

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Petitions Filed by the Boulder Regional)	PS Docket No. 19-254
Emergency Telephone Service Authority)	
)	

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF THE DIGITAL DECISION

The Digital Decision (TDD) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Public Notice issued by the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC/Commission”) Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau.¹ The Notice seeks comment on petitions for Declaratory Ruling and a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) or Notice of Inquiry (NOI) filed by the Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority (BRETSA) that raise legitimate issues that must be addressed to ensure effective interoperable communications for first responders.²

I. BACKGROUND

TDD was founded in 2007 with the mission of establishing true, nationwide interoperable communications for our nation’s first responders. Our team led America’s first two public safety broadband network deployments, negotiated state-wide governance agreements for four states and

¹ *Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Seeks Comment On Petitions Filed By The Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority*, Public Notice, PS Docket 19-254, DA 19-902 (Sept. 11, 2019);

² Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority Petition for Reconsideration, or in the Alternative, Petition for Declaratory Ruling and Petition for Rulemaking, PS Docket No. 16-269, PS Docket No. 12-94, PS Docket 06-229, WT Docket No. 06-150 (filed Nov. 21, 2018) (BRETSA Petitions).

over 67 jurisdictions, and provided expert consulting services to the world's largest commercial carriers and equipment manufacturers. TDD has been an industry leader in public safety interoperable broadband communications for well over a decade and has worked diligently to position numerous jurisdictions and organizations to effectively utilize emerging public safety technologies leveraging wireless broadband deployments. We offer sound solutions that improve customer service offerings while lowering customer costs. TDD has over 200 combined years of subject matter expertise.

II. TDD Supports the BRETSA Petitions

The Notice seeks comment on petitions for Declaratory Ruling and a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) or Notice of Inquiry (NOI) filed by the Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority (BRETSA).³ The petitions raise legitimate issues that must be addressed to ensure effective interoperable communications for first responders.

FirstNet/AT&T and other wireless carriers offer comparable public safety services with priority and preemption available through a dedicated public safety network core. These networks currently provide service to a significant number of public safety customers, and it is reasonable to expect each to continue to do so in the future. Given that communications between users of these different networks can be expected, especially during an event where you have multiple jurisdictions responding to an incident, full interoperability between these networks is critical to ensure effective communications between all responders to the incident. The need for interoperability increases as public safety uses additional commercial networks for its communications.

Standards or agreements between FirstNet/AT&T and other commercial carriers must be put in place to ensure prioritized interoperability for critical public safety applications and access. Based

³ Boulder Regional Emergency Telephone Service Authority Petition for Reconsideration, or in the Alternative, Petition for Declaratory Ruling and Petition for Rulemaking, PS Docket No. 16-269, PS Docket No. 12-94, PS Docket 06-229, WT Docket No. 06-150 (filed Nov. 21, 2018) (BRETSA Petitions).

on the current implementation of the FirstNet network, we foresee a situation where first responders are unable to securely and directly communicate with responders in other jurisdictions, as is currently available on public safety's interoperable statewide P25 LMR networks.

TDD has been a strong advocate for interoperable public safety communications since its inception, and it worked side-by-side with public safety officials to advance federal legislation that would ensure interoperability through the creation of a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network. TDD's founder, Robert LeGrande, II, stressed the importance of interoperability in a pivotal meeting with Members of Congress that ultimately led to the passage of FirstNet legislation, and Congressional leadership agreed that addressing the interoperability problems of the past was a fundamental goal of the FirstNet law. There should be no doubt about the importance of interoperable communications to our nation's first responders, and there should be no question that ensuring interoperability was a fundamental objective of Congress and should be a substantial responsibility of FirstNet.

We agree with BRETSA's request that the Commission should issue a Declaratory Ruling to clarify that interoperability is a fundamental responsibility of FirstNet and that FirstNet should support interoperability at all levels including network, services, applications, and devices.⁴ Also, we agree with BRETSA's request that the Commission issue an NPRM or NOI to consider rules that will best ensure interoperability and promote the development of a public safety ecosystem that is open and interoperable.

All networks supporting public safety communications should be fully interoperable, supporting consistent levels of priority and preemption and ensuring that all public safety voice and data applications work consistently from one network to the other. Such interoperability is logical,

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 1.2; *see also* BRETSA Petitions at 8.

technically feasible, and achievable. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that Congress' goal of interoperable public safety communications is fully realized.

Conclusion

We urge the FCC to act quickly on BRETSA's Declaratory Ruling request that addresses today's critical need for interoperability. Interoperability must be supported at all levels, including network, services, applications, and devices, ensuring reliable communications across broadband networks during active emergency response incidents. Also, we urge the Commission to issue an NPRM or NOI addressing and clarifying the other critical issues for public safety in the FCC's Notice.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert LeGrande, II", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Robert LeGrande, II
Founder and CEO, The Digital Decision