

REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Friday, January 13, 2006

12:00 p.m.

Sherburne County LEC

PRESENT: Tom Hannon, Micah Myers, Bill Mund, and Debbie Backes (Recorder) (**City of St. Cloud**); George McClure and Jay Sikkink (**Stearns County**); Bill Swing and Greg Howell, (**Wright County**); Pat Bettenberg (**Benton County**); Gary Petersen and Bruce Anderson (**Sherburne County**); Ron Whitehead (**DPS/Armer MN Department of Public Safety**); John Anderson, Andy Terry, Tim Lee (**MNDOT**); Dan McCoy and Mike Kahl (**Granite Electronics**); Dave Pike (**Ancom**); Jeff Nelson (**PSC Alliance**).

Call to order at 12:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Introductions were conducted and Tom explained the make-up and responsibilities of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). This is the third meeting to date. Bruce gave an update on Sherburne County and its Facility and invited the group to meet here on a monthly basis or whenever needed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

N/A

INTEROP TALK GROUPS, DEFINITIONS, DESIGNATION AND USE:

Tom stated Jay Sikkink is in charge of the Interop group for Central MN and John Anderson from MNDOT was invited today to explain the interop process, etc.

John explained 800 MHz, conversion to talk groups, what interop is, difference in talk groups, agencies working together, etc. Private are talk groups are within an agency, shared talk groups are talk groups shared between agencies; interop are talk groups which may or may not be owned and are defined by its usage such as Fire Department, Police, Emergency, etc. There are interop talk groups that are set up within regions as well as a state. Common ones are ATACS (A=All users), PTACS (P=Public Safety), STACS (S=State-wide).

Jay stated there was concern regarding when the Central MN users went to areas outside of their area, they would go onto another site and could not utilize their radios as they would get "bonked". This is why the conversation started as to how the different users needed to have their parameters set up, what parameters were needed, what towers they needed to be on and when they could utilize other towers, etc.

John explained what Fleet Mapping was, once this was designed, the programming can begin from there. Jay emphasized this was required before any programming can be started and the County contracted services to help design the fleet map for Central MN. John stated depending on how the fleet map was set up, it affects how the consoles are set up.

Ron asked John to explain the constraints of the system such as roaming and how it ties up the system and impacts users. John stated they try to keep the roaming parameters limited but yet be effective as this would impact the neighboring system. I.e. an entity being outside of their system and still being able to monitor their home system would tie up a channel which adds costs and resources to entities and reduces the channels available when needed.

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He stated on a monthly basis they run a report to monitor who is utilizing the system and what sites to avoid any issues or problems with abuse on the system. Ron asked what type of interop is available in case of a disaster and Metro area would need to come to St. Cloud? John explained there are patches, fire state-wide talk group, and MNSEF group available in this case. Tim stated there could be programming completed to allow radios to work in this area if needed. Tom explained when Hurricane Katrina came through, there was programming done within 10 minutes which did allow this and was a perfect example as to how the system works.

ARMER UPDATE:

Ron Whitehead, Department of Public Safety:

Tom explained Ron is the Project Manager for the state-wide project. Ron stated the board is looking at hiring an interoperability coordinator and is on the next agenda after realization of the need, realize the system has tremendous opportunities for interop and procedures need to be put in place, exercise them from time to time and have everyone on a common system. At this time not everyone is on a common system and it will take some time before everyone is.

The State-Wide Radio Board is a work in progress board and is coming together well, it was formed in 2004, the transition from a Metro to a State-Wide system has a great impact.

RFP for Risk Assessment Update and a Business Plan RFP are in the works for next year. He stated the plan was originally designed in 2000 and needs to make sure everything is updated and accurate. He stated Central MN and the City and Olmsted County working together has proven that a system could be built and reduce costs because of their commitment to work together. This will also help the State in building their third phase by realizing the cost savings by entities working together.

He stated originally the Met system was designed to be paid for by users and ARMER realized that this is not possible and are working on this issue.

There are several committees set up:

- Technical Committee will set up the system and what needs to go into it.
- Steering Committee will set up to control the plan to maximize interoperability on system.
- Finance Committee will work on issues for funding.

Committee representation is comprised of 1/3 State, 1/3 Local and 1/3 Metro.

He stated Geo-Comm will do a high-level review in all counties to make recommendations to the Board to help in decisions as to where funding is approved.

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The State Board looks very positive on the Central MN Region and how we are approaching the building of the system and they look favorably on it and our experience is a key for them. A topic for the steering committee in the future is to define what a Region is and who is on it.

Bill S. asked what Wright County can expect looking forward on their planning of getting onto the 800 system. Tom stated this study will be to see how the \$9.5 million will be distributed between counties to get the systems completed and to complete the State-Wide system. Ron stated it is a Regional Enhancement Project. He stated by the end of May the study should be complete and Jeff who is working with Wright and Sherburne will then contact them on where to proceed from there.

Bruce asked Andy if phase 3 includes Princeton and Tim thought that was outside of phase 3, and stated that this would be an example that may fit into the enhancement plan and would be happy to pursue that opportunity.

Tim Lee, MNDOT (Phase 3 Build-Out):

Andy stated he is happy to see the different entities talking about partnerships, who does what, etc. He looks at the ARMER Project as a partnership where everyone comes to the table as a shared venture. MNDOT has three hats – one is as a state agency they are looking out for their own fleet and are sort of the leader by being the largest group.

Service provider to the Department of Public Safety and are under contract to provide this for the ARMER backbone. They have a contract with Metro Emergency Services Board for servicing and maintenance of the Metro backbone. They also have a lot of contacts with local entities for towers, services, etc. and want to do a limited amount of services and do not want to take away from service providers.

Tom stated MNDOT was a significant partner in the Stearns County project and it would not have happened without them. He stated Tim's administrative and technical background helped in setting up the system and asked him to explain the phase 3 timeframe as this is a concern for a lot of entities in the area.

Tim stated with phase 3 they already have two zone controllers in the Metro where all the routing of voice traffic takes place. They will be adding two additional controllers, one in St. Cloud and one in Rochester and are in the bidding process and Motorola is aware of it. They anticipate on having the zone controllers installed in September – November. Have a plan on which sites they have and need and are in the process of finding and purchasing land for a microwave. It usually takes MNDOT approximately one-two years to purchase land for this usage and takes time. Once the zone controllers are in place, sites are in and microwave is in place, they can then proceed in putting RF equipment in.

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Tim stated Motorola puts a life cycle on their software, the end of 2007 is the life cycle for the end of 6X and he explained the procedure of switching from 6X to 7X of approximately \$12 - \$15 million dollars for them to switch their two existing zone controllers. The question was raised as to what the benefits to the users are to switching to 7X and could not get clear answers. Ron explained some of the State's concern of all the issues on hand that need to be answered. Discussion followed regarding issues and concerns that will arise in the future as far as maintenance, equipment, standards, split system, etc. and the phase 3 build-out impact.

Jeff suggested it may be helpful to get the input from all entities as to what their plans are and a time frame. Ron and Andy explained why this concept would not work and Bill M. explained his thoughts on a split system for the few times they need to communicate.

Bill M. asked if counties can purchase land any quicker or easier than the state to speed up the process and Andy explained this was something that was tried in the past and doesn't necessarily speed up the process because they both need to go through the same entities, especially when putting up a telecommunications tower. Tim stated it is easier to remove an old tower and put up a newer and larger tower.

Tom asked Tim how far out the Zimmerman tower is and he stated they already have the site and there is a lot of capacity in the zone controller and thought by the end of the year is the latest it will be complete.

Tom asked Andy what the status is for radios for Wright and Sherburne Counties? Andy stated they need to have some more communications on this. Tom explained they don't want to use them on a day-to-day operation, they only want to use it for training purposes at this time. Ron asked Tom if Central MN has space available for them and he stated yes and they have no problem with turning those radios on. Bill's radios will be running on Hennepin County West (13 radios) and Sherburne (9 radios) will be on the Central MN system.

Discussion followed regarding users and fee costs and everyone wanting to know the cost to be on the system, classification of interoperability users, etc. Bill S. asked what the benefit would be for Wright County to test the radios and they were cautioned that without the full system in place, they won't have all the benefits and users could be disappointed. Further discussion will follow.

BY-LAWS FOR OPERATION OF RAC:

Bill asked about alternates and Tom explained according to the policy it is up to each agency as to who they want to represent them. Tom explained these policies came from the State Board and revised accordingly.

ACTION: Motion by George to approve the By-Laws as submitted, Bill S. seconded. Motion carried.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Updates from Partners on Current Projects:

Requests for Coming Onto the Central MN System:

Jay stated the Interop Committee met four times so far and everyone is wanting to come onto the system such as fire departments, VA, hospital, schools, etc. He stated there is a procedure in place for the Metro area and the Central MN does not have a procedure for when entities want to come on.

He stated he is asking the different agencies to send Central MN system a request to come on the system which will provide a history and documentation of their requests. Ron stated users also have a subscriber agreement that would need to be signed and will forward a copy to Jay and Tom. The question is what is the process to deal with requests as they arrive? Andy stated MNDOT has the same concerns where counties do not have a regional radio board. Discussion followed as to what may be required of jurisdictions who fall into the areas of where there is a Joint Powers Board. This group is responsible for setting up this board. George asked if there are policies and procedures that need to be set up for the board first and Tom stated yes. These issues have not been decided yet on the next level which is needed. Bill M. stated the board may want a policy in place as to who could come onto the system. Jay passed out an example which explains when a non-governmental agency wants to come onto the system, they will need to be sponsored by a governmental agency.

George asked what policies and procedures this group needs in place and if we approve them, where does the approval go from there? Tom stated this group is the interim decision makers and eventually it will be decided by the Regional Radio when that is finally created.

George suggested we get the various procedures and policies and approve at the next meeting. Bill and Ron agreed that the future Radio Board would not have the same expertise this group would have in setting the standards and language and this group would give them a starting point. Tom will meet with Jay and see what documents have been adopted by the State Board and see what needs to be addressed by this group. They will then email to this group the policies for review prior to the next meeting.

Interop Committee:

Jay stated anyone is welcomed to attend the Interop meeting and he has been attending the Metro meetings just so he understands what is happening in their issue and invited Wright and Sherburne County to attend.

The Interop meets the last Wednesday of the month in the Administration Building and is at 9:30 a.m., next meeting is January 25th.

Jay stated a big concern is which talk group dispatch is listening to and it is important for all entities to know what talk groups are being listening to.

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3-Channel Expansion:

Tom stated the City has signed a contract for a 3-channel expansion with Motorola funded by Homeland Security Grant and will be completed in the next six months.

The City Council approved the budget for a technician to support the radios for the City. George asked how MNDOT handles the maintenance and support of their system and Andy explained how the different counties are involved and how to handle this, several are self-maintained and some are contracted. He stated there are some standards for those that handle it themselves as to what they need to follow. Discussion followed regarding if this is contracted, the entity is still responsible for following standards, etc. Discussion followed about background checks that will be required for individuals working on the system and IT staff.

Discussion Item, Meeting Structure, Open or Closed:

Tom stated this committee needs to determine who is able to attend RAC meetings and their roles here. George asked if this could be decided meeting by meeting and suggested the agenda reflect who is invited and allowed to attend. Bill suggested he likes the idea that vendors offer as they have expertise they can add at times. Bill stated the City of Buffalo is very interested in attending these meetings. The consensus is to have the meetings closed and each entity is responsible to invite who they would feel is necessary to attend.

Items of Interest:

No additional at this time.

UPCOMING MEETINGS, SET DATE AND LOCATION:

February 2006:

Tom questioned if this group should continue to move around as they have in the past for meetings and George stated yes. There was general agreement that the RAC should continue to move meetings around to various sites within the region to enhance participation and understanding of all members issues.

Ron stated the State-Wide Radio Board had the discussion a couple of months ago that it is up to the Regional Boards to determine which agencies they represent and what constitutes their regions. It will be discussed more in the future and a final conclusion has not yet been decided.

ACTION: Motion by George M. to have Morrison County be a part of this group officially and the next meeting will be February 17th, at noon in Morrison County (Little Falls), Bill S. seconded. Motion carried.

March 2006:

To be determined next month.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.