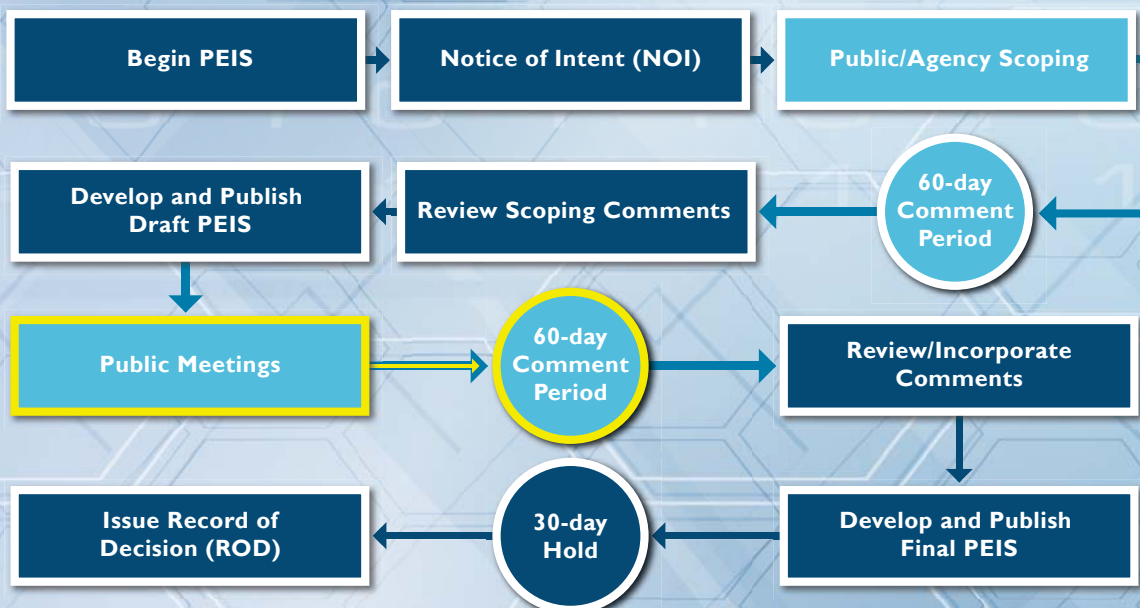


# NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

## What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) provides a framework to evaluate the impact of major Federal actions on the environment through the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) process, and allows the public the opportunity to provide input on implementation alternatives.

The NEPA process is depicted in the diagram below. The light blue coloring indicates those opportunities for the public to comment on the project.



The PEIS process started with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on November 12, 2014. The Draft PEIS analyzes three alternatives, including the preferred alternative, and has been published and incorporates planning efforts, study findings and public input. A 60-day public comment period with public meetings on the East Region Draft PEIS began on May 6, 2016, and will end on July 6, 2016. These meetings will be similar to the public meetings held during the scoping period in November and December 2014.

Comments received on the Draft PEIS will be incorporated into the Final PEIS. After publication of the Final PEIS, FirstNet will make the decision regarding the selection of an alternative within a Record of Decision.

# DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

## **What is the Proposed Action?**

The Proposed Action is to ensure the deployment, operation, and maintenance of a nationwide, interoperable, public safety broadband network (NPSBN), with the goal of allowing first responders and other public safety officials to effectively communicate with each other across agencies and jurisdictions. The applications and services provided through the NPSBN are intended to enhance the ability of the public safety community to perform more reliably, effectively and safely.

FirstNet's goal is that the NPSBN would also provide a backbone to allow for improved communications by carrying high-speed data, location information, images, and, eventually, streaming video. This capability is intended to increase situational awareness during an emergency and improve the ability of the public safety community to effectively engage in critical activities.

## **Description of the Proposed Action**

The Proposed Action would design, deploy, operate, and maintain the NPSBN by FirstNet or a partner organization(s). By statute, the network must have several characteristics, including security, resiliency, backwards compatibility with existing commercial networks, integration with public safety answering points (PSAPs) or their equivalents, substantial rural coverage, it must be built to open, non-proprietary, commercially available standards, and it must use existing infrastructure to the maximum extent economically desirable.

FirstNet intends to ensure the deployment of a core network, comprised of all standard Evolved Packet Core elements under the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) standards, device and location services, billing functions, and all other network elements other than the Radio Access Network (RAN). The NPSBN would also include RAN networks that would consist of all cell site equipment, antennas, and backhaul equipment required to enable wireless communications with devices using the public safety broadband spectrum.

Finally, the Act states that FirstNet must ensure the continued maintenance, operation, and improvement of the NPSBN to account for new and evolving technologies.





# PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

## What are the Project Alternatives?

### Preferred Alternative

Potential elements to be considered for the deployment of a long-term evolution (LTE) nationwide public safety broadband network (NPSBN) could include:

- Collocation of the network equipment on existing towers, poles, and structures;
- Construction of new communication towers, poles, and associated structures;
- Collocation on existing fiber facilities;
- Installation of new conduit and fiber using trenching or directional boring;
- Deployment of satellite phones and other portable satellite technology;
- Installation of microwave facilities for cell-site backhaul communication; and
- Utilization of deployable technologies to reach rural and remote areas, such as:
  - Cell on Wheels (COW)
  - Cell on Light Truck (COLT)
  - System on Wheels (SOW)
  - Deployable Aerial Communications Architecture: Aerial vehicles, including, but not limited to, drones, piloted aircraft, balloons, and blimps, which would be deployed at high altitudes and are capable of providing wide-area coverage, although with relatively low capacity/throughput.

### Deployable Technologies Alternative:

Procure, deploy, and maintain a nationwide fleet of mobile communications systems to provide temporary coverage in areas not covered by existing, usable infrastructure, for deployment at times of an incident to the affected area. These mobile communication units would be temporarily installed and may use existing satellite, microwave, or radio systems for backhaul.

### No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action, the NPSBN would not be constructed; there would be no nationwide, coordinated system dedicated to public safety interoperable communications. This alternative would require an act of Congress to revise the Act, which currently requires the NPSBN.

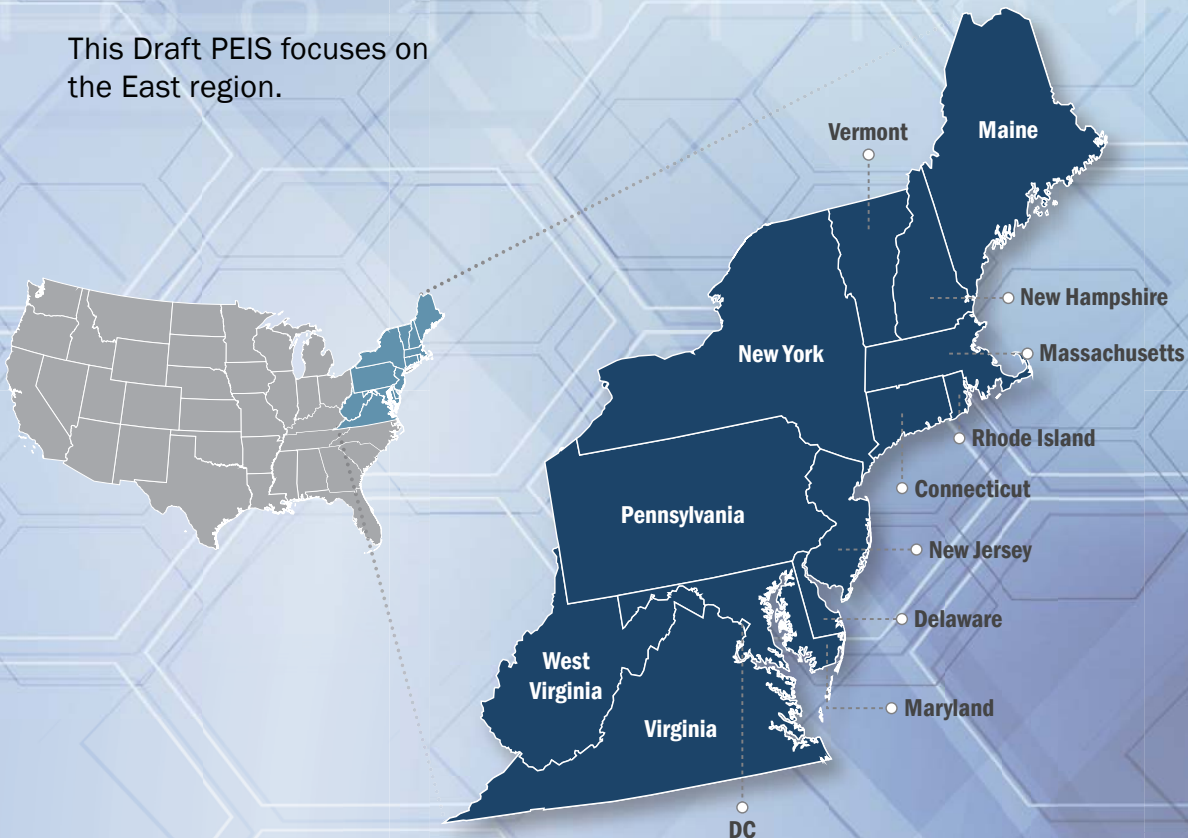


# PROJECT AREA

The entire FirstNet Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) project area would cover the geography of 50 states, 5 territories, the District of Columbia, and 567 tribal nations. The program-wide project area is divided into five regions:

- East – comprised of FEMA regions 1, 2, and 3 (except for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Central – comprised of FEMA regions 5, 7, and 8
- South – comprised of FEMA regions 4 and 6
- West – comprised of FEMA regions 9 and 10 (except for Alaska and the Pacific Islands).
- Non-Contiguous – comprised of Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.

This Draft PEIS focuses on the East region.





# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

## Overview

Public involvement occurs at two stages of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) process: the Public/Agency Scoping period, and following publication of the Draft PEIS. The public scoping process began with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on November 12, 2014, and ended on December 29, 2014. Scoping comments from interested government agencies, Native American tribes, private sector organizations, and the general public informed development of the Draft PEIS.

Publication of the Draft PEIS for the East region on May 6, 2016 initiated a 60-day public comment period, ending on July 6, 2016. Information and public comments received during the comment period will be reviewed for consideration in the development of the Final PEIS for the East region. After the Final PEIS, FirstNet will publish a Record of Decision identifying the potential impacts associated with the project alternatives analyzed in the PEIS.

## Submitting Comments

The public is invited to submit written comments for consideration during the Draft PEIS comment period. Written comments may be submitted at public meetings via comment cards, electronically via [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) (FIRSTNET-2016-0002), or by mail to:

**Amanda Pereira, NEPA Coordinator**  
**FirstNet, NTIA**  
**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, M/S 243**  
**Reston, VA 20192**

*Comments received will be made a part of the public record and may be posted to the FirstNet website without change. Comments should be machine readable and should not be copy-protected. All personally identifiable information (e.g., name, address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.*



**PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT STATEMENT**