

LA-RICS LTE project shrinks as cities opt out, refuse to approve sites

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With its public-safety [LTE](#) system scheduled for completion in six months, the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System Authority (LA-RICS) has seen the scope of the deployment shrink as some member cities have opted out of the project or refused to approve sites, according to LA-RICS Executive Director Patrick Mallon.

“We started out with 232 sites [for the public-safety LTE network], and we’ve dropped about 39, so far,” Mallon said Wednesday during an interview with [IWCE](#)’s *Urgent Communications*. “We’ve dropped those 39 basically because the cities were not willing to support the installation of a site.”

“In cities where we’ve dropped four or five sites, it will certainly impact coverage. In other areas, where we’ve dropped a single site, it doesn’t impact coverage, but it impacts capacity.”

As of Wednesday, five of the LTE sites were completed, and 35 sites were under construction, Mallon said. LA-RICs had permits to build 19 sites, and permits for another eight sites were expected to be finalized by the end of the week, he said.

Mallon said that 13 of the 86 cities in LA-RICS have opted out of participating in the construction of the public-safety LTE and [P25](#) LMR systems that are being built in the area. Other cities have until November —when the funding plan becomes effective —to opt out of the LA-RICS program, he said.

Thus far, the decision by these 13 cities to opt out of the program has “impacted the total cost model by 8.7%,” but it is unclear how much of that will be made up by savings associated with the construction and maintenance of fewer sites, Mallon said.

Although 13 cities have opted out of the LA-RICS program, it is still possible for the first responders in those jurisdictions to use the LA-RICS system, Mallon said.

“Of these 13 cities that have opted out, a couple of the cities are allowing us to continue to install equipment in their cities,” he said. “We anticipate that there might be willingness for them to participate as a subscriber to the LTE system.

As part of the LA-RICS agreement with [FirstNet](#), “we’re obligated to provide PSBN [public-safety broadband network] coverage to any and all public-safety entities that want to participate,” Mallon said. “So, even if they’ve opted out, they have offered to let us continue to install equipment in their cities. Because of that, we anticipate that they will want to participate in the PSBN system.”

Most of the funding for the LA-RICS public-safety [LTE](#) system comes from a federal grant administered by the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA). Under the terms of the grant, the public-safety LTE project—by far the largest in the United States—must be completed by Sept. 30, Mallon said. LA-RICS and its contractors are trying to complete the work by Aug. 15, so there is time to finish necessary administrative steps associated with the grant, he said.

In separate bids, [Motorola Solutions](#) won the contracts to build both the [P25](#) and the LTE systems. In 2013, [LA-RICS signed a contract with Motorola Solutions to build the P25 network](#) at a cost that could total \$149.6 million, if all phases of the plan are deployed. In March 2014, [LA-RICS signed a \\$175 million deal with Motorola Solutions](#) to build the LTE network.

Although recent news reports indicate that [Motorola Solution officials are exploring the possible sale of the company](#), Mallon said his focus is on completing the LTE and LMR projects.

“I don’t that’s going to have any impact on us,” Mallon said. “We’ve certainly had conversations with Motorola about the impact to the existing team, and we’ve been promised that there will be

no change.

“I think that any move to sell the company will be a long, protracted process, and we certainly hope to be done with the LTE system—not the LMR system—long before that. So, I’m not really too concerned with it at this point. From a project-management standpoint, we need to press forward and get things done within our timeline.”

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