



Mark Gordon
Governor
K. Luke Reiner
Director

Wyoming Department Of Transportation

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes



Mark Harshman
Chairman
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I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met in the I-80 Room at the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) Training Building in Cheyenne on Wednesday, February 9, 2022. Chairman Mark Harshman presided, calling the meeting to order at 1:30 P.M.

II. Roll Call

The following members were present constituting a quorum:

Paul Bertoglio, Commissioner	Kebin Haller, Commissioner
Matt Carr, Commissioner	Dwane Pacheco, Commissioner
Mike Choma, Commissioner	Forrest Williams, Commissioner
Doug Frank, Commissioner	Luke Reiner, Ex Officio Member

Commissioner Jonathan Downing was absent. The tribal and Emergency Management Services seats remain vacant.

III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Troy Babbitt, WYDOT Chief Technology Officer	Nathan Smolinski, WYDOT Emergency Communications Manager
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator
Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary	Mike Kahler, Senior Assistant Attorney General

Susan Elliott assisted with virtual meeting management.

IV. Agenda Adjustments

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

V. Action Items

1. Draft Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Commissioner Haller, seconded by Commissioner Williams, and unanimously carried to approve the October 13, 2021, business meeting minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Frank, seconded by Commissioner Pacheco, and unanimously carried to approve the applications from Southwest Wyoming Regional Airport and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Director's Update

Director Reiner presented his update.

COVID-19

COVID-19 case numbers at WYDOT have leveled off, and the agency continues not to track vaccination status.

Federal Updates

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), will provide WYDOT with approximately \$100 million annually in additional formula funding for the next five years. This funding will be used primarily for roads and bridges, electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, and broadband.

The director asked the commission to keep a few things in mind as WYDOT waits for the federal government to determine funding and administrative processes. One, the IIJA contains a large amount of discretionary funding for state and local governments and agencies, but it is not yet clear how the state will synchronize and streamline the application process for these funds and access appropriate matches. Governor Gordon has created a task force to discuss these issues and decide on processes.

Two, EVs will be a reoccurring priority since the IIJA allots \$27 million over the next five years to WYDOT. The director will brief the governor's chief of staff later today on WYDOT's initial strategic plan for those funds. As the funding recipient, WYDOT will lead a collaborative, multi-agency effort to ensure that EV infrastructure is in place along our main transportation corridors.

Finally, the director reminded the commission that the federal government is still operating under a continuing resolution, which holds WYDOT at last year's funding levels. Congress has yet to fund fully the IIJA. Delays in funding will affect timelines for project spending.

State Updates

Budget

No major changes have been made to WYDOT's proposed budget, including the accompanying 20 exception requests. None of the exception requests required additional funding; all were seeking permission to spend funds that had already been allotted to the agency. A few requests are for WyoLink. Director Reiner feels that there is growing support in the legislature for WyoLink because of demonstrated success and increased subscribers.

In addition to the exception requests, two separate pieces of legislation have been proposed that could potentially provide funding for WyoLink.

The legislature is working on a budget for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which includes a line item for WyoLink. If approved, it will provide \$35 million to expand the WyoLink system.

Compensation

The governor has put forward a compensation package to the legislature that would provide raises to state employees. The proposed package successfully cleared the Joint Appropriations Committee with no suggested changes. This package represents the first of several phases to increase employee recruitment and retention. Future phases could include additional salary/wage increases and the implementation of step increases.

Other Legislation

Director Reiner shared that the department is monitoring two additional revenue bills: fuel tax and reallocation of severance taxes. Updates will be provided as available. A must-pass bill for WYDOT is HB0007, Commercial vehicle driving disqualification. This bill mirrors federal law and stipulates that anyone convicted of using their commercial vehicle in the commission of felony human trafficking will be disqualified from driving a commercial vehicle in Wyoming for life. If the bill is not passed, it could lead to the decertification of Wyoming's commercial driver's license program and the loss of 4 percent of federal funding. Director Reiner requested that commissioners speak in favor of this bill.

Commissioner Choma addressed the issue of employee compensation; he felt that WYDOT leadership should discuss the classification of certain positions, such as dispatchers, as a way to address compensation. Director Reiner agreed and shared that WYDOT has worked with the Human Resources Division (HRD) to obtain a raise in pay for dispatchers—hourly wages will increase to about \$17 an hour. Next they will work to adjust classifications for Transportation Management Center (TMC) operators to bring parity with dispatchers.

2. Chief Technology Officer's Report

Troy Babbitt presented his update. The update also included information presented by Ms. Binning on Next Generation 911 (NG911).

Commission Vacancies

The PSCC currently has two vacancies in its membership: tribal and emergency medical services. Mr. Babbitt shared that he and Ms. Chapman are working diligently to fill those positions. The Wyoming EMS Association will discuss their representative's vacancy at the association's annual meeting tomorrow and make a recommendation.

Mr. Babbitt thanked the commissioners for visiting the TMC and the dispatch center. He reminded the commissioners of the critical need to upgrade the microwave backhaul. WYDOT is currently using older, legacy T1-type technology. The long-term goal is to upgrade to Ethernet as it would provide more space to offload traffic, especially as the

state moves to NG911. Mr. Babbitt believes that upgrading microwave capability should be a high priority in funding discussions.

Next Generation 911 (NG911)

Ms. Binning updated the commissioners on the work of the NG911 workgroups. The Education and Outreach Workgroup made a presentation on NG911 funding at the Sheriffs Association's conference in November. The presentation addressed funding deficits, the importance of geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology, and upcoming legislation. Committee members Joey Williams, Campbell County Sheriff's Office; Amber Young, Laramie County Combined Communications Center; Monte McClain, Park County Sheriff's Office; and Sierra Borovatz, Washakie County Sheriff's Office assisted with the presentation.

Mr. Babbitt shared that the NG911 state plan is complete; however, current legislation could impact funding and require modifications to the plan. Therefore, the plan will be released after the legislative session.

Proposed Legislation

Federal

Mr. Babbitt reported that the Build Back Better plan, which would have allocated \$10 billion in NG911 funding to the states, has stalled in Congress. The bill is not dead, but Mr. Babbitt is unsure of the outcome.

State

The 2022 Budget Session begins next week and there are a few bills pertaining to WyoLink and the PSCC. Senate File 41, Expanding NG911, would give the PSCC oversight of the development, implementation and operation of NG911 emergency communications systems in the state. It would also add two new members to the commission from the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials or the National Emergency Number Association and the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security. Federal NG911 grants requires a governing body to oversee funds disbursement to local entities, and SF0041 would create this structure and allow Wyoming to pursue federal grants.

House Bill 12, which resulted from the summer meetings of the Joint Transportation Committee, addresses public safety communications funding. Mr. Babbitt and Mr. Smolinski served on a working group with members of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association (WCCA) to explore funding streams for WyoLink, but the group could not find any satisfactory solutions. As an alternative solution, HB0012 would appropriate \$89 million of unexpended, unobligated ARPA funds for the expansion and maintenance of the WyoLink system.

In anticipation of this bill's passage, Messrs. Babbitt, Smolinski, and Gardiner have identified and prioritized the next 17 sites for additional WyoLink towers. Other

potential uses for these funds include updating the microwave backhaul, updating Quantar radios, channel expansion, and other department priorities. WYDOT is ready to make recommendations upon the passage of the bill.

The governor has also proposed \$35 million in ARPA funds for WyoLink. Additionally, the Mineral Royalty Grant, which would cover the local share for WyoLink, is still included in the budget bill. These funds could potentially cover maintenance costs through the biennium and would give WYDOT more time to search for long-term funding solutions.

Following a question on costs from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Babbitt shared that each WyoLink tower site costs about \$1.9 million, with an additional \$34,000 a year in maintenance costs. The team tries as much as possible to collaborate or colocate with internet service providers, Enterprise Technology Services, and the broadband buildout to increase capacity and decrease costs.

3. Emergency Communications Program Manager's Report

Mr. Smolinski provided his update. The update also included information presented by Mr. Gardiner regarding WyoLink operations.

16 Tower Build-Out Report

Mr. Smolinski reported that construction has slowed for the winter. The team has concentrated its efforts on finalizing right of way (ROW) and utility agreements. Two sites have seen significant progress in access agreements with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM): the Little Sheep Mountain site in Bighorn County and the site on Kismet Peak outside Bondurant. The Little Sheep site awaits final BLM approval following meetings with a power company to mitigate concerns over possible interference.

The Kismet Peak site is a colocate with Sublette County; WyoLink equipment will be installed on a county tower. WYDOT worked with the county to update site dimensions on their application with the BLM. Mr. Smolinski also had to survey private landowners to determine how much will be owed to landowners as part of the ROW agreements. The goal is to conclude all agreements before the start of the spring construction season.

The Buffalo, Orin Junction, Wright, Jackson, Greybull, Lusk, Alcova, Alva, and Rock Springs-Blairtown sites have all been operating successfully and have improved coverage in their respective areas. The team is working to get fiber connectivity at the Lusk site.

The team has attempted to use a cell modem for temporary backhaul while the microwave system is being built at the Rock Springs-14 Mile Hill site. Work at the Ten Sleep-Meadowlark site has been paused for winter. The ROW agreements have been completed for the Northern Goshen County site, and Mr. Smolinski reports that construction will begin in the spring.

The Newcastle site is currently delayed by lease agreements. Mr. Smolinski is trying to set up a meeting with the city and a private landowner to discuss the lease. All agreements have been completed for the Evanston site, and construction will begin in the spring. Mr. Smolinski is also working with Motorola to renew the site contract for another year.

Commissioner Frank asked how WYDOT quantifies the benefit that these 16 sites have provided—access, additional capacity, and improved quality—to the WyoLink system. He enquired how the commission and department could best demonstrate the value of the WyoLink system to the legislature as we pursue funds for additional sites. Mr. Smolinski felt that while the statistics in the user reports help demonstrate WyoLink's value, stories and testimonies from local subscribers would be more impactful. Commissioner Frank expressed his hope that the commission and staff keep thinking about and discussing ways to promote WyoLink.

Commissioner Choma also suggested including usage data on the WyoLink website and enquired how the national supply chain crisis could impact the buildout. Mr. Smolinski shared WYDOT is seeing shortages/backorders in construction steel, HVAC units, and backup generators. Commissioner Pacheco felt that public education on WyoLink would be another key component in obtaining additional funding for the system.

WyoLink Operational Updates

WyoLink Paging

Mr. Gardiner reported that his team demoed Unication pagers in Converse County, but they were not utilized. The team will now provide pagers to Teton County for testing and possible adoption. Each pager costs between \$700 and \$800.

WyoLink System Reports

Mr. Gardiner shared slides on WyoLink usage data. The slides contained information on the top 20 talkgroups, first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 system statistics, and agencies that have currently received radios purchased under the contract with Motorola. The Wyoming Highway Patrol (WHP) has received 75 portable and 60 mobile radios, but accessories and 15 more mobiles are expected before installation can occur. Five hundred mobile radios and 50 portable radios have been ordered for WYDOT.

Mr. Gardiner updated the commission on infrastructure upgrades. New GTR radios and DC power plants have been installed at two out of 18 sites. Another site is scheduled to be upgraded in late February or early March, and other sites will be upgraded based on accessibility and scheduling. Additionally, the department has ordered Nokia service aggregation routers (SARs), which will allow radio sites to be converted to Ethernet. Several WYDOT technicians completed training last fall on the new equipment, so they will have the skills and knowledge to operate the technology.

WyoLink Training

Mr. Smolinski demoed the new WyoLink training slides for the commission. The PowerPoint presentation has been designed for use by local agencies to train their own users. The training provides trainees with a consistent foundation on WyoLink operations while allowing local instructors to customize slides to include location- and equipment-specific information. The commissioners thanked and complemented Mr. Smolinski and the entire WyoLink team on their efforts to create the training.

Statewide Interoperability Coordination Updates

Mr. Smolinski is working with CISA on technical assistance programs, and the largest program to be updated—in every county in the state—is the tactical interoperable communications plan (TICP). TICP was overdue for an update as its last update was in 2015. WYDOT will work with each county and CISA to update each line item on Homeland Security’s existing plan, from which a master plan will be created. The project should take about a year. The master plan will give WYDOT a clearer picture of how WyoLink fits into each county’s communications operations.

FirstNet Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that the critical connect contract has been set up with Motorola. Critical connect is a platform that will allow the department to connect to the FirstNet and Verizon cores and take WyoLink land mobile radios (LMR) and merge it with AT&T LTE technology. A similar set-up will be created with Verizon in the near future.

WYDOT is collaborating with the Casper Police Department to develop protocols for using FirstNet. Mr. Smolinski and his staff are working to create an AT&T “push to talk talkgroup,” comprised of essential and existing talkgroups. It will then be mapped to other, select WyoLink talkgroups. Mr. Smolinski showed the commission a FirstNet capable phone that he is currently testing, which will tie into a few WyoLink talkgroups. He felt that phones, like the one he is currently using, might be a good fit for smaller agencies who cannot afford to purchase WyoLink radios.

Mr. Smolinski admitted that more planning is still needed and policies will need to be created for FirstNet, but he is communicating with other states that are already using the platform to collect best practices and lessons learned. He shared that the policies developed for FirstNet will mirror the WyoLink model for adding new subscribers and users. The PSCC, with recommendations from the department, will ultimately decide which devices are allowed to access WyoLink. Mr. Smolinski hopes to be able to offer the commission a partial demonstration at the May commission meeting.

Following a question from Commissioner Frank, Mr. Smolinski shared that while these phones have to route through cell and WyoLink towers, users will experience very little delay. He also shared that if one of these devices is on the WyoLink network, it will be treated like a WyoLink radio. Phones allowed on the system will be assigned a WyoLink identification number, and the WyoLink office will have control over the device. The FirstNet app can be installed on both Apple and Android devices, and the range is based on cellular network availability. Director Reiner inquired if the use of these devices will

lead to an increase in the number of WyoLink channels, and Mr. Smolinski explained that it will not as signals between FirstNet capable devices and WyoLink radios will not be synchronized at WyoLink sites.

Following a question from Commissioner Pacheco, Mr. Smolinski explained that any agency wishing to bring these devices onto WyoLink will need to submit one application that covers all devices. He also shared that the commission will need to decide if they would like to see and vote on all of these applications from existing subscribers, or if the department can handle these requests on the commission's behalf. Commissioner Haller felt that these devices would be covered under agreements already in place and that the WyoLink office could use their discretion with these agreements. Mr. Smolinski concurred with this suggestion, and there was consensus from the rest of the commission to support it.

VII. Public Comment/Announcements

There was no public comment.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Frank, seconded by Commissioner Haller, and unanimously carried to adjourn the February 9, 2022, business meeting at 3:11 p.m.