

Motorola Solutions wins \$175 LA-RICS' contract while FirstNet rejigs contractor lineup

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Motorola Solutions will develop the LTE-based public-safety broadband network for Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communication System Authority (LA-RICS), which was the first jurisdiction to approve a 700 MHz spectrum-lease pact with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet).

LA-RICS' contract with Motorola will be worth \$175 million if all options are exercised. It covers a five-phase project in which the vendor will design, construct, implement and maintain the authority's Band 14, 700 MHz network.

LA-RICS envisions that its 4,000-square-mile, LTE network will eventually provide mission-critical data to some 34,000 law enforcement, fire service and health service professionals and more than 80 public safety agencies.

The planned network will include an evolved packet core (EPC) with 231 eNodeB sites, a backhaul network and redundant network operation centers. Motorola is also providing 1,000 VML 700 LTE vehicle modems for initial testing. The modems will enable nationwide data roaming across Verizon Wireless' ([NYSE:VZ](#)) LTE Band 13 and CDMA EVDO networks.

LA-RICS was one of seven Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) public-safety entities that received a total of \$380 million in federal grant funding to build out public-safety LTE networks using 10 MHz of 700 MHz spectrum leased from the Public Safety Spectrum Trust (PSST). The trust's spectrum was subsequently merged with FirstNet's 700 MHz spectrum, requiring jurisdictions wanting to use that spectrum to lease it from FirstNet with an eye toward making their deployments compatible with the nationwide public-safety broadband network (NPSBN) FirstNet is charged with building.

Only four of the seven BTOP grantees signed spectrum-lease pacts with FirstNet. LA-RICS confirmed it is primarily funding its LTE network with its BTOP monies.

Motorola is the primary vendor for a 700 MHz public-safety LTE network in Harris County, Texas, which is operating under special temporary authority (STA) from the FCC. FirstNet's board is slated to address whether to further extend spectrum-lease negotiations with Harris County during the board's March 11 meeting at New York City Police headquarters.

Meanwhile, changes are afoot regarding some FirstNet contractor positions. Wireless industry consultant Andrew Seybold announced in an email that he recently lost his contractor position with FirstNet because the Department of Commerce and National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which oversee FirstNet, initiated a new process for choosing and compensating contractors.

Urgent Communications reported Seybold's announcement and also quoted a statement from FirstNet spokesman Corey Ray, which indicated that the recent contractor changes were made on behalf of FirstNet. "FirstNet management was in complete control of its own procurement action with support of its contracting office," he said. "NTIA had no role in the procurement or decision-making process for these contracts."

The changes come at an interesting time, given allegations of potential procurement improprieties and perceived conflicts of interest due to some FirstNet board members' alleged relationships with certain mobile operators. Though voiced privately by others, the allegations were highlighted last April by FirstNet board member Paul Fitzgerald, sheriff of Story County, Iowa, during a public meeting of the board.

Emails related to Fitzgerald's allegations generated a court battle between Story County, which wants his FirstNet-related emails released to media and the public, and the federal government, which wants them blocked.

In a hearing last Wednesday at the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, Story County Attorney Stephen Holmes asked Judge James Gritzner to dismiss legal motions prohibiting the county from releasing Fitzgerald's emails, which the county contends it is legally required to release, reported the *Des Moines Register*.

The federal government has asked Gritzner to issue a summary judgment ending the case, contending the emails impact national security and are therefore exempt from public disclosure laws.

Thought FirstNet's board actions were deemed legal in an initial report issued by an internal review committee, FirstNet Chairman Sam Ginn subsequently called upon the Commerce Department's Office of Inspector General to finish investigating Fitzgerald's ethics claims. OIG has a policy of neither confirming nor denying ongoing investigations.

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