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San Jose and Oakland locked out of emergency broadband test

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San Jose has been shut out of a federally funded rollout of a broadband emergency communications network in the Bay Area, and city and county officials want to know why.

Those officials fear that losing out on a \$50 million grant may eventually mean they could lose out on a \$604 million full-scale buildout of a more reliable and cheaper communications system for emergency responders, along with the construction work and jobs that go with it.

Mayor Chuck Reed and County Executive Jeff Smith have questioned how the grant was awarded to **Motorola Inc.** and asked the **Department of Commerce** to withhold the money until their questions can be answered.

At the center of their concerns is how Motorola and a Bay Area group chose the cities and counties for the pilot project, dubbed "Project Cornerstone."

The group that determined participants in the pilot project is the Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiative, or UASI, which is run by Executive Director Laura Phillips. She came to the UASI after working in government relations at Motorola and serving as a public safety official in Sunnyvale and San Francisco, two of the cities that have been chosen to participate. She also started her career as an emergency dispatcher in San Jose, which was not chosen.

Reed and Smith, in a Sept. 8 letter sent to U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, said the process that was used to select Motorola as the vendor for the broadband initiative funded by Federal Recovery Act dollars "doesn't reflect our standard for accepted procurement practices."

The city said despite the UASI's "approval authority" board — which includes representatives from the **San Jose Fire Department**, **Oakland's Department of Emergency Services**, CalEMA, San Francisco's **Emergency Management Department**, the **San Francisco Fire Department** and the Alameda County Sheriff's Department — no vote was ever taken on which cities would participate in the pilot program.

Motorola stays mum

According to a statement from Motorola, the cities of Santa Clara, Sunnyvale and San Francisco, as well as Alameda and Contra Costa counties, will participate in the pilot of the unified, state-of-the-art broadband network serving multiple agencies across the Bay Area. The pilot program is supposed to begin in mid-October, according to trade publication **Urgent Communications**.

Asked to describe how the cities were chosen for the rollout, Motorola spokesman Matt Messinger said Motorola "doesn't comment on customer deployments prior to system completion and customer acceptance," and referred questions about system details to UASI.

Phillips could not be reached for comment in time for this paper's deadline.

Motorola said the full public safety system will be installed this year and is expected to be operational in 2011. A combination of federal, local and state funding is planned to pay for the full \$604 million buildout. The system is known as an LTE, which is short for Long Term Evolution of Universal Terrestrial Radio Access Network. Such networks can be used for fixed, portable and wireless broadband access and are aimed at increasing capacity, reducing network complexity and lowering costs.

Oakland questions award

Oakland has also joined in questioning the Project Cornerstone funding after it too was apparently shut out of the rollout phase of the project. In a Sept. 3 letter to UASI, the city's interim **Information Technology** director, Ken Gordon, said the initial \$6 million in grant funding for the project was to be divided evenly between Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose. San Jose says the \$2 million it was supposed to get for the initial rollout was reallocated without its permission.

So the city officials want to know what happened.

While Gordon's formal appeal was specific to Oakland, he wrote that Oakland, San Jose and San Francisco were pivotal in securing a waiver from the **Federal Communications Commission** that will grant Motorola the rights to the 700 MHz public safety spectrum needed for the project.

At least part of the network was slated to be operational beginning Oct. 15 for the 2010 "Urban Shield," a simulation to demonstrate the Bay Area's ability to manage ongoing critical incidents through the use of multiple incident commands.

The exercise is described as a "critical component" for the Bay Area's mission for homeland security.

Emergency broadband project

What it is:

A broadband emergency communications network linking police and fire in multiple cities and counties in the Bay Area, expected to cost \$604 million.

How it is funded:

A public-private partnership between Motorola and the Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiative applied for Federal Recovery dollars. The U.S. Department of Commerce allocated a \$50 million grant to the partnership for a pilot project.

Who is the Bay Area Urban Area Security Initiative?

The UASI is made up of representatives from the following:

- San Jose Fire Department
- Oakland's Department of Emergency Services
- CalEMA
- San Francisco's Emergency Management Department
- San Francisco Fire Department
- Alameda County Sheriff's Department

Participants in the pilot project:

Cities of Santa Clara, Sunnyvale and San Francisco, as well as Alameda and Contra Costa counties

When:

The pilot program is expected to begin in mid-October. The full buildout is expected to begin this year and be operational by 2011.

The conflict:

San Jose and Oakland say no vote was taken by members of the UASI for which regions would participate in the pilot program, and say part of the grant that they were promised was reallocated without their permission.

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