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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

First Responder Network Authority

Docket Number: 160728668-6668-01

RIN 0660-XC028

Notice of Availability of a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Central Region of the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network and Notice of Public Meetings

AGENCY: First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of availability of a draft programmatic environmental impact statement and of public meetings.

SUMMARY: The First Responder Network Authority (“FirstNet”) announces the availability of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Central Region (“Draft PEIS”). FirstNet also announces a series of public meetings to be held throughout the Central Region to receive comments on the Draft PEIS. The Draft PEIS evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed nationwide public safety broadband network in the Central Region, composed of Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota,

Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

DATES: Submit comments on the Draft PEIS for the Central Region on or before October 11, 2016. FirstNet will also hold public meetings in each of the 16 states. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for meeting dates.

ADDRESSES: At any time during the public comment period, members of the public, public agencies, and other interested parties are encouraged to submit written comments, questions, and concerns about the project for FirstNet's consideration or to attend any of the public meetings.

Written comments may be submitted electronically via www.regulations.gov, FIRSTNET-2016-0003, or by mail to Genevieve Walker, Director of Environmental Compliance, First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S.

Department of Commerce, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243, Reston, VA 20192. Comments received will be made a part of the public record and may be posted to FirstNet's Web site (www.firstnet.gov) without change. Comments should be machine readable and should not be copy-protected. All personally identifiable information (*e.g.*, name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. The Draft PEIS is available for download from www.regulations.gov, FIRSTNET-2016-0003. A CD containing the electronic files of this document is also available at public libraries (see Chapter 24 of the Draft PEIS for the complete distribution list). See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for public meeting addresses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information on the Draft PEIS, contact Genevieve Walker, Director of Environmental Compliance, First Responder Network Authority, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243, Reston, VA 20192.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Public Meetings

Attendees can obtain information regarding the project and/or submit a comment in person during public meetings. The meeting details are as follows:

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- Des Moines, Iowa: September 7, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Hyatt Place Des Moines/Downtown, 418 6th Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50309
- St. Paul, Minnesota: September 7, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., The Saint Paul Hotel, 350 Market Street, St. Paul, MN 55102
- Indianapolis, Indiana: September 13, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., JW Marriott Indianapolis, 10 S West Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204
- Jefferson City, Missouri: September 13, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Jefferson City, 422 Monroe Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101
- Columbus, Ohio: September 14, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Residence Inn Columbus Downtown, 36 E. Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215
- Topeka, Kansas: September 14, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Capitol Plaza Hotel & Convention Center Topeka, 1717 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66612

- Lincoln, Nebraska: September 15, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., The Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel, 333 South 13th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
- Denver, Colorado: September 20, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Sheraton Denver West Hotel, 360 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, CO 80228
- Bismarck, North Dakota: September 20, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Best Western Plus Ramkota Hotel, 800 South 3rd Street, Bismarck, ND 58504
- Cheyenne, Wyoming: September 21, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Fairfield Inn & Suites Cheyenne Southwest/Downtown Area, 1820 West Lincolnway, Cheyenne, WY 82001
- Pierre, South Dakota: September 21, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Pierre ClubHouse Hotel & Suites, 808 West Sioux Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501
- Salt Lake City, Utah: September 27, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek, 75 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84101
- Madison, Wisconsin: September 27, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Madison, 525 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53703
- Helena, Montana: September 29, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Lewis & Clark Library - Helena Branch, 120 S Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601
- Springfield, Illinois: September 29, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Wyndham Springfield City Centre, 700 East Adams Street, Springfield, IL 62701
- Lansing, Michigan: October 6, 2016, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., East Lansing Marriott at University Place, 300 M.A.C. Avenue, East Lansing, MI 48823

Background

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Pub. L. 112–96, Title VI, 126 Stat. 156 (codified at 47 U.S.C. 1401 *et seq.*)) (the “Act”) created and authorized FirstNet to take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment, and operation of an interoperable, nationwide public safety broadband network (“NPSBN”) based on a single, national network architecture. The Act meets a longstanding and critical national infrastructure need, to create a single, nationwide network that will, for the first time, allow police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical service professionals, and other public safety entities to effectively communicate with each other across agencies and jurisdictions. The NPSBN is intended to enhance the ability of the public safety community to perform more reliably, effectively, and safely; increase situational awareness during an emergency; and improve the ability of the public safety community to effectively engage in those critical activities.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347) (“NEPA”) requires federal agencies to undertake an assessment of environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making a final decision and implementing the action. NEPA requirements apply to any federal project, decision, or action that may have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. NEPA also establishes the Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ”), which issued regulations implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (see 40 CFR parts 1500–1508). Among other considerations, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1508.28 recommend the use of *tiering* from a “broader environmental impact statement (such as a national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analysis (such as regional or basin wide statements or ultimately site-specific statements) incorporating by reference the general discussions and concentrating solely on the issues specific to the statement subsequently prepared.”

Due to the geographic scope of FirstNet (all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories) and the diversity of ecosystems potentially traversed by the project, FirstNet has elected to prepare five regional PEISs. The five PEISs were divided into the East, Central, West, South, and Non-Contiguous Regions. The Central Region consists of Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The Draft PEIS analyzes potential impacts of the deployment and operation of the NPSBN on the natural and human environment in the Central Region, in accordance with FirstNet's responsibilities under NEPA.

Next Steps

All comments received by the public and any interested stakeholders will be evaluated and considered by FirstNet during the preparation of the Final PEIS. Once a PEIS is completed and a Record of Decision (ROD) is signed, FirstNet will evaluate site-specific documentation, as network design is developed, to determine if the proposed project has been adequately evaluated in the PEIS or warrants a Categorical Exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Dated: August 9, 2016

Genevieve Walker

Director of Environmental Compliance

First Responder Network Authority

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