



441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Chairman John Thune
Written Questions for the Record to
Mr. Mark Goldstein
“Three Years Later: Are We Any Closer to a
Nationwide Public Safety Wireless Broadband Network?”

Question 1: I understand that the early builder projects have agreed to provide FirstNet with project deliverables and that FirstNet keeps in close contact with the early builder projects. However, you remain concerned that FirstNet lacks a detailed data-analysis plan to track the performance and results of these projects. Would you please elaborate on your concern and why GAO considers it important for FirstNet to address this?

Early builder projects have learned important lessons related to governance, finance, outreach, and network deployment that could be useful to FirstNet as it develops its plans to establish a nationwide network. However, we are concerned that FirstNet lacks a detailed data-analysis plan to track the projects' observations and lessons learned. Tracking the early builder projects' observations and lessons against FirstNet technical documentation is necessary to ensure that the lessons have been addressed and also facilitates transparency and accountability for FirstNet's decision-making. Even though FirstNet staff and contractors remain in close contact with the early builder projects, without a data-analysis plan to track those projects it is unclear how FirstNet intends to evaluate the projects' observations and lessons and determine whether or how the lessons are addressed. As a result, we believe that FirstNet could miss opportunities to leverage key lessons related to governance, finance, outreach, and network deployment. Given that the early builder projects are doing, in part, on a regional and local level what FirstNet must eventually do on a national level, a complete evaluation plan that includes a detailed data-analysis plan could play a key role in FirstNet's strategic planning and program management, providing feedback on both program design and execution. Furthermore, such a plan could provide FirstNet officials the opportunity to make informed midcourse changes as they plan for the public safety network, and help ensure that lessons from these projects are evaluated in ways that generate reliable information to inform future program-development decisions.