

Alabama changes RFP deadline for public-safety LTE network to Jan. 31

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

January 3, 2017

Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) officials last week decided that vendors wanting to build a statewide public-safety [LTE](#) radio access network (RAN) must submit proposals by Jan. 31, as opposed to the previous plan of waiting until after

[FirstNet](#)

announces the contractor for its nationwide public-safety broadband network.

ALEA had established a request-for-proposals (RFP) deadline that would be 15 days after FirstNet made its nationwide contractor announcement, but that strategy was reconsidered after legal documents noted that the contractor award would not be made until at least March 1. Those legal documents are part of Rivada Mercury's litigation protesting its exclusion from the "competitive range" of the nationwide procurement, leaving the AT&T bidding team as the only entity remaining in the "competitive range," according to multiple sources.

"FirstNet has delayed the announcement of their nationwide partner indefinitely, based on a legal challenge to the partner selection process," according to an ALEA news release. "The indefinite delay is likely to push FirstNet's partner announcement well into the spring of 2017.

"FirstNet has, however, consistently indicated that they are not slowing their efforts to prepare for the eventual announcement and preparation of state plans. In fact, they have indicated that they plan to have the state-plan portal operational within 90 days of the announcement, and multiple key officials have made public statements that they are moving forward with their preparations for deployment of the FirstNet network as soon as the legal challenge is resolved."

This possibility that FirstNet could compress the timeframe between the nationwide contractor award and the release of final state plans—a period that could last six months, based on the target timeline outlined in the FirstNet RFP—was a major consideration in ALEA's decision to establish a Jan. 31 proposal deadline, according to the news release.

"Based on FirstNet's continued diligence towards providing the 56 states and territories with a

viable state plan as soon as 90 days after the announcement of its nationwide partner, ALEA has determined that it is in the state's best interest to establish a final deadline for Alabama's PSB-RAN [public-safety broadband RAN]," the new release states. "This will allow the state to properly review RFP proposals prior to delivery of the state's FirstNet draft state plan."

Although ALEA will conduct the RFP this month to build the RAN portion of a statewide public-safety LTE network, the winner of the procurement will not be guaranteed a contract to do any work. ALEA only would award a contract if Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley reviews the FirstNet deployment proposal for the state and completes all of the steps associated with the rigorous "opt-out" process.

Alabama initially chose to delay the RFP deadline after multiple potential bidders indicated that they would not participate unless proposals were due after the [FirstNet](#) nationwide contractor was named. Rivada Networks expressed interest in the Alabama RFP after stating late last year that it would not bid on state RFPs until FirstNet made its nationwide contractor announcement.

"We lifted our moratorium after they [FirstNet] delayed it indefinitely," Rivada Networks spokesman Brian Carney said during an interview with [IWCE's Urgent Communications](#). "They missed their deadline and they downselected against us, so we no longer feel bound by our pledge not to bid on states. That held true while we were still in the competition.

"They kicked us out, at least for the moment. Even though we're hopeful of getting back in, we owe it to our employees and our shareholders to pursue every opportunity and not just take it for granted that we'll get back in."

Alabama is one of two states with an ongoing RFP seeking a potential vendor to build a statewide public-safety RAN in preparation for the "opt-out" decision that is anticipated later this year. Arizona has delayed the due date for its RFP multiple times, with the current [proposal deadline being March 30](#)

[Link to Article](#)

[Link to Urgent Communications News Articles](#)