers and conduct inspections, perform preventative maintenance, and complete similar tasks.

Mr. Gardiner informed the commission that he is now in charge of the microwave group. This will streamline processes and improve efficiency between programs.

Mr. Gardiner discussed WyoLink usage data. The number of push-to-talks and total airtime is a bit higher than the previous quarter, but that is typical for the season. The top 20 talkgroups remained consistent with the previous quarter.

WyoLink System Upgrades

Mr. Gardiner reported that the first phase of the GTR radio upgrades was completed on July 27, 2022. Nineteen sites were upgraded with new GTR radios and DC battery backup systems. There are still 47 sites that need to be upgraded. The Casper Port of Entry added an extra repeater, increasing their total channels from five to six.

Mr. Gardiner and his team have set up service aggregation routers (SAR) as part of the microwave backhaul system. These devices will allow WYDOT to convert older technology to Ethernet. The first phase of this conversion was completed last year, which included 10 sites between Cheyenne and Casper. The current phase will upgrade the routers at 20 sites in northern Wyoming. A future, and final, phase will upgrade the remaining sites and include microwave installation.

The SARs allow for a self-healing environment in the system—meaning if one router is down, the signal can be automatically rerouted. This reroute would take seconds, and system users would not notice the switch.

Smart and Critical Connect

Mr. Gardiner reported that SmartConnect has been operating since April. SmartConnect will allow WyoLink radios enabled with wireless connectivity to switch between broadband and radio system coverage. The Cheyenne Police Department has 100 of the new APX series radios and have found them to be a very useful tool, especially when going into schools.

Critical Connect allows mobile/cellular devices that are not a part of the WyoLink system to connect to land mobile radio (LMR) networks, such as WyoLink. It would also allow WyoLink subscribers to communicate with other emergency communications networks in neighboring states. A test path was successfully created last week, but it is a complex interface. It will take time to revise, coordinate, and properly manage this system. Mr. Gardiner feels that it will be another useful tool for Wyoming's emergency communications network.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that work continues on the Wyoming Field Operating Guide and the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans. Midway through work with counties and other stakeholders on these documents, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) contacted WYDOT to request an update to the Communication Annex. WYDOT has coordinated with other state and local agencies and entities to assist with this update.

WYDOT/ARPA Funds for Local Agencies

Mr. Smolinski shared a copy of a letter that was sent to local partners in late June announcing an application period for the \$4.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds available for local governments to obtain equipment compatible with the WyoLink statewide public safety interoperable radio communications system. Mr. Smolinski reported that by the time the application window closed on July 29th, the department had received about 115 applications totaling about \$12 million in requests. The Communication sub-committee for the Senior Advisory Committee, which assists with the Homeland Security Grant awards, will be the reviewing body for these applications.

Once awards are announced in mid-September, the awards will be sent over to Wyoming's State Budget Office for a formal approval process.

FirstNet Updates

AT&T FirstNet Presentation

Mr. Smolinski introduced FirstNet Market Manager Garret Doyle to present an overview of the FirstNet program to the commission.

Mr. Doyle provided the program history, starting with its inception after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. FirstNet is a private-public partnership to develop and oversee a dedicated nationwide network for first responders. AT&T was awarded the contract to build and maintain the FirstNet network in March 2017. As of March 2022, over 19,500 agencies are on FirstNet, including several Wyoming entities.

FirstNet was started with a one-time, \$6.5 billion allocation from Congress, with the requirement that the program be self-funded from that point on. Participating agencies and entities pay service fees for FirstNet. As the selected partner to build and operate the network, AT&T has made over a \$200 billion investment in the program. The company was able to leverage existing infrastructure to build the network, which allowed for a significant cost-savings and accelerated buildout.

FirstNet is an alternate cellular provider for public safety agencies and entities. Unlike a traditional cellular network, which provides broad coverage for broad access, FirstNet provides prioritized access for public safety entities. FirstNet also prides itself on providing a safe, secure, fast, and affordable network to its subscribers.

Following a question from Commissioner Shank, Mr. Doyle shared that FirstNet had over 100 deployables—dedicated mobile network assets—across the US that are available to member agencies, at no additional cost, for emergent events. The units can be deployed within 14 hours as emergencies occur, or the units may be requested in advance of major events.

FirstNet is accessible through many device types including land mobile radios, 370 FirstNet ready devices, and 190 applications. FirstNet utilizes Band 14, which is the 20 MHz of spectrum in the 700 MHz frequency band set aside for emergency communications for its first responder network communications.

Groups eligible to subscribe to FirstNet include fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, PSAPs, emergency management agencies, utilities, and transportation. Authorized devices can be provided either by subscribing agencies or by individual subscribers.

There are over 3.7 million FirstNet connected devices nationwide. Mr. Doyle shared some general information on Wyoming FirstNet subscribers, but as it is proprietary information, he provided it visually as information only. Meeting attendees were invited to contact Mr. Doyle or any of his team members with more detailed questions. He also

shared Wyoming coverage maps showing significantly improved Band 14 coverage since 2018. Mountainous areas in the state represent some of the main coverage gaps that AT&T is currently working to fill.

FirstNet made commitments to Wyoming's Governor when the state opted in to the network to build 13 additional sites in remote locations. Mr. Doyle shared that 11 of those 13 agreed upon sites have been built in areas such as Teton County, YNP, and central Wyoming. Additional sites will be built in Campbell County and Hoback Junction by March 2023. Other priority build areas for FirstNet, outside of this agreement, include Elk Mountain, WY 287 between Rawlins and Dubois, the I-80 corridor, and Wheatland.

Following a question from Commissioner Frank, Mr. Doyle shared that more sites have been built to accommodate the FirstNet network than would have been commercially viable from a strictly business sense. He felt that was the benefit of the public-private partnership on the network.

Mr. Doyle also shared information on units available to purchase called FirstNet Band 14 Cell-on-Wheels (COW). The COWs are an easy-to-use, portable device that entities can purchase and use as need arises.

VII. Converse County Rural Fire Delegation

Richard Grant, vice-chairman of the Converse County Board of County Commissioners and zone warden for the Converse County Rural Fire Department, shared some of the challenges that rural fire departments face during emergency events. Commissioner Grant reported that during fires, he carries two radios in his vehicle: one is programmed to talk to his fire department and the other is a WyoLink radio. He uses two radio because the WyoLink radio is less user-friendly in that it is harder to switch between channels.

There are also coverage issues, especially in the southern part of Converse County, with WyoLink. Commissioner Grant shared that the fire department radios utilize Bureau of Land Management (BLM) channels as BLM has established a series of radio repeaters on the tops of several hills and mountains in the area. He suggested that another WyoLink tower in southern Converse County would improve coverage and make WyoLink more user-friendly for the fire department.

Commissioner Frank shared his thoughts that this is a larger issue for more fire departments and agencies statewide. Following a question from Commissioner Frank, Mr. Smolinski shared that WYDOT is open to potential partnerships and colocates with telecommunications agencies/firms and local towns and counties. Mr. Doyle shared that FirstNet is open to colocates, especially ones that align with priority build locations.

Commissioner Choma suggested that some of the WyoLink training modules could be particularly helpful for groups like the Converse County Rural Fire Department that only use WyoLink occasionally. He stressed the importance of online access to the training.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Carr shared a recent experience on Teton Pass that showed the benefit of WyoLink. During a recent incident, where a motorcyclist left the roadway and went over a steep embankment, the Teton County Sheriff's Department, Teton County Search and Rescue, and other Wyoming and Idaho entities were able to use WyoLink to successfully communicate and coordinate efforts to respond to the incident. Unfortunately, the accident did result in a fatality, but law enforcement and emergency services were able to successfully recover the individual with no additional injuries to personnel.

IX. Recognition of Commissioner Doug Frank

Chairman Harshman recognized and thanked Commissioner Doug Frank for his many years of service to the PSCC. His term ended at the end of June. Commissioner Frank shared his appreciation for all of the work that has been done to expand and improve the WyoLink system. He further shared that he felt the system was in good hands and will only continue to improve.

Chairman Harshman and Mr. Smolinski presented Commissioner Frank with a framed Wyoming photograph as a token of appreciation for his service and recognition of his commitment to WyoLink and emergency communications.

X. Public Comment/Announcements

There was no public comment.

XI. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Frank, seconded by Commissioner Bertoglio, and unanimously carried to adjourn the August 10, 2022, business meeting at 11:29 a.m.