



Mark Gordon  
Governor  
K. Luke Reiner  
Director

# Wyoming Department Of Transportation

## PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes



Mark Harshman  
Chairman  
Telephone No.:  
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#### I. Call to Order

The Public Safety Communications Commission (PSCC) met via videoconference on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. Chairman Mark Harshman presided, calling the meeting to order at 3:30 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
Jonathan Downing, Commissioner	Luke Reiner, Ex Officio Member
Doug Frank, Commissioner	

Commissioner Ron Gatti was absent. The tribal seat remains vacant.

#### III. Introductions

The following attendees participated in the meeting:

Troy Babbitt, Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT)	Nathan Smolinski, Emergency Communications Manager, WYDOT
Neil Gardiner, WyoLink Support Manager	Aimee Binning, 911 Planning Coordinator
Kevin Hibbard, Director, State Budget Department	Kelli Little, Deputy Director, Wyoming County Commissioners Association (WCCA)
Kimberly Chapman, Commission Secretary	Mike Kahler, Senior Assistant Attorney General
Ryan Thompson, 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 Pacheco, and unanimously carried to approve the July 14, 2021, business meeting minutes.

2. WyoLink Applications

It was recommended by Mr. Gardiner, moved by Commissioner Frank, seconded by Commissioner Haller, and unanimously carried to approve the application from Riverton Public Works.

VI. Updates/Discussions

1. Update on Proposed (WyoLink Funding) Legislation

WCCA Deputy Director Kelli Little presented an update on the WCCA's WyoLink future funding discussions. A working group comprised of WyoLink users, commissioners from the PSCC, WYDOT staff, and other stakeholders discussed historical and potential future approaches for funding WyoLink. Eight different funding options were presented to the Joint Transportation and Military Affairs Committee (JTC) for consideration.

The JTC chose to advance the proposal to use existing revenue from registration fees to fund WyoLink. Ms. Little is working with the Legislative Service Office and WYDOT to draft a bill that would include not only the local and state funding portions for WyoLink, but also provide funds for system maintenance and future upgrades. Ms. Little reminded the commission that the JTC tasked the working group with using existing revenue instead of proposing any legislation that would require new revenue sources.

Following a question from Commissioners Frank and Choma, Ms. Little acknowledged that while this bill would provide statutorily mandated, long-term funding for WyoLink, it would also require funds to be diverted away from projects currently funded by the registration fee revenue. Recent data shows that approximately \$157 million in local and \$40 million in state registration fees are collected and redistributed to schools, special districts, and counties each year.

As a short-term solution, the working group is checking to see if American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds can be used to subsidize WyoLink while the details of the proposed legislation is worked out. The local portion of the maintenance agreement is currently paid by the mineral royalty grant funding, but those funds are running out and will be unavailable in the near future.

Commissioner Haller thanked Ms. Little and the WCCA for taking on this issue and advocating for the WyoLink system. Ms. Little recognized the difficulty in having these conversations, but she remains hopeful that a compromise can be reached.

2. Chief Technology Officer's Report

Troy Babbitt presented the CTO's update. The update also included information presented by Ms. Binning on Next Generation 911 (NG911).

Proposed Federal Legislation

Mr. Babbitt shared two documents with the commission detailing proposed legislation from the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. A NG911 funding bill was introduced

in the U.S. House on September 10, 2021, that would help states and local entities implement, operate, and maintain NG911 systems. The bill would appropriate \$10 billion in funds that would be available to states through 2026. Mr. Babbitt highlighted a section from the bill that requires a governing body, either new or existing, to oversee NG911 development and deployment in each state.

Following a question from Commissioner Frank about positioning the PSCC for 911 governance, Mr. Babbitt advised that WYDOT will continue to look for opportunities to work with legislators on this issue.

Mr. Babbitt also informed the commission about the work of the Governor's health task force. One of the discussion topics revolved around training for emergency medical service providers in the public service answering points (PSAPs), and it could lead to new legislation during the next legislative session.

#### Next Generation 911 (NG911)

Ms. Binning reported on recent developments from the work of the NG911 workgroups. Current federal guidance requires that a governing board oversee the administration of NG911 federal funds. County commissioners and sheriffs are currently controlling 911 funds in the state. The Wyoming chapter of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials/National Emergency Number Association (APCO/NENA) plans to recommend that a state board provide representation and administration for these federal funds, and is working on legislative recommendations to help identify the correct governing body.

#### *APCO/NENA Meeting*

The Wyoming APCO/NENA board will meet on October 31<sup>st</sup> in Casper to provide recognition, awards, and training for telecommunicators across the state. There are five award categories that will be presented at this meeting: Public Safety Telecommunicator of the Year; Radio Frequency Technologist of the Year; Information Technologist of the Year; Communications Supervisor, Manager, or Director of the Year; and the Public Safety Team of the Year. Nominations for the awards close October 15<sup>th</sup>. The Western States Director for NENA, Bruce Romero, and NENA past president, Gary Bell, will speak at the meeting.

#### *NG911 Meeting*

Following the APCO/NENA meeting, WYDOT will hold a stakeholders meeting for the NG911 planning process in Casper on November 4, 2021. This meeting will provide participants an overview of NG911, information and updates on the plan that was developed for NG911, information and updates on the potential NG911 funding, and information on future (equipment) needs.

Last month, WYDOT met with the WCCA to keep their members informed and involved in the NG911 efforts. Two members from the Next Generation Education and Outreach

Committee, Jenifer Shassetz from Sheridan and Joey Williams from Gillette, assisted WYDOT with sharing information on funding and planning for NG911.

3. Director's Update

Director Reiner presented his update.

COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to impact WYDOT's operations although case numbers seem to be stabilizing. The agency does not track employee vaccination status. Between COVID-19 and employee retention issues, some WYDOT stations have been greatly affected, and it could make for a challenging winter in regards to snow removal.

The agency continues to advise employees to follow Center for Disease Control's COVID-19 guidelines on social distancing, handwashing, and quarantining following exposure.

Budget

*Federal*

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) did not pass before the September 30, 2021, deadline, but the government is currently operating under a continuing resolution that will expire at the end of October. The hope is that IIJA passes before the end of October. If the approval process lasts too long, it could disrupt cash flow and impact construction projects funded by the federal government. Director Reiner is not greatly concerned about this as WYDOT has planned accordingly for these situations, and construction season is coming to a close.

*State*

The Transportation Commission approved WYDOT's operating budget at their September meeting. Director Reiner will meet with Governor Gordon in November to discuss the legislative portion of the budget before the Governor makes his final recommendation.

WYDOT has also submitted requests to the Governor's office for ARPA funds. Significant requests have been made to expand and build out the WyoLink system. The agency will continue to monitor these requests as the process advances.

Broadband in the Right-of-Way (ROW)

Following the passage of HB0014 during the last legislative session, WYDOT has been working to fulfill the requirements contained in the law. The law requires WYDOT to request blanket easements to the ROWs for broadband. Director Reiner met with the U.S. Forrest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to find a compromise that would expedite the process. The challenge is that these agencies are bound by federal statutes that authorize those agencies to grant access and that authority cannot be delegated to WYDOT. The director will meet with Federal Highway Administration tomorrow to discuss potential alternative solutions.

WYDOT has also been working with industry and the Governor's office to streamline a "dig once" policy. As emerging technologies such as NG911, autonomous vehicles, and electric vehicles become more widespread, it will become even more important to ensure there is broadband in the ROW.

4. 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 Buildout Report

Mr. Smolinski started his report with a slideshow of photographic updates displaying progress at a few of the buildout sites.

The Buffalo, Orin Junction, Wright, Jackson, Greybull, Lusk, Alcova, and Alva sites have all been activated and are performing well.

Construction is nearly complete at the Rock Springs – 14 Mile site, and crews are working to finish installing power. Mr. Smolinski shared photos of the conduit trench that connects the tower site to Union Wireless' transformer, allowing WYDOT to lease power from Union at a significant cost savings.

Before the tower at 14 Mile can be brought fully online, the microwave system that feeds the tower will need to be upgraded. The tower at Aspen Mountain, which is the parent (donor) tower, is over capacity and a new tower will need to be constructed to house the upgraded system. Construction on the new tower will begin in November but will probably take some time to complete as winter construction is not very favorable on Aspen Mountain.

Meanwhile, Mr. Smolinski and his team are exploring other options to backhaul the system to bring the 14 Mile site online sooner. Top among these options is to work with FirstNet to bring the system's backhaul over a cellular modem. Reliability would be decreased, but the tower could be brought into service more quickly.

Blairtown, a site in Rock Springs, was recently completed after the summer construction season and as of yesterday, it is online and active. This is the first, state-owned 800-megahertz site on the WyoLink system.

Ground was broken at the Meadowlark site in late August, but the crew soon encountered challenges with rocky terrain and damaged access roads. After working with the USFS to obtain permits and gravel to make emergency repairs to the road, construction progressed to the point of standing up a large portion of the tower structure. Construction will resume in late spring or early summer when the rest of the tower and site will be completed.

The Office of State Lands and Investments approved the Northern Goshen County site, but the team is waiting for other agreements before construction can begin. Mr. Smolinski hopes that construction can get underway in the next month or two and continue through the winter since it is sited at a lower elevation.

Mr. Smolinski and his team are still working with the city to get final access agreements in place for the Newcastle site. He reported that on October 1<sup>st</sup>, he received the final agreement for the Evanston site, and it has been signed by the Attorney General's (AG) Office and the landowner. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring.

The final plans for the North Big Horn County site are ready for approval by the BLM. For the Bondurant site, Mr. Smolinski is working with Sublette County and a private landowner to find a collocation option on Kismet Peak.

Following a question from Commissioner Choma, Mr. Smolinski updated the commission on potential sites in Saratoga and Sheridan County. WYDOT has submitted a budget exception request to the legislature for two additional WyoLink sites, one in each location. Sheridan County would like to have two sites to fill in coverage gaps: one in the northwest part of the county and another site in the Ranchester/Dayton area. As a result of a meeting the county held with stakeholders, a letter of support was drafted and sent to the legislature. WYDOT will await instruction from the legislature.

Commissioner Pacheco commended Mr. Smolinski and the WyoLink team for the work they have done to bring the Rock Springs sites online. He shared that for the first time in his 31 years with the Rock Springs Police Department portable coverage has been building with reliable service and no dead spots. Commissioner Pacheco was very appreciative and stated that he would like to see news of this success shared with local and state leaders.

#### WyoLink Operational Updates

##### *WyoLink System Reports*

Mr. Gardiner reported that Blairtown – Rock Springs is the latest site to become operational. The 800-megahertz site has already seen a great deal of activity. The 18-site GTR upgrade project is due to start next week. These radio site repeaters will replace the old Quantar models. The Cheyenne Water Tank site will be offline for a few hours for this upgrade, and notifications will be sent to users. Other sites will be upgraded as equipment is received and weather permits.

Notifications will be sent through the RAVE system about dispatch site interruptions next Tuesday while Motorola finishes the multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) project. Routers at dispatch sites will be rebooted causing a brief outage. The MPLS project converted some radio sites to Ethernet to provide greater redundancy and a self-healing connection.

Jason Gilmour, with the WyoLink office, passed the drone pilot's license exam last week. Mr. Gilmour will lead the effort to utilize drones for tower inspections. More information will be presented to the commission at a future meeting.

Mr. Gardiner presented a PowerPoint presentation that provided site statistics from the third quarter of 2021. Information included WyoLink site registrations, the top 20 talkgroups, and the number of busies at certain sites around the state.

Commissioners agreed that they would like to see more information in future meetings on the different talkgroups using WyoLink. Mr. Gardiner will provide more statistics on usage in the meeting packets at future meetings. Commissioners Downing and Bertoglio suggested that breaking the data out by county and talkgroup type might provide the commission with useful talking points when visiting with elected officials about WyoLink.

#### *WyoLink Training*

Mr. Smolinski provided an overview of the planned training with the commission. The training will consist of a PowerPoint presentation with complete speaker notes so that it can be given by either WYDOT staff or local partners. Blank slides for agency-specific plans will allow partners/subscribers to tailor the presentation to their needs. The presentation will also contain videos: one on operational instruction for equipment and one featuring WyoLink stakeholders. Mr. Smolinski will share a final version of the training presentation at the next meeting for commission comment and approval.

#### *WyoLink Website*

Mr. Smolinski shared that the website is 90 percent updated. Sections on vendor information and frequently asked questions are still under construction. The expanded support and feedback sections will provide greater connectivity between WYDOT and WyoLink subscribers/customers.

#### Statewide Interoperability Coordination Updates

Mr. Smolinski reported that shortly after the July PSCC meeting, the Transportation Commission approved the subscriber unit request for proposal (RFP), which was awarded to Motorola. WYDOT is working with the AG's Office and Motorola to finalize the contract. A formal announcement will be made once the contract is signed. Mr. Smolinski shared that WYDOT has been able to secure a 57 percent discount off of the listed unit price. The three-year contract will allow state and local agencies ample time to build equipment purchases into their budgets and grant requests.

Mr. Hibbard highlighted the importance of the strategic sourcing that Mr. Babbitt, Mr. Smolinski, and the team have established. He wanted to see WYDOT emphasize this effort in their state of the agency narrative.

#### FirstNet Updates

WYDOT has purchased two FirstNet devices to use for testing. Wyoming Highway Patrol Division Q (in Weston and Crook counties) is operating off of FirstNet modems. Data is currently being collected from these tests.

Mr. Smolinski reported that the team will soon be participating in some mission critical push-to-talk training on merging WyoLink devices with FirstNet systems. The team will meet next week with Motorola and AT&T FirstNet to begin discussions on the critical connect solution. The team wants to have a better understanding of the controls and capabilities of the merged systems before sharing more information publicly with other WyoLink users.

**VII. Public Comment/Announcements**

There was no public comment.

*Commissioner Comments*

Following a question from Commissioner Bertoglio, Director Reiner shared that he would highlight the strategic sourcing tactic in his budget update but also in his reports to the Joint Appropriations Committee and the JTC. He also felt that WYDOT's Public Affairs team could help publicize this effort. Commissioner Bertoglio recommended that any press releases or announcements be shared with the WCCA and the Wyoming Association of Municipalities.

**VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. Chapman provided the 2022 PSCC meeting schedule to the commissioners. The February and August meetings will be in person, and the remaining meetings in May and October will be virtual. If commissioners have conflicts with any of the dates, they are to alert Ms. Chapman as soon as possible.

**IX. ADIJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Commissioner Choma, seconded by Commissioner Frank, and unanimously carried to adjourn the October 13, 2021, business meeting at 4:59 p.m.