

Mississippi remains lone state holdout in FirstNet preparations

Urgent Communications By Donny Jackson

March 27, 2016

LAS VEGAS—Mississippi will receive a state plan from [FirstNet](#) regarding that outlines proposed public-safety broadband service within its jurisdiction, despite the fact that Mississippi continues to be the only state that has declined to engage in the FirstNet consultation process to date, according to a FirstNet official.

“We’ve reached out to Mississippi, and they have not yet initiated the formal consultation process that we have done with the 55 other states and territories,” Dave Buchanan, FirstNet’s director of state consultation, said during an interview with [IWCE](#)’s *Urgent Communications*. “States that don’t participate miss the opportunity to provide inputs into the state plan and how the network will be deployed in their state.”

FirstNet officials have visited Mississippi and had “informal” discussions with state officials, and Mississippi officials participated in FirstNet’s most recent webinar, Buchanan said. But the state of Mississippi has not started the formal consultation process that was established almost two years ago, despite the fact that FirstNet is just seven weeks away from receiving bids from offeror teams to build and maintain a nationwide public-safety broadband network (NPSBN) on May 13.

This lack of engagement will not prevent Mississippi from receiving a state plan from FirstNet that outlines the coverage and timeline proposals associated with the proposed buildout of the first-responder broadband network in the state, Buchanan said.

“They’ll get a state plan,” Buchanan said. “They’re going to get one, but they will not have had an opportunity to benefit from consultation. First responders in Mississippi aren’t getting an opportunity to give us their feedback.”

Buchanan made his statements after participating in a conference panel at IWCE 2016 in Las

Vegas.

Shortly after Congress passed legislation that established FirstNet and made the organization responsible for building and maintaining the proposed NPSBN in 2012, the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) froze work on all public-safety [LTE](#) projects that were funded by Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program (BTOP) grants.

When NTIA froze the public-safety BTOP projects in the spring of 2012 after Congress passed the legislation creating FirstNet, Mississippi's public-safety LTE network was just "weeks away" from completion, according to Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.). Later, Mississippi was not able to reach a spectrum-lease agreement with FirstNet, and the project was halted.

Since then, Mississippi was the only state or territory that has not completed its initial state-consultation meeting with FirstNet. In fact, the state of Mississippi also was the only state that chose not to apply for federal grants that were established to pay for much of the planning work in a state associated with the FirstNet deployment.

[Link to Article](#)

[Link to Urgent Communications News Articles](#)