

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Study Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: October 14, 2014 **Start Time:** 11:00 am **Length:** 1 hour

Presentation Title: Federal Agenda Update

Department: Public and Government Affairs

Presenters: Gary Schmidt

Other Invitees: Chris Lyons, Public and Government Affairs
Hal Hiemstra, Michelle Giguere and Mark Dedrick, Summit Strategies

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

None. This is an informational update of the County's 2015 federal agenda.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In January, the Board of County Commissioners approved the County's 2015 federal agenda:

- Support continuation of the **Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act** (county timber payments).
- Support legislation **for responsible management of federal forest lands.**
- Advocate for passage of a **surface transportation reauthorization bill.**
- Secure funding to support **Sunrise Phase II and I-205 expansion.**
- Support continued operation and restoration of the **Willamette Falls Locks**, designation of the **Willamette Falls Heritage Area**, and funding to support **Blue Heron redevelopment.**
- Support **critical funding programs** for Juvenile Services; Public Safety; Emergency Management; Health, Housing and Human Services.

In February, Commissioners Schrader and Smith visited Washington, D.C. to promote the County's federal agenda by meeting with Congressional members and staff and federal agency representatives. In April, Chair Ludlow and Commissioner Savas visited D.C. to do the same. In September, Commissioners Bernard and Smith visited D.C. to do the same.

The County contracts with the lobbying firm Summit Strategies to develop and implement strategies to accomplish County goals. Today, the Summit Strategies team is present to discuss the current federal climate and update the Board on the status of the County's federal priorities. Attached is a memo from Summit Strategies.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Depending on action or inaction by Congress, the County may face reduced or eliminated federal revenue sources for key County programs. Potential implications are outlined in the attached Congressional Update Memo.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

N/A

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

Public and Government Affairs (PGA) continues to work closely with the Board of Commissioners, County Administration and County departments to develop strategies and approaches to pursue federal funding for important County projects and to guide federal policy issues that have the potential to impact Clackamas County. PGA also continues to build and maintain effective partnerships with the Congressional delegation members and staff to work together on these shared priorities.

OPTIONS:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

- Congressional Update Memo from Summit Strategies
- County 2015 Federal Agenda

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____

Department Director/Head Approval s/Gary Schmidt

County Administrator Approval _____



MEMORANDUM

TO: Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Hal Hiemstra
Michelle Giguere
Mark Dedrick

DATE: October 7, 2015

CLIENT: Clackamas County

RE: Congressional Update

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you at your October 14, 2015, Policy Session. We appreciate the chance to provide you with a brief Congressional update and hope this summary will be helpful to you prior to our discussion.

House Leadership Elections

With House Speaker John Boehner set to resign at the end of this month, there will be significant changes in the leadership of the House. Speaker Boehner has set a vote to select a new Speaker for October 29. Following the election of a new Speaker, the new Speaker will set the election date for other House leaders. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who hails from the Bakersfield area in California, is the current frontrunner for Speaker, but it is not clear that he has enough votes to win especially now that Rep. Jason Chaffetz of Utah has entered the race and all the Democrats are likely to vote for House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California. Oregon's own Greg Walden is likely to remain in his leadership position of head of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rogers of Spokane, WA, chairs the Republican Caucus in the House. She momentarily entered the ring for the position of Majority Leader but quickly exited that race. She is the highest ranking woman in the Republican leadership in the House.

Possible Budget Deal in the Works?

Last week, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Speaker John Boehner announced that they will enter into budget talks with President Obama to consider wiping away the automatic spending cuts to defense and nondefense programs, known as sequestration. Without adjustments to current sequestration levels, the FY2016 Appropriation process has been unable to move forward.



Some in the Republican Caucus are concerned about a budget deal being struck by Speaker Boehner, but those concerns have not yet discouraged talk about a significant budget deal that would add potentially \$76 billion to defense spending and a similar amount to non-defense spending. Finding a way to pay for these spending increases will be difficult, however, with some Republicans emphasizing that they don't want to see a deal that will bust the nation's budget. Senator McConnell is telling GOP colleagues that he supports significant reforms to Social Security and Medicare, but Democratic leaders are saying to the President that they won't support such a deal. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi wields significant leverage in these discussions given her ability to keep the Democratic side of the aisle unified.

While Speaker Boehner would like to see a budget package include a multi-year transportation bill, and corporate tax reform, it is not at all clear that this will be possible. Reauthorizing the Export-import Bank could also be rolled into ongoing budget discussions. Chances for success shouldn't be considered high, but Speaker Boehner has a wider degree of freedom now than he once had and may be able to find the right formula for a final budget deal.

2015 Clackamas County Federal Priorities:

Despite the unknowns concerning the upcoming House leadership elections and the impact they will have on the appropriations process, we will continue to advocate for the County's positions and communicate on a regular basis with you and your policy team, with Oregon's Congressional delegation, and with relevant committee staff and agencies within the Administration.

Following are brief updates on the federal FY16 legislative process and the County's 2015 federal legislative priorities.

Economic Development

- **Federal Forest Management and O&C Lands**
- **Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act**

Last year saw significant action on O&C lands legislation, with many proposals being introduced and considered. This year has been a bit more quiet. Senator Wyden has re-introduced a slightly changed version of his package from last year, and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has held a hearing.

Summit Strategies has been working with the Oregon Congressional delegation, the House Natural Resources Committee, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Governor Brown, and other Oregon counties throughout this process to ensure that Clackamas County's interests are known and addressed as legislation moves forward.

The Secure Rural Schools program was reauthorized for two years in April of 2015, as part of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act. The two years of payments authorized for the SRS program cover FY2014 and 2015. This program will need to be reauthorized if payments are to continue through FY 2016. The President's FY 2016 budget called for a five



year reauthorization of SRS, with mandatory funding starting at \$257 million for FY2015 and declining to \$97 million by FY2019.

Wildfires

With the difficult wildfire season this year there has been a great deal of work done to move legislation to treat wildfires as emergencies, much in the way that hurricanes and tornadoes are considered emergencies – instead of robbing all other USFS accounts to pay for firefighting and clean up. Just last week, Congress approved and the President signed the Continuing Resolution to fund the government and it included \$700 million for “urgent” wildland fire suppression activities. In addition, bipartisan efforts in the House and Senate, including both Senators Wyden and Murkowski and Congressman Schrader and Cong. Walden, have introduced legislation to increase the funding available for these efforts. Earlier this year Senator Wyden, along with Senator Crapo from Idaho, introduced the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act. It is designed to end the cycle of underfunding fire suppression, which currently forces federal agencies to steal from fire prevention funding to fight fires. Congressman Walden’s Resilient Federal Forests Act (H.R.2647) passed the House on a vote of 262-167 in July, but it has not yet been considered in the Senate.

Transportation

• **Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill** – In late July, after a slow start earlier this year caused by disagreements over how to fund a six year surface transportation bill, the Senate finally passed its version of a “long-term” MAP- 21 reauthorization bill. Called the “DRIVE Act,” the bill includes six year of authorization, but only three years of funding. Following the Senate action, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee announced that it would move forward with its own MAP- 21 reauthorization bill in September. But like the Senate, that effort has been bogged down by a lack of agreement over funding sources, and the House has yet to introduce, let alone pass a long-term reauthorization bill. Currently, action on a House bill may happen within the next few weeks, but not before another short term extension of MAP- 21 will be required. The next extension is expected to run until the end of this year.

If the House T&I Committee is able to pass a bill this month, there is a reasonable chance that a final bill can be hammered out between the Senate and the House by the end of this year. That bill would likely include funding for approximately three years. The practical implications of this are that once the Presidential election is completed, much of the next Congress would also be taken up with discussions about long-term transportation policy and funding.

With regard to the Senate’s bill, there are new programs and initiatives in the Drive Act that could eventually be beneficial to the County if they are included in a final conferenced reauthorization bill. One new program provides significant new levels of funding for projects that will enhance freight movement. The national Freight Program will distribute to states by formula, between \$1 and \$2 billion annually, for freight projects. A smaller new freight program will provide \$200 million dollars annually for discretionary freight mobility projects. Another new program will provide between \$250 and \$350 million in discretionary funding for the Assistance for Major Projects (AMP) program. Any of these programs could be beneficial to efforts to add



capacity to I-205 or extend the Sunrise System given the heavy freight mobility aspects of both projects.

Of course, Rep. Peter DeFazio sits as the most senior Democrat on the House Transportation Committee. As the ranking Minority Member, Rep. DeFazio is directly involved in negotiating policy and programmatic positions that will be included in the House transportation bill. We continue to meet frequently with Rep. DeFazio and his staff to ensure that they keep the County's transportation priorities in mind as they write and negotiate on any final bill. Cong. Blumenauer continues his forceful advocacy for financing mechanisms from his seat on the Ways & Means Committee, as does Sen. Wyden with his position on the Senate Finance Committee. Senator Merkley played a key role on the Senate bill from his positions on both the Senate Environment and Public Works and the Banking committees.

Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) Designation: Improvements to I-205 was previously nominated by ODOT as a PNRS project. In late 2014, ODOT nominated the Sunrise System for designation as an additional PNRS project. Unfortunately, despite a spring 2015 deadline, USDOT has yet to announce its list of additional PNRS projects beyond the initial list of 25 projects that includes the I-5 Bridge as the only Oregon project. At this time, no specific discretionary funding has been made available by Congress for PNRS projects, but the Drive Act's discretionary AMP Program is quite similar to a funded-PNRS program. There is considerable speculation that the House will either include discretionary funding for a PNRS program or possibly agree to the new AMP Program when it releases its draft bill later this month or in early November.

• **Waters of the United States**

On May 27, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) jointly announced a final rule defining the scope of waters protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The rule would revise regulations that have been in place for more than 24 years.

Legal challenges were filed in multiple federal courts soon after the rule was finalized. These lawsuits, filed by industry groups, 30 states, and several environmental groups, will test whether the agency's interpretation of CWA jurisdiction is consistent with the Supreme Court's rulings and whether the rule complies with substantive and procedural requirements of the CWA and other laws.

Many Members of Congress are strongly opposed to the Administration's actions, and there are numerous efforts in both the House and Senate to block it. While it is possible to pass rule-blocking legislation out of the House and Senate, any such legislation would face a Presidential veto and a lack of sufficient votes to overturn a veto.

FY'16 Appropriations

Throughout the past year Summit Strategies has worked with the County to identify federal programs that matter the most to the County, and that provide significant resources. We have



worked with the Oregon Congressional delegation and the Appropriations Committees to provide details about how the County has used these federal dollars, and the impact changes to the program would have. We have outlined some of these programs below, and their current status in Congress.

Health, Housing and Human Services

The Transportation-HUD (THUD) Appropriations bill passed in the House in June of this year. It has passed out of committee in the Senate, but has yet to pass the full body.

- **Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing and Capital Fund Programs**

The Senate version of this legislation includes \$10.8 billion, while the House includes \$19.9 billion. The FY15 Omnibus Appropriations bill included \$19.3 billion.

- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funding**

The Senate version of this bill includes \$2.9 billion for CDBG, while the House includes \$3 billion, the same amount as the FY15 Omnibus. The Senate includes \$66 million for HOME, while the House includes the same \$900 million as the FY15 Omnibus.

- **Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS)**

Both the House and Senate direct the Census to continue to use ACS to innovate and collect data.

- **Weatherization and Energy Assistance Programs**

The Senate included \$197 million for Low Income Weatherization Assistance grant program. The House included \$190 million, the same as the FY15 Omnibus. The Senate includes \$3.39 billion for LIHEAP versus \$3.365 from the House. The FY15 Omnibus included \$3.39 billion.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

Both the House and Senate include \$81.7 billion for SNAP. The FY15 Omnibus included \$81.8 billion.

Public Safety

- **Juvenile Justice Funding**

The House-passed Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill includes \$183.5 million for Juvenile Justice programs, which is \$68 million below FY15 and \$155.9 million below the administration's request. The Senate included \$294.5 million.



Willamette Falls Locks

Tremendous efforts underway by the County and stakeholders are yielding great results in terms of developing better relationships with the Corps of Engineers and development of an effort to create a pilot project and study on how the federal government might dispose of the Locks and transfer them to an eligible entity. We are attending local meetings with the Locks working group and regularly update the Oregon congressional delegation. We are currently working with your policy team and project partners to encourage the Congressional delegation to make a push for inclusion of study funding into the President's budget for FY'17. As you know, we worked extremely closely with Senator Wyden's office on his recent visit to Oregon City and Commissioners visiting Washington throughout the year have been able to reinforce the County's strong support and interest in reopening the Locks.

Willamette Falls Legacy Project/Masterplan for Redevelopment:

We continue to work with County officials and project partners on redevelopment of the former Blue Heron mill site. We have helped to coordinate multiple visits and tours by congressional staff and work closely with all the stakeholders on this project. We have provided information and timelines on various federal grant programs and have helped to coordinate and attend meetings in D.C. by County, Metro, and other officials. With the Riverwalk/public access project's design and engineering team having now been selected, some of the federal grant programs that we have identified are becoming riper for applications.

We worked very closely with your staff and others to help coordinate Senator Wyden's recent visit to Oregon City and worked diligently to ensure that the Locks, the Blue Heron Redevelopment, and the Heritage area were all covered during the briefing with Senator Wyden, and we also worked with his staff to ensure the attendance and participation of key federal agencies.

Willamette Falls Heritage Area:

The County and stakeholders' efforts to move a heritage area designation forward made great strides with approvals in Salem and passage of SB131. We are working closely with County staff and the working group to make sure that when it is timely, new legislation on federal designation will be easier to move forward. We have assisted the County with meetings in D.C. with officials from the Department of Interior and are in regular communication with the partners on the project.

Additional Recent Outreach on behalf of the County

Summit Strategies continues to represent the County in a variety of ways not identified above. We have advised the County on issues associated with the Aurora Airport Tower and helped to coordinate Congressional outreach to the FAA about funding for the tower. We also continue to advise your policy team about National Marine Fisheries policies associated with sea lion control, and have shared with the Oregon Congressional delegation the County's concerns



SUMMIT STRATEGIES

Memorandum to the Clackamas County
Board of County Commissioners
October 7, 2015
Page 7

about conflicts between sea lions, fisheries, and public safety. We met with Congressional offices on the Cooper Spur land exchange, and provided support for the County's communication with Congress regarding the scheduled October 8 Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing.

Finally, as we did with Commissioner trips to Washington D.C. in February, April and September of this year, we always stand ready to advise and coordinate such visits and look forward to the next visits by County officials.

**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

Executive Summary

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Federal Forest Management and Oregon & California (O&C) Lands

Support legislation for responsible management of federal forest lands, including O&C Lands, which improves the financial stability of counties and creates a predictable, long-term solution to county revenue needs. Federal forest legislation should balance economic, social, and environmental values so that significant areas of federal forests are dedicated to the production of forest products, while other forests are dedicated to environmental protection.

Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act

Support future reauthorization or extension of the expired Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (County Payments) or similar legislation. Extending the Secure Rural Schools Act would continue critical funding to timber dependent counties in Oregon while Congress works to enact legislation to allow for responsible management of federal forest lands. This historically important source of revenue, derived from federal O&C Lands, is critical to timber-dependent counties in Oregon, including Clackamas County. From 2001-2008, the Act provided the County approximately \$12 million per year for the county road and general funds.

Stewardship Contracting

Support reauthorization of Stewardship Contracting within the Healthy Forests Restoration Act that would include payments to counties as part of the retained receipts generated from stewardship contracts for the management of federal forests.

TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT

Sunrise Phase II Funding

Advocate for federal funding to support extension of the Sunrise System from 122nd Ave. to 172nd Ave. or other operational enhancements that contribute to the entire Sunrise System. The Sunrise Phase II project is the County's top transportation priority and is listed as a Federal Highway Administration Project of National and Regional Significance. This project is vital to improving access to thousands of acres of employment lands, many of which are ready for development.

I-205 Expansion Funding

Advocate for federal funding to support an additional lane of capacity in each direction of I-205 from Stafford Road to OR 99E. The I-205 expansion project is listed as a Federal Highway Administration Project of National and Regional Significance and is of vital importance to the Portland metropolitan region. Without additional travel lanes, this section of I-205 will be overwhelmed by forecasted traffic volumes and will negatively impact regional freight mobility.

**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

Executive Summary, continued

Transportation Reauthorization

Advocate for Congress to fix the Highway Trust Fund and pass a multi-year surface transportation authorization bill that adequately funds the maintenance and construction of roads in order to improve the reliability and safety of the transportation system and to meet the needs of an interconnected economy. Insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund threatens the viability of numerous transportation projects in Clackamas County that could receive funding through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and regional flexible funds.

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program Funding

Support continued federal funding of the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, which works to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.

Waters of the U.S.

Oppose the proposed Waters of the U.S. rule that seeks to clarify federal jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, which has the potential to greatly expand the scope of federal jurisdiction and subject Clackamas County to new rules, standards, and significant new costs.

WILLAMETTE FALLS

Willamette Falls Legacy Project

Support efforts to aid in the redevelopment of the 23-acre former Blue Heron paper mill site adjacent to Willamette Falls in Oregon City. Clackamas County has been working in partnership with Oregon City, Metro, and the State of Oregon to explore the feasibility of redeveloping the site, which presents significant structural and environmental challenges. The site's location provides a rare opportunity for a unique economic redevelopment project that would complement and strengthen Oregon City's downtown and create a regionally-significant visitor amenity and historic tourist attraction to benefit the local economy.

Willamette Falls Locks

Support continued operation and restoration of the Willamette Falls Locks so that they may continue to be an economic, recreational, and historic driver to the region. The Locks bridge the upper and lower stretches of the Willamette River, without which the Willamette becomes two disconnected rivers for navigation purposes. The Locks were operated safely under a reduced schedule until November 2011, when an inspection discovered the gates were in danger of fracture and could not be safely operated. Clackamas County remains a member of the One Willamette River Coalition and seeks federal support to repair and reopen the Willamette Falls Locks.

Willamette Falls Heritage Area

Support federal designation of the Willamette Falls Heritage Area. Designation as a historic area will strengthen the identity of the historic working communities of Oregon City and West Linn by preserving and promoting their distinctive natural, cultural, scenic, recreational, and industrial resources. Clackamas County remains an active partner in the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition and fully supports federal designation of the Willamette Falls as a National Heritage Area.

**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

Executive Summary, continued

HEALTH, HOUSING & HUMAN SERVICES

Funding for Housing Programs

Support increased funding for the housing choice voucher, public housing, and capital fund programs, which is critical to maintaining a sustainable level of operations for the Clackamas County Housing Authority. In particular, the Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8) provides assistance to 1,531 families in Clackamas County that rent units in the private rental housing market. Any further reduction in federal funds would require the County to subsidize the voucher program or significantly reduce service levels.

Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program Regulatory Relief

Support reform of the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs to reduce administration, streamline process, and benefit clients. Over the past four years, funding to the County to administer these programs has been reduced, yet the administrative rules, regulations, and processes have not lessened commensurately. Many housing authorities are at risk of not meeting compliance standards simply because staff levels needed to complete the required documentation have been reduced to bare minimums.

Moving to Work (MTW) Program

Support expansion of the Moving to Work (MTW) Program, which provides public housing authorities with the opportunity to test innovative, locally-designed strategies with the aim of using federal dollars more efficiently while helping residents find employment and increasing housing choices for low-income families.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Funding

Support funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). CDBG funds are the only funds available to the County to construct infrastructure improvements in low income areas, while the HOME program is a keystone in the development of any affordable housing project in the County.

Older Americans Act (OAA)

Support reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA), which is the major vehicle for the organization and delivery of social and nutrition services to seniors. In FY13-14, over 249,165 meals were served to 3,684 seniors by the 10 senior centers operating in Clackamas County.

Weatherization and Energy Assistance Programs

Oppose funding reductions to the Department of Health & Human Services' Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Department of Energy's Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program. Clackamas County receives approximately \$1 million per year in federal energy assistance to help meet the heat and electricity needs of more than 3,000 low-income households in the County.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Funding

Oppose funding reductions to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. The SNAP program has grown significantly in Clackamas County, from 18,897 recipients in FY06-07 to 41,745 recipients in FY13-14. It is an essential benefit to many individuals and families.

**FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

Executive Summary, continued

Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) Rule

Support elimination of the Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) Rule for addictions and mental health treatment facilities, which are currently prohibited from receiving Medicaid reimbursements for persons between the ages of 22 and 64 if the facility has more than 16 beds.

Privacy Protections for Addictions

Support careful revision of federal regulations relating to privacy protections of alcohol and drug abuse patient records to enable improved information sharing for people with addictions.

Public Health Funding

Support funding increases to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Prevention and Public Health Fund. These programs are critical to assisting public health departments with prevention activities, as well as efforts to prepare for responding to a range of public health threats.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Juvenile Justice Grant Funding

Support continued federal funding of juvenile justice programs, including the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDNA) Title II State Formula Grants Program, JJDNA Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Grants Program, and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants. These monies support programs that are based in evidence, proven to prevent delinquency, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety – critical investments that are worth the cost. In particular, the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant provides approximately \$115,000 annually to the County Juvenile Department for youth services.

Emergency Management Performance Grant

Support continuation of grant funding for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program as a stand-alone grant and process, which provides approximately \$208,000 annually to the County's emergency management program. EMPG is the backbone of the nation's emergency management system and provides key assistance in building and implementing the county's emergency management capabilities. The grant includes funding for staff and program materials for emergency management plan updates, relationship building, response, and recovery. It is important that funding continue in order to support local emergency management as the number and frequency of natural disasters in the United States continue to rise.

First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)

Support FirstNet, which was created by Congress in 2012 and is working to build, operate, and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety. This network will be an essential tool to first responders on life-saving missions.