

# Public Radio Embraces Digital Technology

## Public Radio's Conversion to Digital a Necessity

Consumers have consistently and rapidly adopted new digital technologies — CDs, MP3s, DVDs, to name a few — because of the improved quality, choice, convenience and interactivity they provide. This consumer adoption trend shows no sign of slowing. HD Radio technology, now with the FCC's approval, offers public broadcasters and their listeners radically upgraded audio quality and new program choices, along with an on-demand interactive experience and compelling new wireless data services.

HD Radio technology will allow broadcasters to compete on the digital playing field of the 21st century and marks the most significant advancement in radio broadcasting since the introduction of FM stereo more than 50 years ago. HD Radio technology allows for an easy transition for broadcasters and consumers by using the existing infrastructure and spectrum and at the same time preserving the existing analog service for as long as is necessary. Consumers can continue listening to the same local AM/FM stations they love but with the added services and benefits that HD Radio offers.

Public radio stations provide important community services to their listeners in their new digital capacity. The technology enables stations to increase the diversity of their programming by providing supplementary content for their current audience and offering additional programming to their “underserved” audiences, such as second language, ethnic and minority broadcasts, as well as programming targeted for the visual and hearing impaired communities. By using digital transmission, stations are also able to more effectively deliver AMBER alerts, emergency information, evacuation or shelter in place instructions, and ultimately, geographic emergency message targeting.

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## Expanded Public Service Benefits of the Technology

- **Same Channel/Same Frequency** = No new spectrum required, No new channel allocations necessary, Preserves analog service for as long as necessary with no public service loss. **Improved sound clarity** (especially AM) and enhanced reception with less static and interference.
- **Text information services** also incorporated into the signal: artist/song title; local weather; news updates; emergency warnings/public service alerts.
- **Expanded public service opportunities** for public radio with multicasting capabilities:
  - FM digital multicasting: 2 program channels on same frequency.
  - Expanded and new program offerings to unserved and underserved audiences.

## **Transition Update**

- FCC approved In Band On Channel (IBOC) technology (October 2002).
- WUSF, in Tampa, was the first public radio station to go digital (February 2003); KUSC, in Los Angeles, followed in December 2003.
- Currently, more than 300 public radio stations in 42 states have received 460 CPB digital radio conversion grants totaling \$33 million.
- 149 public radio stations are broadcasting digital radio, and 23 stations are multicasting.

## **Costs and Funding**

- **Estimated total transmission conversion cost: \$150 million.**
  - **Federal share of total estimated at approximately \$75 million.**
- **Estimated remaining transmission conversion cost: \$87 million.**
  - **Federal share of remaining cost estimated at approximately \$39.2 million.**

## **Funding History**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Funds</b>	<b>Made available to</b>
FY 03	\$10.6 million	145 stations
FY 04	\$11 million	157 stations
FY 05	\$11.2 million	155 stations
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$32.9 million</b>	<b>457 stations</b>