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Public Safety Emphasizes Critical Elements for Creating a Nationwide Network

WASHINGTON, D.C. – April 03, 2008 – Today, following conclusion of the “quiet period” under the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) anti-collusion rules for Auction 73, the Public Safety Spectrum Trust (PSST) shared comments regarding the D block auction.

Chief Harlin McEwen, Chairman of the PSST, said, “The public safety community is, of course, very disappointed that the D Block did not receive a winning bid. However, we applaud the recent comments by Members of Congress and FCC Commissioners confirming their support for creating a nationwide network for first responders by means of a commercial/public safety partnership. If public safety is going to improve its effectiveness in times of critical need, the nation must make available to public safety the technology and resources to communicate effectively. The PSST believes that a commercial/public safety partnership is the only way we will be able to permanently solve our nation’s long-term public safety communications problems. We are committed to working with these decision-makers in order to enable a new auction to happen quickly and to make it a success for all parties.”

Now that Auction 73 is over, the PSST looks forward to discussing with auction participants and other interested parties why they did not bid on the D Block. The PSST also plans to work with the FCC as the FCC develops rules for a follow-on D Block auction, rules that will result in a winning bidder and also meet the critical communications needs of the public safety community. The PSST intends to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the new auction to continue to make information available, to engage in a dialogue with interested bidders, and to make sure its goals are consistent with the public policy objectives of Congress and the FCC.

Chief McEwen stated that in the new auction the PSST, as the advocate of public safety, will be focused on achieving its primary goal: deployment of a commercially viable network that meets public safety’s mission-critical needs. The PSST believes the shared network envisioned by the FCC should include the following elements: a single nationwide network on a shared platform with one common technology standard; public safety control over public safety aspects of the network; population and other coverage milestones, consistent with keeping the cost of network use as low as possible for public safety entities and cost-effective for the commercial partner; public safety priority and pre-emption capability, and network quality and reliability standards; a satellite component; and a source of funding to support public safety operations on the network. The PSST looks forward to finding a solution that can accommodate the needs of public safety in an arrangement that achieves the commercial goals of the D block winner and the policy goals of the regulators.

Chief McEwen stated, “We are concerned about some of the misinformation and speculation that has occurred in the media while the bidders and the PSST were restricted from commenting by the anti-collusion rules. In particular, a number of accounts in the public domain have stated that the PSST and/or Cyren Call have ‘demanded’ a fixed, specified payment. Some of these allegations suggested that the intended result of this was to discourage bidding. Neither allegation is true. It is true that the FCC order states that there is to be a lease between the public safety spectrum holder and the commercial partner, and we had interpreted this as allowing for a fair and reasonable lease payment for the capacity being leased, subject to negotiating a network sharing agreement and subsequent approval by the FCC.”

He added, “The important point is that there must be some acceptable funding source to meet the many tasks and responsibilities assigned to the PSST by the FCC, and those tasks continue over the ten year term of the license. We are a non-profit, dedicated only to the goals of public safety as mandated by the FCC, and we have no source of funding. We continue to believe that a reasonable lease payment would address that need, although we remain flexible to consider, as part of the network sharing agreement, other ways of addressing this.

About the PSST

The PSST, a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, is the Public Safety Broadband Licensee (PSBL), holding an FCC license for public safety spectrum in the upper 700 MHz band designated for nationwide wireless broadband use. The PSST’s mission is to provide national public safety leadership an organizational structure through which decisions can be made to guide the construction and operation of an interoperable nationwide broadband network via a public safety-commercial partnership, ensuring the communications requirements of the public safety community are met. For additional information, visit www.psst.org.

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