Maryland Statewide Interoperability Radio Control Board

Quarterly Public Meeting

- **Voting Members in Attendance**

  - Secretary Savage (DoIT)
  - Colonel Roland Butler Jr (MSP)
  - Chris Holland (MDOT)
  - Dr Ted Delbridge (MIEMSS)
  - Bud Frank (GoHS)
  - Clay Stamp (Talbot County)
  - Mayor Craig Moe (NCR)
  - Charles Summers (WAGIN)
  - Tony Rose (Charles County)

- **Board Support Staff**

  - Norman Farley
  - Jen Zambito
  - Brandon Renehan
  - Cindy Cole
  - Justin Ellingwood
  - Pat King
  - Curt Andrich

- **Not Attended**

Call to Order – 1:00 pm

Secretary Savage opened the meeting, confirming DoIT's support of, and alignment with, Governor Moore's vision to address public safety opportunities in Maryland. Secretary Savage briefed the group on Governor's Moore's Safe Summer Initiative, a program that focuses on supporting law enforcement, building stronger and more vibrant communities, and enhancing collaboration across all types of government. Secretary Savage affirmed MD FIRST's critical role in these initiatives as it supports State, county, and local governments, along with bordering States and federal agencies, and can be leveraged to bring more public safety innovation projects into the Governor's office.

Norman Farley briefed the group on the status of the core MD FiRST project, announcing that while Phase 5 went live on April 19, 2023, the team is continuing forward with the coverage improvement program, upgrading the network backhaul in Phases 1-4 from T1 to Ethernet/MPLS, and improving overall system resiliency and reliability. The MD FiRST team is always looking at new innovations to expand our network capabilities to support the Governor's vision of a safer Maryland.

Review Minutes from 3/15/2023– Norman Farley

Proposed Motion: The Radio Control Board approves the minutes from the March 15, 2023 meeting.

Moved – Charles Summers (WAGIN)
Second – Colonel Butler (MSP)

The vote was taken, and the minutes were approved.

Yea – All

Nay – 0

Abstain – 0

New Business – Norman Farley

Proposed New Limited Primary Users:

Johns Hopkins Police Dept (JHPD)- Represented by Errol Dutton and Phillip Kasten

JHPD is a newly formed jurisdiction within the boundaries of Baltimore City, working closely with the Baltimore City Police Department on 3 university campuses – Homewood, Peabody and East Baltimore Hospital. JHPD requests 8 MD FiRST talk groups, anticipating 5 dispatch consoles and ~105 TDMA capable radios with 100 officers operating on 3 shifts. The Campus Security Officers (CSOs) operate on a different system and will not be using MD FiRST. The planned usage is for daily operations of JHPD as well as for interoperability with other State and Local public safety agencies.

Proposed Motion: The Radio Control Board approves the application of the Johns Hopkins Police Dept (JHPD) to become a Communications Limited Primary User on Maryland FiRST and authorizes the Chairwoman to conclude the appropriate MOU with the Johns Hopkins Police Dept (JHPD).

Motion – Bud Frank (GoHS)
Second – Chris Holland (MDOT)

The vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Yea – All

Nay – 0

Abstain - 0

Proposed New Interoperable Users:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Strategic Preparedness – Represented by Adam Karsin (OS/ASPR/COOP)

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration is a Special Operations and Tactical Medical Division which directly supports many State and local Maryland jurisdictions as part of their daily operations. The group works closely with the MD Department of Health in Frederick, MD. They operate ~30 TDMA capable radios and request to be an interoperability user on MD FiRST to work operations with MD law enforcement and public health medical units. This initial application is for Interoperability Status, they may be interesting in upping that to Limited-Primary in the future.

Proposed Motion: The Radio Control Board approves the application of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to become a Communications Interoperability User on Maryland FiRST and authorizes the Chairwoman to conclude the appropriate MOU with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Motion – Bud Frank (GoHS)
Second – Chris Holland (MDOT)

The vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Yea – All

Nay – 0

Abstain - 0

Review of Annual Cost Estimations (FY24 Budget) - Norm Farley

In accordance with the RCB law to review the annual cost estimation, Norm Farley presented the approved O&M budget for FY 24 and the O&M budget estimates for FY 25 to FY 29.

FY 24 and FY25 Capital Budget Update - Norm Farley

The approved FY24 Capitol budget was presented, along with the proposed FY 25 Capital Budget submission and the out-year Capital Budget estimates for FY 26 to FY 29.

Innovation Efforts – Brandon Renehan, Jen Zambito

Tactical Bi-Directional Amplifiers (BDA's) –MD FIRST has procured 2 Tactical BDA's, portable units that can quickly be set up to provide increased in-building (or specific outdoor scenarios) during special events, ongoing emergency operations, etc. BDAs can retransmit 700MHz, 800MHz, or both and can run off battery or A/C power. MD FiRST team offering the use of these BDAs to user-agencies for increased coverage during special events or prolonged emergency situations where coverage is lacking.

Smart Connect Pilot Program – The Motorola Smart Connect feature allows select LMR subscriber radios to communicate on MD FiRST using Wi-Fi or cellular systems. This capability can extend a user's coverage outside the normal MD FiRST areas of operation and may enhance in-building coverage without the use of BDAs (provided Wi-Fi or Cellular coverage is available). Smart Connect initial pilot testing is expected to begin midsummer 2023; agencies can participate in the pilot testing on a volunteer basis. Once the Smart Connect technology is implemented on MD FiRST, user agencies may purchase subscriptions to use this application. In support of this, DoIT/MD FiRST will develop SOPs and parameters around the usage of Smart Connect and document any subscription fees.

Critical Connect Pilot Program – Motorola's Critical Connect feature allows MD FIRST to connect to Motorola's "Critical Connect Cloud", allowing users to access MD FiRST from a Motorola "Wave" push-to-talk device, a cellular push-to-talk application on cell phones, or from a dispatch application. Critical Connect also allows two disparate radio systems that are both connected through Critical Connect to communicate with no radio programming changes. Testing of Critical Connect is also expected to begin midsummer 2023; as with Smart Connect, agencies can volunteer to participate in the testing exercises. DoIT will develop SOPs and parameters around the usage of Critical Connect and document subscription fees.

FEMA Region 3 Talk Path (PA, DE, MD, VA, WV and DC) – The FEMA Region 3 SWICs requested the creation of a radio talk path that would enable them (and their respective command level staff) to communicate/coordinate throughout Region 3. MD FIRST is working with representatives from bordering states to develop a technological solution. Since the State of Maryland is in the geographic center of FEMA Region 3, and MD FiRST is a statewide system within the region with spill over coverage in the adjoining states, it is expected that MD FiRST will play a key part within the solution.

Radio Tower and Backhaul Improvement Project (MITDP) – The funding for this effort comes from the State RSA agreements per legislation and was kicked-off in FY23 as a program with the overall goal to improve MD FiRST reliability and resiliency. The scope within the program includes tower upgrades, backhaul enhancements, shelter upgrades, site security and monitoring, along with some site maintenance and repair. In FY23, working collaboratively with MD FiRST agencies, DoIT has used some of this funding to improve some MSP and DNR sites with much needed shelter roof repairs.

Operations Status and Coverage Improvement Update – Brandon Renehan
MD FIRST is now averaging over 3 million PPTs per month and has over 100,000 primary and interoperability users. MD FiRST team is tracking system/site capacity and keeping an eye on a couple of sites as Phase 5 usage ramps up, there is a potential that certain sites may need additional channels as system usage continues to increase.

Project Status and Coverage Improvement Updates – Jen Zambito
With the completion of Phase 5, State agencies are migrating day-to-day operational activities within the respective five (5) counties over to MD FIRST. Work has also begun to convert Phases 1-4 from a T1 based network over to Ethernet/MPLS. Statewide Air to Ground (A2G) functionality was tested and went live in April 2023, which allows for direct communications between SYSCOM and State/commercial aircraft in the field supporting life-saving missions. The BDA program will be kicking off in FY24 – Talbot Count and Garrett County have offered up sites to use as pilots.

Operations Coverage Improvement Updates – Brandon Renehan
Efforts to improve radio coverage on existing MD FiRST towers by adjusting antennas, converting sites to simulcast, etc. is ongoing. Cellular interference also continues to be an issue, and DoIT has undergone several rounds of troubleshooting and testing. The interference has been identified as localized to specific cellular bands. Motorola and Verizon have been made aware of the issues and the FCC is engaged.

System Managers Committee Status and System Users Committee Updates – Brandon Renehan
New MD FIRST users continue to be vetted during the System Manager meetings, and capacity is considered before a new user is recommended to the Radio Control Board. New user capacity considerations will be presented with new user requests at future RCB meetings.

Old Business - Norman Farley
No Old Business was on the agenda for presentation.

Closing Remarks

Clay Stamp (recap): The MD FIRST team is knocking it out of the park. We are realizing the benefit of the collaboration and much progress has been made. Under Governor O'Malley the legislature passed a law that created this state and local partnership (I.e., the Statewide Interoperability Radio Control Board). This is one of the best state and local partnerships in the state of Maryland. We have all stepped up to create this public safety communication system. We thank you and welcome your leadership Secretary Savage and look forward to working with you for the opportunities to continue to grow.

Secretary Savage (recap): I have the highest respect for this type of work, coming from the DOD you can't underscore the importance of having infrastructure in place. We never know how quickly a situation will devolve. I come from the innovation and design thinking space too, and am excited to take advantage of this infrastructure and this committed group of people and considering what we can layer on top of this platform. I am excited that this group exists and the work for public safety, first responders and what we can build on top of this. I am proud to have it as part of our portfolio.

Proposed Motion - I move that we adjourn and reconvene on September 20, 2023.

Moved – Clay Stamp (Talbot County)

Second – Colonel Butler (MSP)

The vote was taken, passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:41 pm.

Director of Board APPROVAL: *Norman Farley*
    (Signature & Date) _____ Dec 5, 2023

Chairwoman of Board APPROVAL: _____
    (Signature & Date) Katie Savage -DoIT- (Dec 5 2023 13:46 EST)   Dec 5, 2023