

Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Henry C. Fraind

SUBJECT: ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH MIAMI-DADE COUNTY TO PROVIDE 800-MEGAHERTZ RADIO SERVICE FOR SCHOOL BUSES, EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND OTHER DISTRICT FUNCTIONS

In 1993, Miami-Dade County purchased an 800-megahertz countywide radio system for use by police, fire-rescue, public works, transportation and other county departments. The system was designed with sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected needs of other municipal users as well as Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS); however, due to start-up delays and other operational problems the district declined to participate at that time.

By 1996, the initial problems were resolved and district staff began discussing with the county the technical and economic feasibility of using the system to provide radio communications for school buses, emergency operations, maintenance personnel and various district functions. Also, beginning in 1996, all radios purchased for school buses were compatible with the county's system. Consequently, over 1,000 buses are already equipped with compatible radios.

In 1998, a pilot project was launched whereby the district switched 145 school buses and 100 Facilities Operations personnel to the county's system for evaluation purposes. Later that year, the district's emergency communications network vendor discontinued the radio service used by M-DCPS since 1993. After exploring several alternatives, the District Emergency Communications Network (DECON) was switched to the county's radio system at the start of the 1998 hurricane season. The results of these trials have been very favorable.

During the course of the pilot, the county has utilized two of the district's 800-megahertz radio frequencies and the district has utilized several of the county's UHF radio frequencies on a trial basis. Concurrently, a contractual agreement was drafted by the county and reviewed by district staff and the School Board Attorney. The following are highlights of the proposed agreement:

1. The county will own, operate, license and maintain the 800-megahertz radio system.
2. The district will operate approximately 2,200 radios on the county's radio system.
3. The district must pay a one-time infrastructure fee of \$1,564,000 (in two annual installments) to offset a proportionate share of the county's original capital expenditure.
4. The district must pay a recurring annual fee of \$336,000 to offset a proportionate share of the county's infrastructure maintenance and service cost.
5. The county will permanently assign six UHF radio frequencies to the district for use in school-site security and operations.
6. The district will permanently assign six 800-megahertz radio frequencies to the county for use in special law enforcement and fire-rescue operations.
7. The term of the agreement will be twelve years with the option of three additional one-year renewals.

The following are significant benefits that will be realized by the district upon entering into the radio agreement with Miami-Dade County:

1. All district personnel and vehicles provided with these radios may communicate on common channels in times of emergency. Additionally, communications with other government agencies will be possible for coordinating emergency services.
2. School buses will have full countywide radio coverage, unlike the regional coverage under their current system. This will facilitate communications during field trips and other events outside their normal service area.
3. All school buses will be equipped with the same type of radio, thus, facilitating equipment repairs and interchangeability of buses between the district's seven transportation centers.
4. Savings of approximately \$150,000 per year will be realized by discontinuing current leases for radios and airtime used by over 600 school buses and Stores and Distribution vehicles.
5. Radio frequencies provided by the county will improve school-site radio communications for security and school operations.

The appropriation for this item will be included under the Capital Outlay Fund of the 2000-2001 Tentative Budget, to be recommended for adoption in July 2000. Other relevant information will be provided to the Board under separate cover. This information will be placed on file in the Office of the Board Recording Secretary and in the Citizen Information Center.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. enter into an agreement with Miami-Dade County to provide 800 megahertz radio service for school buses, emergency operations and other district functions;
2. pay the county \$1,564,000, over two years, to offset a proportionate share of the county's original capital expenditure for their radio system infrastructure;
3. pay the county \$336,000 annually to offset a proportionate share of their infrastructure maintenance and service cost;
4. add radios to the system, as necessary to accommodate future growth;
5. pay the county for additional radios added to the system at unit prices for infrastructure and maintenance based on the terms of the original agreement; and
6. purchase radio equipment, as necessary, for school buses and other district departments.

The appropriation for this item will be included under the Capital Outlay Fund of the 2000-2001 Tentative Budget, to be recommended for adoption in July 2000.