



Broadband Communities Magazine Article: Connecticut as Leading in FirstNet Implementation

The Office of Consumer Counsel's (OCC) state Broadband Policy Coordinator, Bill Vallée, is federally funded to participate in the state's initiatives to advance the federal FirstNet public safety wireless broadband project in the state in cooperation with the federal authorities organizing that effort. This project will probably take many years but like all great infrastructure projects in U.S. history, the Transcontinental Railroad, the Interstate Highway System, and the space program, pulling together public/private partnerships will make this project a success for decades to come.

Bill recently authored an [article](#) in the March/April 2014 edition of Broadband Communities entitled "Public Safety Transitions to FirstNet." Connecticut is among the states that took an early lead in planning for FirstNet and three of the 40 members of the FirstNet Public Safety Advisory Committee hail from the state. It was one of the first five states to receive FirstNet funding. This experience has given us some insight into the potential benefits of the new network – and into the implementation challenges still ahead of us.

One reason Connecticut was ready to start early was that, in 2010, the state received a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant which enabled it to upgrade the statewide fiber network (Nutmeg Network) and establish at least three broadband nodes (for example, police, fire and an educational facility) in each of its 169 towns. In addition, Connecticut has had interoperability governance for several years and have had a fulltime Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) for a similar period.

As well, the state is essentially covered with commercial LTE broadband networks already, and the administration is working with the providers to harden their sites, in response to the multitude of serious storms the state has experienced over the last few years.