MD FiRST Newsletter, Issue 5

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MD FiRST Newsletter

December 22, 2022
Issue 5

Dear Board Members, Partners and Stakeholders,

In 2022, Maryland FiRST continued to move forward in providing our users/partners with a reliable interoperable public safety communications system. Despite COVID related supply chain issues, we have made progress on every front. Last year we achieved the goal of having all Maryland major political subdivisions as Primary, Limited Primary or Interoperable users. This year we started work with Maryland's surrounding jurisdictions and had seven jurisdictions from Virginia, DC and Pennsylvania become Interoperable users.

While the Phase 5 backhaul network did not meet public safety standards during final testing, causing a delay in the overall Phase 5 go-live, the end result is a "great" news story and a "win" for Maryland first responders because the failures forced the vendor to redesign the network and provide a new MPLS Ethernet based network that has greater bandwidth and improved reliability than the original design. This will also be a better impact for the upcoming Phases 1 to 4 T1 to Ethernet conversion project.

We completed three new RF sites this year as part of the Coverage Improvement Program and we have submitted a capital budget project plan to DBM to fund 20 more sites between FY 23 to FY 28.

Our goals for 2023, in addition to completing Phase 5 (and the original radio project) and starting the T1 to Ethernet conversion project, is to:

1. Continue the Coverage Improvement Program
2. Increase the reliability and resiliency of the system
3. Enhance Cyber Security
4. Continue expanding our interoperability partnerships with surrounding jurisdictions

It can never go without mention, I am so proud of our Maryland FiRST staff and our partner agencies staff. Without their tireless efforts and their cooperation and collaboration we would not be able to field this magnificent system for the First Responders of Maryland.

I wish you and yours a happy and safe Holiday Season and a Happy New Year,

Norm

2022 Major Accomplishments

MD FiRST Capital Project

Phase 5 - Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, Montgomery County, St Mary's Counties
- Equipment installations and coverage testing completed in all 5 counties
- Testing, troubleshooting and burn-in of backhaul equipment was completed in November 2021. However:
  - Final testing of backhaul discovered network issues that impacted system reliability
  - Re-design work has been completed to implement backhaul as MPLS Ethernet
  - New backhaul equipment has been ordered and installed.
  - Interzone will be enhanced to MPLS – go-live in January 2023
- April 2023 planned go-live for operational users

T1 to Ethernet Conversion
- Planning efforts underway to convert Phases 1-4 to MPLS Ethernet
- Design completed in September 2022

Contract Management
- Successfully negotiated a 3-year extension to Motorola contract to support system maintenance
- Began work on a System Maintenance RFP that will provide contract(s) to maintain and operate the system after November 2025

MD FiRST Operations
- **Cybersecurity -** evaluating and addressing vulnerabilities
  - FortiGate patches to eliminate zero-day exploits
  - US Dept of Homeland Security - Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) worked in conjunction with DoIT to perform Cybersecurity Assessment on MD FiRST System

- **A.2021.1 Major System Upgrade**
  - Completed Nov 3
  - Several punch list items open with Motorola related to NICE logging, Authentication and VMS/Zone Controller issues
  - Next upgrade targeted for FY2025 (tentative)

- **Phase 4 UPS Battery Refresh** – lifecycle replacement of batteries; on-going effort

- **Statewide site inventory equipment audits** - on-going effort

- **Cache loan of radios to U.S. Coast Guard to support 2022 Fleet Week**

- **Critical Connect/Smart Connect**
  - Implementation to begin April 2023
  - PO Issued to Motorola for purchase of Critical Connect / Smart Connect Equipment and Services
  - Initial trial phase to take place, after which systems will be opened up for Agency Participation
  - Participation will be on a strictly voluntary basis
  - Agencies will be responsible for subscription fees associated with their use

- **Region 20 Interoperability Template -** Released on March 10
  - Template includes MD CALL, MD EVENT, MD LAW zones as optional zones

- **2022 State of the Union (SOTU) Maritime Support**
  - DNR, SHA, MSP, and DoIT collaboration effort
  - DNR Consolettes at MSP College Park, connected to SHA CCGW
  - Console patches of DC MIC TGs to MD MARINE TGs

- **Interzone and CEN MPLS Migration** - Cutover to new MD FiRST Interzone MPLS network took place In April/May
  - Network performing as designed
  - Circuits from NetworkMD utilized to provide additional layers of redundancy
  - Circuits being arranged for existing zones and for phase 5, to be implemented when ready

Taylorsville, Carroll County Simulcast Cell - Live for operational traffic Sept. 2022

System End-of-Year Statistics

Primary Users: 28,998 – 19.9% increase from 2021
Interop Users: 54,513 – 7.5% increase from 2021
Total Push-to-Talks (PTT): 31,925,547– 1.12% decrease from 2021
Total Airtime: 3,346,868 minutes – 3.32% decrease from 2021

Coverage Improvement Efforts

2022 Successes
Coverage Improvement Program (Capital)

- Carroll County Simulcast Conversion – Complete
- Westminster, Sykesville (Feb) and Taylorsville (Sept) are live for operational use
- La Vale (Allegany County) - live for operational traffic (May)

Operations

- Klej Grange (Worcester County) - Raise TX antenna, swap directionals for omnis
- Bozman ASR (Talbot County) - Replaced TX antenna with new, also new TX feedline

2023 Planned Activities
Coverage Improvement Program (Capital)

- Swallow Falls/Oakland Sang Run Road (Garrett County)
- Greenbrier State Park (Washington County)
- Davidsonville (Anne Arundel County)

Operations

- Waste Treatment (Howard Co) - Convert to Simulcast, raise antennas, swap directionals for omnis

Radio Control Board

New Primary/Limited Primary Users
Alcohol & Tobacco Commission
United States Department of Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service

New Interoperability Users
D.C. Office of Unified Communications
Maryland Judiciary - Office of Security Administration
Loudoun County, VA
Fairfax County, VA
Fauquier County, VA
City of Alexandria City, VA
Prince William County, VA
Adams County, PA
Jefferson Patterson Park & Museum (Maryland Historical Trust)

New RCB Subcommittees
Established Radio Control Board Working Groups to conform with RCB law:

System Managers Committee -- Technical issues
System Users Committee -- Operational/User issues
Committee of the Whole -- Combined Managers & Users (when needed)

System Managers Committee
Convened in June, September and December
Election of Vice Chair
Election held by this committee to serve 1 year term

System Users Committee
Convened in June, September and December following System Managers Committee meeting
Election of Chair and Vice Chair

SB235 – RSA Funds Support MD FiRST

In 2021, DoIT proposed legislation in the Maryland 2021 Legislative Session designed to help fund future development of MD FiRST. SB235 was amended to state that MITDP RSA (Resource Sharing Agreements) funds "shall" be used to support Network Maryland and MD FiRST.

In 2022, the MD FiRST Radio Tower and Backhaul Improvement Project was initiated to support SB 235, and utilize Resource Sharing Agreement (RSA) funds funneled into the MITDF to implement the following:

- MD FiRST Radio Tower Remediation's to bring the existing towers up to TIA construction code standards (ref: http://standards.tiaonline.org/all-standards/committees/tr-14)
- MD FIRST Tower Site maintenance/repair
- MD FIRST Tower Site Physical Security
- MD FiRST Tower Start Up Lease Costs (to cover situations where we can't get like kind exchange RSAs)
- Radio Tower construction (to cover budget shortfalls from the MD FIRST Coverage Improvement Project (capital)
- Mitigation of known backhaul (fiber/microwave) gaps within the MD FIRST network.

The first use of these funds was put towards tower remediation (MD FIRST T1 to Ethernet) project towers and expansion of the MD FIRST network of fiber backhaul.

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RCB SOP Website

Coverage Improvement Reporting Tool

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