



Editorial

>> Marc Cheves, LS


Polarization

The ninth meeting of the Space-Based Positioning Navigation and Timing advisory board, held in Alexandria VA on November 9, 2011 was widely anticipated as a “showdown” between the anti- and pro-LightSquared forces. While the meeting scored points for both sides, it left unanswered some of the most important issues: the upper spectrum band, and who will pay. Those who are just now tuning in to this discussion can visit the LightSquared Watch area of amerisurv.com to get up to speed.

Attended by high-level experts, the meeting included an informative presentation by Javad Ashjaee of JAVAD GNSS. In his inimitable way, Javad explained the decibel scale, and showed how his solution completely and inexpensively allows the use of the lower band. The NTIA, in charge of testing the use of the lower band, is currently only testing cell phones and nav units. The precise gear testing will take place after the first of the year, so even though Javad made a very convincing case for his solution, the verdict is still out until it and other precise units are tested by NTIA.

In the days prior to the meeting, The Coalition to Save Our GPS filed a motion with the FCC, seeking to have it rule that LightSquared cannot use the upper MSS band for high-powered terrestrial operations. According to Coalition representative Jim Kirkland, “Currently, LightSquared is asking everyone to concentrate on the lower band and its proposed solutions for using that spectrum, which are still being tested. But as long as the upper band, which LightSquared has said it hopes to use in the next few years, is still on the table, that creates a tremendous amount of uncertainty in planning for all GPS users. It means, if a reasonable solution is found in the lower band, although that remains to be seen, that GPS users could face the prospect of a time-consuming and highly disruptive transition in the lower band merely to be faced with being asked to do so again in the upper band just a few years later. This is particularly untenable for critical government users including defense and aviation, given the lengthy testing and certification cycles needed to protect the safety of air travelers and our military personnel.”

LightSquared issued a press release issued after the meeting stating “Today’s meeting was a watershed moment for LightSquared for three reasons,” said Martin Harriman, Executive Vice President of Ecosystem Development for LightSquared. “One, Dr. Ashjaee presented irrefutable evidence that the GPS interference issue can be solved and is not—as the GPS industry has led the public to believe—an unsolvable physics problem. Two, Trimble, a leader of the lobbying effort against LightSquared, acknowledged that it believes its own solution for the interference problem is ready to test. And three, the entire debate has turned from whether there is a solution to who pays for it. And that’s a conversation we’re willing to have.”

Several industry folks I chatted with at the meeting expressed doubts about the military’s willingness to go along with the roll-out, particularly as it regards the upper band. It’s been said that LightSquared’s financial model ultimately depends on being able to use that portion of the spectrum as well, and when pressed about it, Harriman only says they’ll worry about that in the future as the company awaits yet-undeveloped technology. My sense is that—subject to testing—the lower band is a done deal, so it all comes down to who will pay. Furthermore—subject to yet-uninvented technology—the upper band may never fly. Should the end users—who have made the precise positioning industry what it is today by buying the equipment—have to pay to upgrade their equipment? Ubiquitous broadband will provide enormous benefits (for us, RTK), so some are saying that this is no different than having to pay for any type of new technology—like when calculators replaced slide rules, etc.—and that it’s the double-edged sword of capitalism. What do you think? 

www.amerisurv.com

2011 Vol. 8 No. 8
© Cheves Media LLC

PUBLISHER Allen E. Cheves
allen.cheves@chevesmedia.com

EDITOR Marc S. Cheves, LS
marc.cheves@chevesmedia.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Joel Leininger, LS
ASSISTANT EDITOR Jacalyn Cheves
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Jason Metsa

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Dale Beeks	Jeff Lock
Joseph Bell, LS	Dan Martin
Joe Betit, LS	John Matonich, LS
Shawn Billings, LS	Jerry Penry, LS
J. Anthony Cavell, LS	Al Pepling, LS
C. Barton Crattie, LS	Walt Robillard, Esq., LS
James J. Demma, Esq., LS	Fred Roeder, LS
Dr. Richard L. Elgin, LS, PE	Gavin Schrock, LS
Fred Henstridge, LS	Angus W. Stocking, LS
Chuck Karayan, LS	Patrick Toscano, LS
Gary Kent, LS	John Wilusz, LS, PE
Wendy Lathrop, LS	Robert Young, LS
Thomas Liuzzo, LS	Rj Zimmer, LS

The staff and contributing writers may be reached via the online Message Center at amerisurv.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN LTD Creative, LLC
WEBMASTER Joel Cheves

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT Edward Duff
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Richard Bremer

CIRCULATION Mirta Ryker

The American Surveyor (ISSN 1548-2669) is published monthly by Cheves Media LLC. Editorial mailing address: 905 W. 7th St., #331, Frederick, MD 21701. Tel: (301) 620-0784.

The American Surveyor is a publication of Cheves Media LLC, 905 W. 7th St., #331, Frederick, MD. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the express written permission of the publisher. Opinions and statements made by the writers and contributors do not necessarily express the views of Cheves Media LLC.

Subscriptions prices in the U.S.: Free for qualified professionals. Canada: 1 year \$56.00 US; international subscriptions \$72.00 per year (Airmail), U.S. funds prepaid. Back issues (subject to sufficient stock) are available for \$4.95 + S/H.

New subscription inquiries and all other address changes should be sent to *The American Surveyor*, P.O. Box 4162, Frederick, MD 21705-4162. Fax: 301-695-1538. Subscribe online @ www.amerisurv.com

Made in the United States of America



Proud Member of:

