

**EWA chief says spectrum speculators should avoid 900 MHz LMR frequencies being considered for LTE**

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

April 23, 2014

Speculators trying to secure 900 MHz frequencies in hopes of a big payday if a possible transition from LMR to [LTE](#) technologies becomes reality should consider other strategies, because massive spectrum purchases are not part of the current proposal, according to [Enterprise Wireless Alliance](#) (EWA) President and CEO Mark Crosby.

Crosby said he has no knowledge of any application for a license transfer within the 5x5 MHz LMR band at 900 MHz that is being targeted for a potential transition to a 3x3 MHz swath to support LTE operations, with the remaining frequencies continuing to be used for business-industrial LMR systems. However, there have been industry rumblings of such speculative activity in the 900 MHz band, he said.

These rumors may be fueled by the fact that Morgan O'Brien has been involved in the discussion to transition some 900 MHz spectrum from LMR use to LTE operations. In the 1990s, O'Brien spearheaded the famous purchase of 800 MHz frequencies that provided the spectral foundation for Nextel Communications, the wireless carrier that O'Brien cofounded.

While O'Brien—who last year [floated the notion of transitioning LMR spectrum for LTE use](#)—has his name linked to the 900 MHz talks, speculators looking for a repeat of the Nextel Communications scenario of spectrum buyouts likely will be disappointed, Crosby said.

“This is not the same as what happened 20 years ago at 800 MHz,” Crosby said during an interview with [IWCE](#)’s *Urgent Communications*. “It’s yet to be determined, but the plan that we’re thinking about now is that people—if they have a private, internal system—will be relocated so that they maintain the operations of that private, internal system. At this point in time, I don’t know of any plans in which we’re going to be buying people out.

“So, it’s not the same as the 800 MHz development that Nextel pursued. It’s different.”

In February, EWA filed a joint letter with the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the [Utilities Telecom Council](#) (UTC) to the [FCC](#) that [outlined their proposal to create a “900 MHz Private Land Mobile Broadband” initiative](#) and requested a six-month freeze on licenses to new players in the affected band.

Under the proposal, the six-month time period would allow “interested organization and licensees” to develop a spectrum plan proposal that would transform the 5x5 MHz of 900 MHz Industrial/Business (I/B) spectrum into a 2x2 MHz band for existing LMR systems and a 3x3 MHz swath to support private [LTE](#) networks.

In March, [FCC officials discussed the proposal](#) with representatives from [EWA](#), API, [UTC](#), Sprint—the nationwide wireless carrier that owns most of the affected spectrum in the 900 MHz band—and O’Brien, who last fall proposed the notion of transforming narrowband spectrum into frequencies that would support broadband LTE.

No formal action by the [FCC](#) followed that meeting, but the 900 MHz stakeholders are working to develop a proposal that can be considered by the regulatory agency, Crosby said.

“We’re still working out details,” he said. “There’s business progress being made, and the next substantive step is the preparation for filing a petition for rulemaking. We don’t have the details yet to prepare that, but that’s the next play.

“When that will happen, I’m not quite sure. There are still some things that we’re working out from an administrative and business standpoint.”

Crosby said the earliest timeframe for filing a petition with the FCC on the proposal probably would be in the summer.

[Link to Article](#)

[Link to Urgent Communications News Articles](#)