



Mark Gordon
Governor
K. Luke Reiner
Director

Wyoming Department Of Transportation

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes



Mark Harshman
Chairman
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I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met in the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) headquarters auditorium in Cheyenne on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. Chairman Mark Harshman presided, calling the meeting to order at 1:30 P.M.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Dwane Pacheco, Commissioner	Owen St. Clair, Commissioner
Forrest Williams, Commissioner	Cindi Shank, Commissioner
Jonathan Downing, Commissioner	Monte McClain, Commissioner
Matt Carr, Commissioner	Luke Reiner, Ex Officio Member
Phillip Franklin, Commissioner	

Commissioners Doug Frank, Mike Choma, Kebin Haller, and Paul Bertoglio were absent.

III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Troy Babbitt, WYDOT Chief Technology Officer	Nathan Smolinski, WYDOT Emergency Communications Manager
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Susan Elliott, WYDOT Executive Assistant
Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator	Mike Kahler, Senior Assistant Attorney General
Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary (via Zoom)	

IV. Agenda Adjustments

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to approve the February 9, 2022, business meeting and education session minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Downing, seconded by Commissioner Williams, and unanimously carried to approve the application from Rocky Mountain Communication Systems.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Director Reiner presented his update. He began his update by welcoming the four new commissioners who were present at the meeting.

General WYDOT Update

The director shared that WYDOT is currently transitioning from snow removal/maintenance to construction season. WYDOT will have somewhere between 90 and 100 construction projects this summer. Around 45 of those projects are in the beginning stages.

Supply chain issues are impacting WYDOT operations. The department has extended contracts for contractors struggling to complete projects on time due to materials shortages and delays. WYDOT contracts offer cost escalation clauses for fuel, asphalt binders, and structural steel to help combat inflation, and the clauses are currently in effect for many contracts.

Wildlife Issues

Wildlife Crossing Groundbreaking

The director attended a groundbreaking event yesterday for a new wildlife crossing near Big Piney. The crossing will consist of 18 miles of fencing and nine underpasses to support deer and pronghorn migration. WYDOT has been working closely with Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust to coordinate efforts and funding—not only for this project, but others as well.

Federal Highway Administration Award

WYDOT has been awarded the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) 2022 Environmental Excellence Award for a bridge project on Wyoming Highway 22 south of Jackson. FHWA recognized the project for its extensive stakeholder and community engagement, inclusion of environmental considerations, and accommodation of wildlife and pedestrians.

Federal Updates

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

Notices of funding opportunities continue to be published for IIJA discretionary grants, but there is not yet guidance available for all of the grants.

Governor Gordon has set up an IIJA taskforce, led by Rob Creager, to coordinate statewide efforts and leverage all available funding. The taskforce will also request a temporary waiver to the IIJA's Buy America requirement, because most construction materials and products are not manufactured in the United States.

Electric Vehicles

Wyoming will receive about \$25 million in IJJA funding over the next five years to expand electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. WYDOT has developed the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan to provide a roadmap for spending Wyoming's allocation(s) in a strategic, systematic way. Director Reiner shared that the project purpose is to increase infrastructure that supports the traveling public, no matter their vehicle choice.

Joint Transportation Committee (JTC)

Director Reiner and other members of WYDOT staff met with the JTC on May 3 and 4, in Casper. The main message to the committee was to reiterate WYDOT's appreciation to the Governor and legislators for the pay raises approved during the last session. Pay has been an important factor in employee satisfaction, and the director hopes that these increases will aid in recruitment and retention.

Issues Potentially Necessitating Legislative Action

WYDOT maintains a non-consensual tow list of tow truck companies who can help clear the roads when vehicles are blocking lanes and impeding travel. A significant issue, which has occurred more frequently over the last year, is that some of these companies are charging egregious amounts for their services. This reflects poorly on WYDOT and the state. Legislation may be needed to impose caps on what companies are allowed to charge for non-consensual tows.

Director Reiner enumerated other potential legislation that was discussed at the JTC meeting including moving expense reimbursement for employees, lifetime registrations for light trailers, and possible penalties for drivers who violate road closures.

2. Chief Technology Officer's Report

Troy Babbitt presented his update.

NG911 Updates

Mr. Babbitt reminded commissioners that a copy of the current state 911 plan was provided in the meeting packet, and he encouraged commissioners to review it. The plan can be adjusted as needed, but it allows Wyoming to pursue grant opportunities as they become available.

Legislative Updates

Federal

Mr. Babbitt reported that the annual report on 911 fee collection and distribution is due to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) by June 30, 2022. This report is also shared with the governor's office. He noted that a copy of last year's report and survey questions were provided in the packet.

State

Senate Enrolled Act 0038, originally Senate File 0041, expanded the duties of the commission to include administrative and oversight responsibilities on NG911

development, implementation, and operation. The act increased the size of the commission from 11 to 13 members and included representation from the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security (WOHS) and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials or the National Emergency Number Association. To allay local concerns, Mr. Babbitt stated that the sole purpose of this bill is to improve the 911 system statewide.

House Bill 0012 would have appropriated funding for public safety communications. While the bill was never introduced for consideration, WYDOT did receive \$35 million in American Rescue Act (ARPA) funds to make necessary upgrades and system improvements. Around \$4.5 million of these funds will be made available to local governments to purchase radios. Following a process established by WOHS, WYDOT will form a committee to review grants and award funds based on demonstrated financial need. Other funds from the \$35 million will be used to purchase the remaining Quantar radios and begin upgrading the microwave backhaul.

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 informed the commission that within two weeks his department will be down by seven employees.

16-Tower Buildout Report

Mr. Smolinski reported that construction season began for WyoLink sites. The Buffalo, Orin Junction, Wright, Jackson, Greybull, Lusk, Alcova, Alva, and Rock Springs-Blair Town sites are all online and operating as expected. WYDOT has received reports of coverage improvements and increased usership. Construction at the Rock Springs-14 Mile site is complete, but the site remains dark.

Mr. Smolinski presented a photographic slideshow to the commission that illustrated progress or issues at the Aspen Mountain site. The tower is currently at 200 percent capacity, so a new tower is under construction. Photographs detailed progress on the new tower.

Following a request from Commissioner Pacheco, Mr. Smolinski provided information on how the Aspen Mountain and 14 Mile sites cooperate. The two sites are roughly five to six miles apart, and Aspen Mountain will feed microwave transmissions to the 14 Mile site.

Construction at the Meadowlark site will not resume until June or July as the area is still buried under snowpack. A crew is scheduled to begin construction at the northern Goshen County site on Monday, May 15, 2022.

Mr. Smolinski reported that progress has been made on the lease for the Newcastle site, and he expects to hear back from the city soon so that it can be finalized. Construction

was delayed at the Evanston site by a late spring snowstorm and has been postponed until late May or early June.

WYDOT signed a lease with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the North Big Horn County site on Little Sheep Mountain. Construction is projected to begin in early June. BLM has also approved construction for the Bondurant/Kismet site. WYDOT is awaiting Sublette County's signature on the lease before construction begins.

Following a question from Commissioner Downing, Mr. Smolinski confirmed that, like other WYDOT departments, Emergency Communications and the WyoLink office are being impacted by supply chain issues. Some WyoLink equipment was pre-ordered, so most of the items needed have been designated and set aside for WyoLink.

Other Project Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that the project to upgrade base station repeaters is progressing well. The scope of work for the project covers 365 radios across all of the WyoLink sites, and the target completion date is fall 2023.

WYDOT has received permission to stand up two new tower sites: one in northern Sheridan County and one near Saratoga. The WyoLink team will meet with stakeholders to determine the most advantageous location for the Saratoga site. A similar meeting was held last week in Sheridan County, and the stakeholders selected a site near the Montana border, which will be known as Kerns. These tower sites will be built using ARPA funds.

Over 90 sites will be involved in the microwave upgrade made possible by the ARPA allocation. Each one of the WyoLink sites are connected via a microwave link, and the majority will be replaced. The ARPA funds are not enough to cover the whole project, so critical links will be replaced first. Other project phases will be completed as funding allows.

WYDOT will control the \$4.5 million in ARPA funds made available to counties, municipalities, and other entities to purchase WyoLink compatible equipment. Applications will be sent out in early June and will be vetted with WOHS's State Homeland Security Program, Senior Advisory Committee. Awards will then be made based upon the nature of the request. WYDOT will purchase the equipment using the price estimates guaranteed in WYDOT's former purchasing contract with Motorola.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner presented information on WyoLink usage data. The top 20 WyoLink talkgroups—measured by total airtime—changed little from last quarter and are largely comprised of law enforcement and emergency services. The system statistics on numbers of push-to-talks and total airtime minutes from the second quarter were also fairly consistent with first quarter numbers.

WyoLink System Upgrades

Mr. Gardiner reported that 10 sites have been upgraded with GTR radios and DC battery backup systems. Eight remaining sites will be upgraded in this round, with three of the eight sites scheduled to be updated within the next month.

Smart and Critical Connect

Mr. Gardiner updated the commission on new WyoLink features including Smart- and Critical Connect. SmartConnect is a feature that allows Motorola radios to automatically switch between broadband and radio system coverage to ensure mission-critical communication. Mr. Gardiner showed examples of radios with this feature including the APX Next and APX 8000 models. Both of these models are currently used on the WyoLink system.

The WyoLink office is looking to add Critical Connect capability to the system in the next six to eight weeks. Critical Connect allows mobile/cellular users to connect to land mobile radios (LMR) networks, like WyoLink, with a smartphone instead of a two-way radio. Mr. Gardiner and his team will control Critical Connect users' access to the WyoLink network. This feature will more than likely replace the inter-RF subsystem interface (ISSI) feature that some entities have previously used to connect to WyoLink.

Following a question on SmartConnect, Kevin Parker with Motorola Solutions shared that currently up to 20 hotspots can be programmed into a radio for greater interoperable communications. Motorola's goal is to increase that number to 100 for all 6000 and 8000 model radios. He further explained that the radios, when programmed correctly, can automatically switch between cellular and broadband networks when radio network coverage is lost.

WyoLink Site Map

Mr. Smolinski shared the WyoLink Local Towers and Locations Site Map with the commission, which details all new, existing, and fully operational sites. The map also identifies PCE, core, 800MHz locally-owned, and microwave-only sites. He also shared a draft version of a map that, when completed, will provide WyoLink technicians with turn-by-turn directions to each tower site.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that WYDOT is working with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) to update the tactical interoperable communications plan (TCIP) and the Wyoming Field Operators Guide. The guide is given to operators who have access to WyoLink or other emergency communications systems. The group will be meeting with each Wyoming county and other partners to gather input on updates.

Additionally, WYDOT and CISA have worked on a broadband technical assistance program with a focus on LMR and LTE convergence to be launched in June 2022.

Mr. Smolinski will meet with statewide interoperable communication coordinators in June and July to discuss federal practices that can be replicated in Wyoming.

FirstNet Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that the buildout for FirstNet has accelerated. Network updates from AT&T were not as detailed as Mr. Smolinski would have liked, but he was able to discover that all but two Wyoming counties (Sublette and Uinta) have some form of representation or participation in FirstNet. Coverage is lacking in those two counties, but buildouts are increasing.

Critical Connect is a mobile application that allows users to connect to WyoLink talkgroups, which are mirrored from and mapped to the WyoLink core. This will make interoperable communication between subscribers using different types of devices (mobile phones and radios) possible through WyoLink.

Critical Connect will provide Wyoming with “complementary coverage.” Cellular coverage could fill a need in areas where WyoLink coverage is lacking. It could also expand usership for agencies and organizations that cannot afford radios since it is a mobile application that can be downloaded on most mobile phones. While two-way radios are still the primary medium for connecting to WyoLink, Critical Connect will be another tool available to subscribers.

VII. Retirements

Mr. Babbitt announced that Wyoming Highway Patrol Colonel Kebin Haller, who serves as WYDOT’s representative on the PSCC, will retire June 3, 2022. Mr. Babbitt shared that he will also retire on July 29, 2022. Chairman Harshman wished both gentlemen well and thanked them for their service. Mr. Babbitt thanked the commission for their support through the years. He also recognized all of the improvements to the WyoLink system and statewide interoperable communications that have resulted from the hard work and dedication of both WYDOT staff and the commission.

Commissioner Pacheco announced that May 11th was his last day as the Police Chief of the Rock Springs Police Department after 31 years of service. He will continue as the PSCC representative for the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police.

VIII. Public Comment/Announcements

There was no public comment.

IX. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and unanimously carried to adjourn the May 11, 2022, business meeting at 2:43 p.m.