

## Government Contracts Weekly: A Closer Look at Globalstar's Bluetooth Interference Issues; LNPA Timeline Update; FirstNet on Track to Award Key Contract on Time

### Globalstar Update

**Update on FCC negotiations.** The offices of FCC Commissioners Wheeler, Rosenworcel and O'Rielly have been actively negotiating the Globalstar TLPS order, especially concerning provisions regarding Channel 14. As we previously [reported](#), a likely area of compromise is a plan – proposed by Public Knowledge and Open Technology Institute (as well as Google) – that would allow greater use of Channel 14 in areas where TLPS is not deployed. While this plan would represent a compromise that would gain political buy-in from stakeholders in the tech and public interest communities, it does not address the technical issues with interference, such as those raised by groups that rely on Bluetooth. Two groups (the HIA and WCA) have objected on the record to that proposal, claiming that it would increase interference for unlicensed devices that rely on Channel 14.

Rosenworcel's support for a compromise is central to getting a deal done. In order for the Commissioners to find grounds for compromise to deal with the interference concerns – as they have done in other proceedings with unlicensed devices – Rosenworcel will likely have to get comfortable with the notion that interference regarding Bluetooth devices is manageable and that testing will be comprehensive or that the benefits to the wifi tech community outweigh the potential harms to Bluetooth. To examine how interference issues may be shaping negotiations, we spoke with the head of a Bluetooth industry association that plans to rely more and more on unlicensed spectrum, among other sources.

**In-depth look at Bluetooth Industry's interference concerns.** Andy Bopp is the Executive Director of the Hearing Industries Association (HIA), which has been one of the active groups advocating for modification or disapproval of the TLPS order. The HIA has objected to the order over the potential for interference with Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE), which hearing aid makers are increasingly adopting to connect to cellular phones, PA systems and other features where people with hearing aids need wireless connectivity. Unlike standard Bluetooth, BLE devices use three so-called advertising channels in order to connect, and their makers have raised the potential of harmful interference in Channel 14, which they state is the quietest advertising channel.

**Goals for BLE industries: no interference, transparency on technical information to conduct own testing.** Bopp explained his association's stance that there must be no interference, "People with hearing loss using hearing aids don't want interference." He added "In the future, Bluetooth and similar will be the standard for all hearing aids at all price points. The promise is enormous, but interference will kill connectivity." He also said interference issues can be hard to resolve in regular usage, as "Hearing aid users won't know what caused interference when it occurs. The assumption would be that the problem is with the hearing aids' BLE features."

One of HIA's primary goals is transparency about operating specifications, as the association has been unsatisfied with testing so far. "Transparency was what we were hoping for from the beginning. I mean, we can't base our position on hypotheticals. We don't believe that Globalstar's done adequate testing." Bopp said the industry has been unable to conduct its own tests due to this lack of information. Inability to test may have been an obstacle to Bluetooth groups and other objectors being able to place a compelling argument in the record. Bopp emphasized

that no technical information from the order has been known, and that the FCC and Globalstar's testing was unlikely to simulate real world conditions.

**Room for non-interference or technical solutions with more information.** Bopp also left open the possibility that no disruptive interference could be discovered, or a technical solution could be found, once more detailed technical information is made known for the purpose of testing. “[If they said], these are the specs, this is what we're coming out with, these are the power levels, at that point we would be more than thrilled to look in and say there are no issues... Perhaps there are technical ways. We're not a competitor [with Globalstar].”

**Rosenworcel's choice: Wifi vs. Bluetooth.** The crux of the matter for both the HIA and Globalstar is influencing Commissioner Rosenworcel, who has the best grasp of the technical issues around unlicensed devices and has most clearly expressed her support for unlicensed spectrum. As Rosenworcel negotiates with Wheeler and the other commissioners on the order, there are two central issues likely being considered. First, there is the potential interference with unlicensed devices, including Bluetooth and BLE. Second, there are calls for spectrum sharing raised by Google and public interest organizations.

With regard to the second issue, a compromise is likely taking shape that will satisfy these stakeholders and increase spectrum usage in Channel 14. However, this compromise does not resolve, and may even exacerbate, the interference concerns of the Bluetooth community. The question now for Rosenworcel is whether she can negotiate an order that also solves or minimizes the interference issues for the sake of Bluetooth stakeholders-- or whether she is willing to accept a compromise that primarily benefits Wifi, potentially putting Bluetooth at risk of greater interference.

### Neustar/LNPA Transition Update

**In filing, FBI reconfirms support for Telcordia as LNPA Administrator.** Stakeholders have questioned whether or not Ericsson's ties to China and federal investigations into potential corruption could affect the LNPA transition. [Yesterday's letter](#) from A. Todd McCall, Assistant Director of the Operational Technology Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary of the Federal Communications Commission, clearly confirmed that U.S. law enforcement supports Telcordia as the new LNP administrator. Mr. McCall concluded, “The FBI does not possess any information, as of this date, to reasonably question Telcordia's ability to meet these needs or to otherwise object to the FCC's selection of Telcordia as the LNPA.” This filing by the FBI may provide the FCC with the reassurance it needs to progress with approval of the MSA.

**Our thoughts on timeline and cautious language from Transition Oversight Manager.** Previously, we have written that those in charge of the LNPA transition originally laid out a fairly conservative timeline for the transition. Many stakeholders are wondering whether or not a delay to the FCC's approval of the master services agreement (MSA) will affect the overall timeline. Greg Chiasson, Principal at PwC and leader of the Transition Oversight Manager (TOM), added to fears of a delay in a stakeholder [outreach webcast](#) last week in which he said, “With the extension of MSA approval, the TOM is continuing to monitor plans for transition activities, especially the absolute time allowed as well as the timing of these activities relative to holiday and other busy periods. At this point it's quite likely that the timing shared in April will be revised.” Despite this cautious language, we believe stakeholders should not necessarily conclude that the transition will be delayed given that the original timeline was conservative.

## **Motorola Solutions/FirstNet**

**FirstNet on track to award NPSBN contract by November deadline.** The bidding process for the contract to construct the National Public Safety Broadband Network officially closed on May 31st. Though FirstNet, the organization created to facilitate the bidding and construction process, cannot disclose the number or details of bids received, officials have said that they are happy both with the number of offerors and the quality of the offers. So far, two companies, PDV wireless and Rivada Mercury, have publicly acknowledged that they have submitted competitive bids for the contract. In a Senate hearing on the status of FirstNet, CEO Michael Poth stated that FirstNet was both on time and under-budget, and expected to award the NPSBN contract by November. While, Andrew Kataros, the U.S. Department of Commerce's assistant inspector general for audit, described this timetable as "aggressive," he could not name specific obstacles, other than unforeseen problems that could arise due to the novelty of the project.

## **Contracts Timeline**

### **FirstNet/Motorola Solutions**

- June 29th: FirstNet board and council meeting
- November 1st: NPSBN contract awarded
- May 1st, 2017: NPSBN contractor to deliver its deployment plans to all 56 states and territories, starting the 90 day window for states to decide whether to opt-out

### **Neustar**

- June 30: NANC meeting with update from Transition Oversight Manager
- July 13: Transition Outreach and Education Plan (TOEP) Webcast
- July 20: TOEP Webcast
- August 31: TOEP Webcast
- September 7-9: Cellular Telephone Industries Association Conference
- September 15: NANC meeting with update from Transition Oversight Manager
- September 26-27: National Telephone Cooperative Association Fall Conference
- October 27: TOEP Webcast
- November 16: TOEP Webcast
- December 1: NANC meeting with update from Transition Oversight Manager
- December 13: TOEP Webcast