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NPSTC Urges FCC To Support Adequate Spectrum for Public Safety Broadband Network

(Littleton, Colorado, February 26, 2007)—The National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) believes that deployment of a nationwide public safety broadband network is enormously important and is an essential tool for all public safety agencies. In a comment submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) today, NPSTC stated that the Commission's 9th Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), seeking to promote a national broadband network, does not contain the critical elements needed to make such a public safety network work.¹

NPSTC believes that the 9th NPRM must address critical public safety needs—universal access by all agencies, sufficient spectrum to ensure commercial investment and public/private coexistence on a shared network, a modern network built to public safety standards and ability to accommodate changing requirements, and a governance structure ensuring public safety community control and standards. NPSTC does not believe these attributes can be realized if the network is limited to the 12 MHz of the existing public safety 700 MHz allocation as proposed in the 9th NPRM and there is no structure to sustain access by all public safety agencies.

In addition to the 9th NPRM, the Commission has open proceedings examining the structure of the 700 MHz public safety allocation, the reallocation of 700 MHz guard band segments, and service rules for the yet-to-be auctioned 700 MHz commercial allocation. NPSTC believes that these converging proceedings present a pivotal opportunity to provide the 700 MHz capacity needed to support an economically viable nationwide broadband public safety network, if sufficient spectrum is made available to do so.

NPSTC related that the Public Safety Broadband Trust (PSBT), proposing that 30 MHz of the yet-to-be auctioned spectrum in the upper 700 MHz band be committed to public safety communications for a nationwide interoperable broadband network, is a sound plan for a viable network. It also noted that the proposal of 700 MHz guard band licensees will afford additional channels and flexibility to public safety agencies.

NPSTC stated that within the PSBT concept, the guard band licensee proposal and the 9th NPRM is a path to a nationwide public safety broadband network that will unify public safety and improve quality and coverage significantly. To achieve this unity there must be the dedication of spectrum that is adequate to support the initiative. The Congress, Administration, FCC, public safety and private interests now have a short opportunity to enact and structure a nationwide broadband network that will be a critical tool for the public safety mission.

NPSTC is a federation of organizations whose mission is to improve public safety communications and interoperability through collaborative leadership.

1/ FCC PS Docket No. 06-229, WT Docket 96-86