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Public Safety Spectrum Trust Encourages FCC to Move Quickly to Create a Nationwide Network for Public Safety

WASHINGTON, D.C. – March 18, 2008 – Today the Public Safety Spectrum Trust (PSST) issued comments regarding the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Auction 73, also known as the 700 MHz auction, which began on January 24, 2008. Rules indicate that the auction is ended once a round passes in which there are no new bids, which happened earlier today. Considering that the D Block did not receive the minimum winning bid of \$1.33 billion, it is likely that the FCC will need to establish new procedures regarding the auction of the D Block.

Chief Harlin McEwen, Chairman of the PSST, said, “It appears at this time that the D Block did not receive a winning bid. If the FCC certifies this to be the case, we encourage Commissioners to act swiftly in examining the current rules regarding the D Block and the creation of a nationwide broadband network for public safety. If changes are necessary, the FCC must make certain that the interests of public safety remain at the top of the list. Only a public-private partnership will provide an innovative solution that will permanently solve our country’s continuing public safety communications crisis and first responders have a vital role to play in any network designed for their benefit.”

Under current FCC rules, the winner of the 10 MHz D Block license will partner with the PSST’s 10 MHz of spectrum to create a single, nationwide broadband network for mixed commercial and public safety use. In exchange for access to the PSST’s block of spectrum, the D Block commercial partner will build out the shared network and provide public safety with priority access during times of emergency. The parameters of the network build and the relationship between both parties will be negotiated in a network sharing agreement that must be approved by the FCC. Prior to the start of Auction 73, the PSST released a statement of expectations regarding public safety aspects of the network, also known as the Bidder Information Document, which can be reviewed at www.psst.org.

Chief McEwen added, “It is unfortunate that some stand in the way of bringing state of the art communications capabilities to America’s first responders, even to the point of demanding that public safety obligations be removed entirely from the D Block. Others have suggested that temporary regional patches at huge expense to public safety could replace the innovation that would come with the creation of a nationwide network built to meet public safety’s needs. I cannot understand opposition to the only viable solution to date that would transform public safety communications in our country and allow public safety to benefit from the next generation of wireless technology in a meaningful way. However, I am hopeful that decision-makers in Washington will see that these unconstructive comments are harmful to those who are trusted to protect the public every day.”

About the PSST

The PSST, a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, is the Public Safety Broadband Licensee (PSBL), holding an FCC license for public safety spectrum in the upper 700 MHz band designated for nationwide wireless broadband use. The PSST’s mission is to provide national public safety leadership an organizational structure through which decisions can be made to guide the construction and operation of an interoperable nationwide broadband network via a public safety-commercial partnership, ensuring the communications requirements of the public safety community are met. For additional information visit www.psst.org.

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