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Brenner, BTC Look Ahead

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The station members of the Broadcast Traffic Consortium have contributed enough spectrum for the service to cover 54 U.S. markets with Navteq traffic data delivered by FM analog RDS and HD Radio signals.

It plans to expand in the United States and Canada in 2009, with a goal of doubling its markets. Mercedes, Magellan, Garmin and others use the BTC service as part of their navigation systems.

Of the activated markets, 20 are using HD Radio signals to deliver the data. "We continue to activate those markets as software and process improvements are made," said BTC President Paul Brenner, who's also vice president of integrated technologies for Emmis Communications.

Aside from creating compelling content for multicast channels, the purpose of the BTC is to accelerate consumer HD Radio receiver penetration and create new revenue for member stations. The group wants to supplement traffic data with weather information as well, according to Brenner.

"We think we've found a medium that will tolerate ads," he told Radio World.

However, Brenner said an HD Radio digital power increase is important and that manufacturers are watching the issue closely.

A station's digital coverage has to match that of its analog, he said, noting that the BTC competes against navigation information delivered by satellite radio and Microsoft's MSN Direct service, which uses FM radio as its delivery platform, in addition to Clear Channel's Total Traffic Network, which uses RDS-TMC (Radio Data System Traffic Message Channel) and HD Radio as its delivery platform. All of those services have good coverage, he said.

Asked what the BTC's challenges are for 2009, Brenner said, without going into specifics that he believes the original timeline for success needs to be pushed out because consumer purchases have dropped due to the poor economy. Another challenge is to make sure broadcasters continue to find value in the service, participate and "fund the right things to make it a good service."

The BTC has eight founding members: Beasley Broadcast Group, Bonneville International Corp., Cox Radio Inc., Emmis Communications, Entercom Communications Corp., Greater Media, NPR and Radio One.

Four additional broadcast members have joined the consortium since its April inception: Cumulus, Hubbard, Cobalt



and Lincoln Financial. The BTC continues to seek more broadcast partners.

— *Leslie Stimson*

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