



NPR Labs Launches CPB-Funded Study on Power Increase for HD Radio

Challenge is to Improve Digital Radio Coverage and Protect Today's Analog FM Services

April 2, 2009, Washington – The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) has awarded a grant to NPR Labs to undertake an expedited Advanced Digital Radio Coverage and Compatibility Study to improve innovative HD Radio™ services. The study will establish industry recommendations for the amount of power increase needed to improve digital radio coverage while protecting the existing analog FM system and its subcarriers, which serve over 32 million public radio and 239 million total FM radio listeners each week. (*Source: ACT1 based on Arbitron Nationwide, Persons Using Radio, Fall 2008, Persons 12+, Mon.-Sun Midnight-Midnight*)

The new study will seek to determine how to maximize HD coverage while minimizing interference with essential analog FM radio services. It will build on earlier research by NPR Labs of digital radio coverage, also funded by CPB. The earlier study revealed that FM services would experience a high level of interference from HD signals in some areas, if the needed power increase was not closely managed.

“We’re pleased CPB has selected NPR Labs to expedite a detailed technical analysis so we can resolve these critical issues,” said Vivian Schiller, NPR President and CEO. “NPR is committed to advancing HD Radio™ and protecting the quality of the listening experience for all of our audiences. If the power increase is not carefully managed, NPR member stations risk losing audience to signal interference.”

“It’s absolutely critical that industry guidelines are established to ensure a well-managed and responsible power increase that maintains universal service for public radio stations,” said Bruce Theriault, CPB Senior Vice President for Radio. “The industry collaboration involved in this study will generate technical data needed to inform decision-making on best options for elevated digital radio power levels.”

The \$350,000 study is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2009 with findings presented to CPB, FCC and the broader industry in time for the National Association of Broadcaster’s Radio Show in Philadelphia in September 2009.

NPR Labs is working with representatives from CPB and several major commercial radio entities, as well as representatives from public radio stations with major investments in digital radio. Major participants with digital operations include American Public Media and Minnesota Public Radio, St. Paul; WABE-FM, Atlanta; WAMU-FM, Washington; WBGO-FM, Newark; WDUQ-FM, Pittsburgh; WFAE-FM, Charlotte; WNYC-FM, New York; WTMD-FM, Towson/Baltimore; WVXU-FM, Cincinnati; WUKY-FM, Lexington, KY; WUSF-FM, Tampa; KJZZ-FM, KBAQ-FM, and SunSounds Radio Reading Service, Phoenix; KQED-FM, San Francisco and KQEI-FM, Sacramento; and KUHF-FM, Houston.

Industry associations participating in the study include: the Consumer Electronics Association, the North American Broadcasters Association, the International Association of Audio Information Services, and the Association of Public Radio Engineers.

About NPR Labs

NPR Labs' mission is to identify, evaluate, and advance the application of innovative technologies in support of the public service mission of NPR and our member stations. A unit within NPR, NPR Labs is the nation's only not-for-profit broadcast radio technology research and development center. The unit works daily on technical research projects supporting the interests of public radio stations across the country. For more information, visit www.nprlabs.org

About NPR's Digital Radio Initiative

This technology enables station operators to split their broadcasts up into multiple channels, providing several digital-quality channels for their audiences. Additional uses of NPR's digital radio initiatives leverage advanced technologies for those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing that will expand captioning to the radio dial. Specially equipped HD Radio™ receivers are in development that will provide the audiences with visual disabilities with better access to radio, such as receivers with audio prompts that speak the digital displays, notifying users which direction the tuner is scanning, what channel the radio is on, what command has been executed, and employing larger, easier-to-read text displays.

More than 1,900 radio stations are currently broadcasting in HD Radio™ in the United States including over 475 public radio stations, most of them members of NPR. Over half of the CPB-qualified stations have been awarded HD Radio™ conversion grants by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

More information on the initiative can be found at www.i-cart.net

About the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

CPB, a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1000 locally owned and operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television, and related on-line services.

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