



**ALMR User Council
Meeting Minutes**

Date: March 2, 2022

1. Attendance.

P = Present	T = Via Telephone	E = Excused	U = Unexcused	N/A = Not required
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User Council Members

Primary				
T	Angell	James	SSgt	DOD USAF, JBER
T	Atkinson	Ross	Mr.	Fed Non-DOD DOI, BLM-Alaska Fire Service
T	Goggia-Cockrell	Tammy	Ms.	Municipalities Central
	VACANT			DOD US Army - Alaska
T	Berrian	Keith	Deputy Chief	Municipalities North, Chena Goldstream Fire & Rescue
U	Kalwara	Erann	Ms.	Municipalities Southeast
T	Kroona	Jon	Mr.	Federal Non-DOD DOJ, FBI
T	Nelson	James	Officer	Fed Non-DOD All Others, US Forest Service
T	Martin	Chris	Mr.	DOD USAF, Eielson AFB
T	Cole	Henry	Mr.	SOA DOT
T	Rockwell	John	Mr.	SOA DPS, Chair
T	Skinner	Nate	Mr.	SOA All Others, DNR Forestry

Alternate				
U	Boyce	Timothy	Mr.	Fed Non-DOD DOI, National Park Service
N/A	Brown	David	Mr.	Fed Non-DOD DOJ, FBI
N/A	Carrier	Chasen	A1C	DOD USAF, JBER
T	Green	Kyle	Fire Marshal	Municipalities North, University Fire Department
T	Goodman	Jim	Mr.	Municipalities Central, MatSu Borough
N/A	Maley	Christopher	TSgt	DOD USAF, Eielson AFB
T	Nelsen	Scott	Mr.	SOA All Others, DMVA, Vice Chair
T	Nicolazzo	Jill	Ms.	SOA DOT
N/A	Roberts	Rick	Captain	SOA DPS
N/A	Scott	Heath	Chief	Municipalities Southeast, Haines Borough PD
T	Williams	Rick	Mr.	DOD, US Army - Alaska
T	Young	Sam	Mr.	Fed Non-DOD All Others, TSA

Supporting Staff and Guests:

P	Nelson	Dan	Mr.	Operations Manager
T	Patterson	Dave	Mr.	Motorola Solutions
T	Reed	David	Mr.	Information Systems Security Manager
T	Richter	Bruce	Mr.	DHS
T	Rogell	Pete	Mr.	BK Technologies
T	Shafer	Sherry	Ms.	ALMR Document Specialist
T	Thometz	Tim	Mr.	Icom America
T	Woodall	Timothy	Mr.	ALCOM PM/COR



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2. Meeting Minutes and Action Items.

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action Items Assigned
Call to Order	Mr. John Rockwell called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.	
Roll Call	Roll call was taken, and a quorum of User Council (UC) members was in attendance. Mr. Nate Skinner and Mr. Bruce Richter joined the meeting after the roll call was read.	
Introduction of Guests/Special Announcements	There were no special announcements.	
Previous Meeting Minutes	John asked if everyone if they had reviewed the February meeting minutes and if there were any requested changes. Hearing none, John requested a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. Motion: Approve the February meeting minutes as presented. Motion: Ms. Scott Nelsen Second: Mr. Henry Cole There were no objections. The motion passed.	
Issues & Risks Log	Updates	Action Items Assigned
	John noted UC84 for the vacant alternate position for DOD Eielson was now closed as TSgt Christopher Maley's appointment had been approved by the Executive Council. Mr. Henry Cole UC80 would be closed shortly as soon as the paperwork made its way to the Chair and Operations Management Office (OMO). He stated he had been appointed to the primary position and Ms. Jill Nicolazzo was appointed as the new alternate.	
	Issues Closed at, or since, last meeting	
	N/A	
Action Items	Review	Resolution
	John noted there were no new action items, just the one currently being carried over from December 2020.	
Operations Management Office	Mr. Dan Nelson, Operations Manager	Action Items Assigned
Training	1. Mr. Dan Nelson advised the quarterly training occurred yesterday morning with a live, interactive training session on radio programming best practices with about 45 attendees present. He noted as soon as the recording gets processed, it will be posted on the website. Dan also stated there were	



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<p>Zone Controller Rollover</p>	<p>some very good comments received through the evaluation survey.</p> <p>2. Dan stated ALMR is in the middle of their quarterly zone controller rollover with the first half completed this morning. He advised the ALMR office will complete the second half of the rollover tomorrow and for those that aren't aware, the rollover is maintenance for patching of the system controllers in each zone. Dan explained there are redundant controllers at each master site, the primary active controller and a backup, and during the rollover the controller is switched to the backup side and the Motorola team works to patch that throughout the day. He added he next morning the controller is switched back to the primary side and then the secondary backup is patched. Dan noted these are done in the in the early morning hours, so as not disrupting any system traffic. He stated there is a brief interruption, and today, it was about 10 seconds. Dan advised the OMO and System Management Office (SMO) will call each dispatch center to check with them before ALMR makes the switchover, and then notifies them again when it's completed to ensure that there are no unforeseen issues.</p>	
<p>Annual Inventory Confirmation Forms</p>	<p>3. Dan briefed the annual confirmation is still ongoing. He noted it is a requirement by legislative audit for the point of contact for each of our member agencies to certify the inventory of their subscriber units. Dan advised member agencies received their detailed inventory lists near the end of 2021 and the signature page attesting that those inventories are correct are due no later than April 29th. He added the OMO currently has about 60 forms returned, which is a little less than half. Dan stated the OMO is sending reminders out to agencies and also asked the User Council representatives to encourage their agencies to get those returned before April 29.</p>	
<p>February Document Reviews</p>	<p>4. Dan advised there was only one document review in February, which was the Strategic and Operational Plan and it was reviewed and approved with no substantive changes made.</p>	
<p>February System Metrics</p>	<p>5. Dan stated the metrics for February compared to January, saw a downturn in calls and push the talks with group and individual calls at 1,086,448 which is a decrease of 62,934. He added puh to talks were similarly down about 123,000 to 1,961,987 and although we are seeing a decrease in in traffic and usage of the system for February, when compared to this time last year, it is continuing to increase. Dan advised for the month of February there were 226 busies which was up by 9, and also 27 additional subscribers bringing the total subscribers on the system, not including in the Municipality of Anchorage to 24,663 units.</p>	



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<p>International Wireless Communications Expo</p> <p>Site Prioritization</p> <p>TDMA Transition Planning</p>	<p>Dan briefed there were six radio sites below three nines which mainly that had to do with the backhaul and commercial circuit issues, as well as site maintenance. He reminded the council he had mentioned Hill 3265 power issues last month from the fiber cut and that had been resolved.</p> <p>Dan stated the website we had 234 unique sessions, 661 total page views, and 59% of the views were new visitors.</p> <p>6. Dan briefed he would be traveling to the International Wireless Communications Expo (IWCE) at the end of the month and speaking at that convention as well as being able to network and get some information on some of the new technologies and developments which he would report back to the User Council next month</p> <p>7. Dan advised there is currently a lot of talk ongoing about the budget priorities, legislative priorities as well as a lot of discussion about the forthcoming infrastructure bill and guidance from that and he wanted to remind the council the last time that they formally prioritized a list of sites and coverage areas for any potential funding or actions that could be taken was back in 2016. He noted there have been a few updates to that list that have been resolved, but he thought it might be a good idea for us to look at this together and talk about some of the specific areas. Dan briefed, for those that weren't familiar with some of the other discussions, there are some duplicates on the list in some areas that well known and there are still some areas that are not represented but the list represents our feedback and what was obtained from this survey.</p> <p>Dan stated the OMO wanted to send the list out and if the User Council representatives had any knowledge of any additional areas or wanted to solicit feedback one more time from any of your member agencies it would be a good idea to put that on for new business next month and talk about the full matrix when some of the technical staff are present. He asked if there was any objection to that.</p> <p>John stated he appreciated Dan bringing this issue up to the attention to the council and he had no objections to sending it out to the group. He added that hopefully there would be some good feedback and maybe some prioritizations. John clarified he didn't expect a list of 1 to 100 necessarily, but if we could get the top three priorities that would be wonderful.</p> <p>8. Dan briefed last week at the Executive Council (EC) there were some discussions about the TDMA transition and there</p>	
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	<p>are also a lot of questions coming into the Help Desk and the SMO office about when that date will be for transition. He noted during the discussion at the EC meeting the consensus was it may be very helpful to have a specific date and a plan in place to be able to give out to users right now.</p> <p>Dan reminded the group that ALMR has not set a date and it is still on the action items list from December 2020 to do so. He explained the reason behind this is we are still in the upgrade process of replacing the Quantars and this has created a very complex project to manage due to the many outside variables created by the Motorola team in that we don't know exactly when TDMA will be turned up on the System. Dan advised that the ALMR offices were looking at the December or January timeframe for that to be completed, but he cautioned the council that this is one of those variables.</p> <p>Dan stated despite all this ALMR agreed that they were at a point where we can build a plan for approval by the User Council that we can put out to our members and feel confident that we have something that is reasonable and sustainable for all of our agencies despite some significant downsides. He explained by this he was referring to replacing radios that aren't TDMA compliant which are still being used by a lot of agencies. Dan deferred to John and the council for additional direction on what they would like to see for this transition.</p> <p>John pointed out this is an issue that they all need to talk about with our users because as Dan mentioned, this has kind of a double-edged sword. Number one it will be possibly doubling the capacity of the of the towers bringing up the new technology, but at the same time as we move forward and start to shut down any other type of technology, such as your existing XT 5000 radios for example would no longer be able to be used on the system, so it's not something that we need to just take lightly and throw a date in the air. We truly need to talk with our end users, look at the inventory if we have of our existing radios, look at what kind of budget planning process we have going on and then come up with some date that makes sense. So at this time, as Dan mentioned, I'd like to open it up to the floor just for some general discussion as far as questions and answers and the suggestion of the timing. Is this something that possibly by the next meeting that we can come together and have enough information to solidify some type of a date moving forward, so I'm opening them up, opening up this discussion to the floor.</p> <p>Chris Martin stated he would love to push it to five years, but I'd be willing to agree to three years. He explained that his</p>	
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	<p>push to talk and busies aren't that bad and we have a lot of XTS radios that are in good shape that the Red Flag folks are using, and they can beat them up, crack them and the whole works, and they can keep them going easily for another three years. He clarified he still would love five years but could see that people seem to be antsy and trying to push for the Phase 2.</p> <p>SSgt James Angel from JBER noted they have a lot of Army users who have XTS5000 radios and getting the Army to spend their money would be the precedent on those replacements, but he didn't know when that would happen, but any information about that would be useful.</p> <p>Mr. Rick Williams stated he had talked to Army leadership at various levels about TDMA and upgrades and the handheld refresh. He reminded the group the Army had recently completed some upgrades at some of their site's power, but it is minor compared to the fleet that we're talking about. He explained he has talked to a lot of folks in the Army and has yet to speak to someone who doesn't think it's a good idea, but he also has yet to speak to someone who says that they will pay for it. Rick advised the next funding cycle he anticipates being able to be successful on is FY25, so he thinks he is three years out but there will be more to follow; it all could change tomorrow, but up until now everybody thinks it's a great idea Just nobody has the money to do it.</p> <p>John advised that he understood this is going to be a budget issue for quite a few individuals and there are groups like DOT or AST that have a tremendous number of radios and then there are small groups like Kenny Lake Fire Department with three radios, but this does impact everybody.</p> <p>Deputy Chief Keith Berrian echoed everybody else's concerns and stated he would like to see a five-year timeline on this. He noted with all the departments he has talked to in the area, most of their radio fleets are not compliant. Deputy Chief Berrian provided an example of his own department, where they have two mobiles that are TDMA compatible out of a huge fleet at this point and less than a fifth of his portables and no base stations, so they are looking at an entire radio change out. He added most of the other departments that he had talked to in the area are in the same boat, so definitely the longer the better. Deputy Chief Berrian reiterated that he would like to see nothing less than three years but would prefer five years.</p> <p>John added that one item that has come up to his attention is the fact that if we do not set a date then many people that set budgets won't feel the need to budget the radios and that includes DOD. He stated he had heard from DOD that</p>	
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	<p>basically they are saying if you don't give them a date, they are never going to meet it and that's one of the reasons that the discussions have been ongoing between the State of Alaska, DOD, and others whether it is the right time for them to do this. John reminded everyone there are upgrades going on, there is a system upgrade as well as a software upgrade coming early fall, and we can now say that we are ready to turn up TDMA, so he believed, in his opinion, that it is time to set some date and then set some forward planning and motion. He concurred it was not something that the council should set a short date on, like one or two years. John noted they had talked about that three-year cycle but wanted to further discuss not just what the date would be, but the need for the setting the date.</p> <p>Mr. Henry Cole agreed 100 percent with John that a dated needs to be set. He explained that anyone who's tried to work with a state agency budget in the last few years knows how much fun that can be, and so whether it's three years or five years or more, having a date will allow us to plan. Henry noted that DOT has something like 1000 radio units that are going to need to be replaced and the goal would be to find a way to phase that in over a three- or five-year period, rather than trying to purchase a bunch all at once, so the sooner a date can be set, the sooner the different agencies like DOT and others can start thinking about how that impacts their annual budget requests for the next couple of fiscal years.</p> <p>Fire Marshal Kyle Green requested an update on how many sites were left for the Quantar upgrade and Dan advised him there were still six sites, five in the southeast and one Anchorage site still pending</p> <p>Fire Marshal Green stated his next question was regarding site testing, and he referred back to a conversation he had with Mr. Nelson and Mr. Travis Conant a couple weeks ago when he got to visit them in Anchorage during some other work travels. He explained he was curious if ALMR was going to consider a date in accordance with the testing based upon the technology change with this upgrade and if that rang a bell from our conversation a couple weeks ago with the power output conversation he had with Travis?</p> <p>Dan stated it did and for the benefit of folks on the call, he provided a brief background. He clarified he did not want to get anything incorrect, and Travis would be able to join the next monthly meeting, but the change to TDMA had changed several things about the system, one change being the physical hardware. Dan reminded the group about four or five months ago, during the SMO report, there was discussion regarding adjustments based on the antennas, because many of the antennas were upgraded to a higher</p>	
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	<p>gain. He explained the calibration or attenuation was putting out too much power and interfering with adjacent sites primarily in urban areas and the second piece of that is the TDMA was engineered to a lower power output than we currently have, right now we output about 110 watts of power if we're on a non TDMA site. Dan advised the GTR repeaters are 60 or 65 watts, so there's a question about how that affects coverage along with some other variables in there (i.e., the new antenna gains). He noted the long and the short of it is there is absolutely some testing and some more exploration that must be done and ALMR is trying to get some test sites set up so we can do some of that testing, but Motorola has stated it is difficult to carve out just one or two sites because TDMA requires such a change to the backhaul and to the core of the system. Dan briefed ALMR is still trying to figure out if that is going to be possible and he didn't want to say anything inaccurate, but TDMA will change some of the operating characteristics of the system for sure.</p> <p>Fire Marshall Green stated he didn't want to throw Dan under the bus, and he hoped that perhaps, especially those who are new to the council, there would be some type of update related to that back-end changes, so when we flip the switch everyone knows what to expect especially if we're not going to be able to test the TDMA changeover and how it's going to affect coverage. He also pointed out that as a fire and building official, he worries about that because although it's great to have excellent coverage outside of buildings, as a user who operates inside buildings, he has concerns about some of that as they talked about a couple weeks ago. Fire Marshall Green advised he would love to hear more about it, so he can be prepared for other situations that might come up that we will face and for questions from the users. He stated other than that he agreed it is important for the extra traffic ability and the expansion to the newer technology.</p> <p>John briefed one of the issues that came up a few years ago during the contract negotiations was if ALMR was willing to pay for site propagation maps or updated site propagation maps and the error rate that Motorola was giving us at that point, since they didn't have the antenna information that they were going to have to move to was something that we felt we just didn't want to pay because it was an expense that seemed at that point to be significant, so we chose not to do it at that time.</p> <p>John advised some of the information that ALMR would be able to provide is just done through individual site testing. He stated when Travis gets back next week, he can describe it in more detail how we're utilizing the newer ranges and higher output antennas. He agreed more information is needed to understand how that's going to work, but he hoped</p>	
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	<p>that would not preclude us from moving forward and making some decisions on things like turning full TDMA on.</p> <p>Dan stated John was correct but as he mentioned, ALMR did have to do some tweaking of a couple particular sites in some of the more urban areas and as we move forward there may find a few more errors to the Motorola mapping that we have, so it's definitely a combination of using Motorola information as well as our own staff and user experience.</p> <p>Fire Marshall Green stated he looked forward to any additional information to be provided.</p> <p>Mr. Tim Woodall noted another one of the other things that has to be considered in the transition to TDMA is the frequency licenses that we have both on the FCC side for state local government and on the NTIA side for federal government. He briefed the emission designation and in some cases power outputs are going to change, which requires a modification to those licenses, and there is a cost to that on the on the state and local side along with a timeframe for getting that work done and approved. Mr. Woodall briefed we are also looking at any point when we change the current spectrum sharing arrangement that has been agreed upon at the national level may facilitate a renewal of that agreement or an application to renew it. He advised the previous sharing agreement was good for ten years and we are past the timeframe that that agreement covered, but we are still licensed and operating as we are currently configured. Mr. Woodall stated here are some ramifications to consider as we move that that way and a lot of decision points to make. He stated at minimum three years is required, but the five-year final date is probably the most reasonable. He pointed out the need to have a transition plan that understands the cost, understands the technical requirements, the pros and cons of the capabilities, and any changes to or additional funding requirements. Mr. Woodall emphasized this is critical and they might not be able to come up with a date immediately, but the council should begin the process of putting a report together that that considers all of those factors and lays them all out and then proposes a time frame based upon all of those factors.</p> <p>John agreed it was critical that they adhere to the sharing agreement and the licenses from both FCC and NTIA. He added when he had spoken with Mr. Scott Stormo and Mr. Scott Thompson regarding this, that they were also aware, but he had not seen a checklist yet.</p> <p>Dan stated he didn't want to commit Mr. Conant, but a briefing on some of the more in-depth layers of TDMA might be helpful for the next meeting, so he would work together</p>	
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<p>UC Representative Reports</p>	<p>with Mr. Conant and Mr. Stormo to provide that to the council and would also prepare a draft report for new business for the next meeting and go from there.</p> <p>9. Dan asked if there were any updates from the Northern Region.</p> <p>Fire Marshal Green gave a shout out to Mr Nelson and Mr Conant for hosting him on the 18th while he was in Anchorage for the state fire marshal's Fire and Building Officials Forum. He noted he was able to stop by and talk about some northern region concerns and one of the things that they talked about in addition to the site upgrades was fire codes and in-building repeater systems. Fire Marshall Green briefed in-building repeaters are a tool that local building officials could use to help augment and improve coverage, especially in our critical areas where we're operating it's a long-term strategy. He added it has been in the code for quite a while, but it's very generic to the point that, in his opinion, many building officials at fire and fire code officials don't understand how to enforce it and it's kind of being left behind. Fire Marshall Green explained one of the routine complaints he's heard throughout my entire 18 years in the fire service is the system has poor reliability inside buildings and that depends on how the buildings constructed the materials used, the layout configuration, heightened areas, all those things, so it's very hard to pinpoint down how to fix it in building repeater systems. He stated perhaps some attention is needed to see how they fit in line with how LMR is set up and that Mr. Nelson, Mr. Conant, and he are going to be kicking off a project to create some type of standard's cover document for fire and building officials, so they have a resource to go to in understanding how to evaluate a building and when it should probably consider an in-building repeater system to improve radio communications and coverage using LMR or other options that local users can use to improve their communications inside these structures</p> <p>He stated he was really excited about that relationship and looks forward to working on that with ALMR with the hope it will help us as we move forward with improvements on the system and to take care of those users that are inside buildings.</p> <p>Dan asked if the representatives from the central area had anything to report.</p> <p>Ms. Tammy Goggia-Cockrell stated she didn't have anything new to report although she did want to relay her appreciation for today's discussion regarding TDMA. She noted she did have a fire chief reach out to her with a question regarding</p>	
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	<p>that and had learned a lot listening to today's discussion and she looked forward to future discussions in moving forward and updating the users and in the jurisdiction that she is responsible for.</p> <p>Dan asked if there were any updates from the southeast and there was no response.</p>	
System Management Office	Mr. Travis Conant, System Manager	Action Items Assigned
	Mr. Conant was not available for the meeting and there were no updates.	
State of Alaska	Mr. Scott Stormo	Action Items Assigned
	Mr. Stormo was not available for the meeting and there were no updates.	
Department of Defense	Mr. Timothy Woodall	Action Items Assigned
	Mr. Timothy Woodall stated he had nothing further to add.	
New Business	Discussion	Action Items Assigned
	Mr. Bruce Richter provided information on the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) "Shields Up" campaign.	
Next meeting	Discussion	
	John reminded everyone the next meetings are scheduled for April 6 and May 4.	
Adjournment	Discussion	
	<p>John asked if there was any other discussion and hearing no response, he requested for a motion to adjourn the meeting.</p> <p>Motion: Adjourn the March monthly User Council meeting.</p> <p>Motion: Ms. Tammy Goggia-Cockrell Second: Mr. Henry Cole</p> <p>There were no objections. The motion passed.</p> <p>The meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.</p>	