Modernization of EAS operations

National Association of Broadcasters
Washington, DC

July 2, 2024

Modernization of EAS operations

- First raised by NAB in December 2022 in comments filed with FCC in proceeding on cybersecurity risk management

- We continue to discuss with manufacturers and FEMA

- Goal today is to discuss the DAS ex parte and provide new information on the EAS vendor marketplace
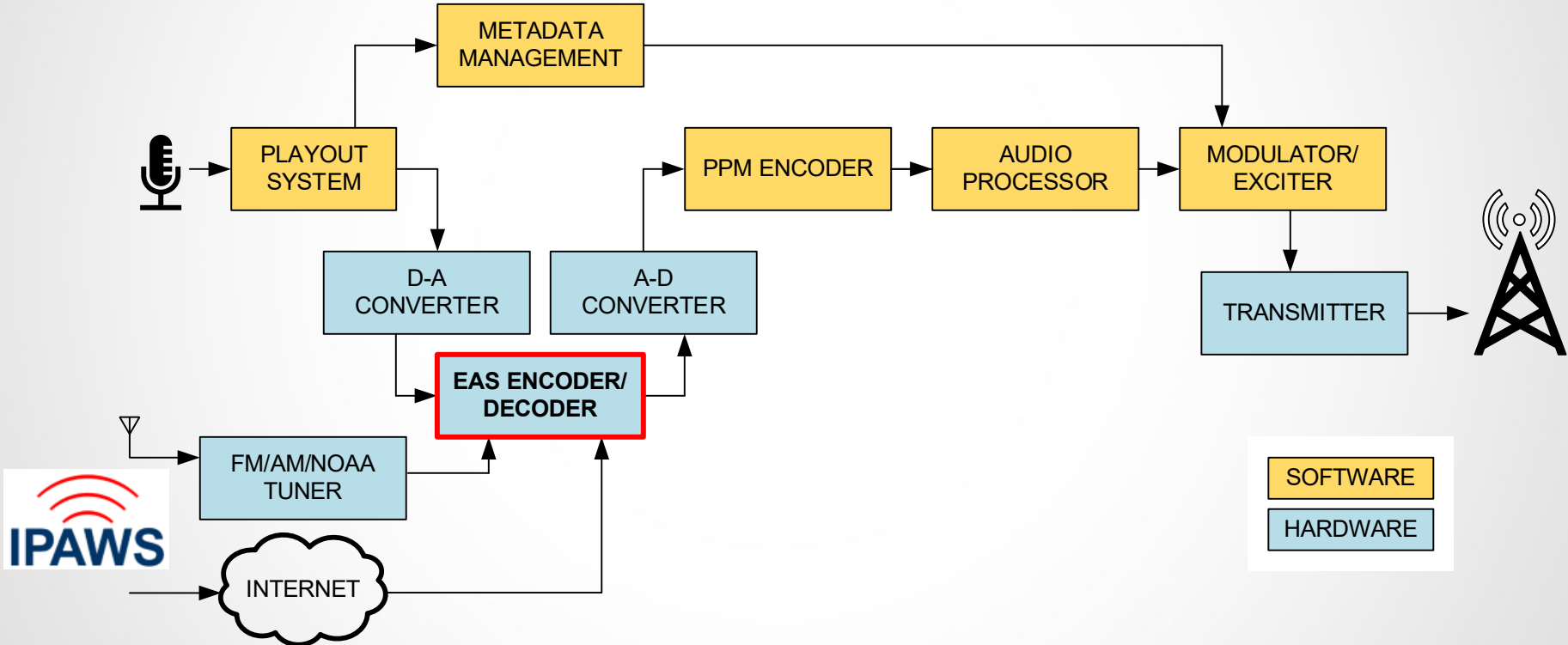
Executive summary

- Hardware EAS encoders/decoders are currently a requirement under FCC rules
  - This creates problems for broadcasters as many air chains are now implemented in software

- NAB is proposing that the FCC allow use of software-based EAS encoders/decoders
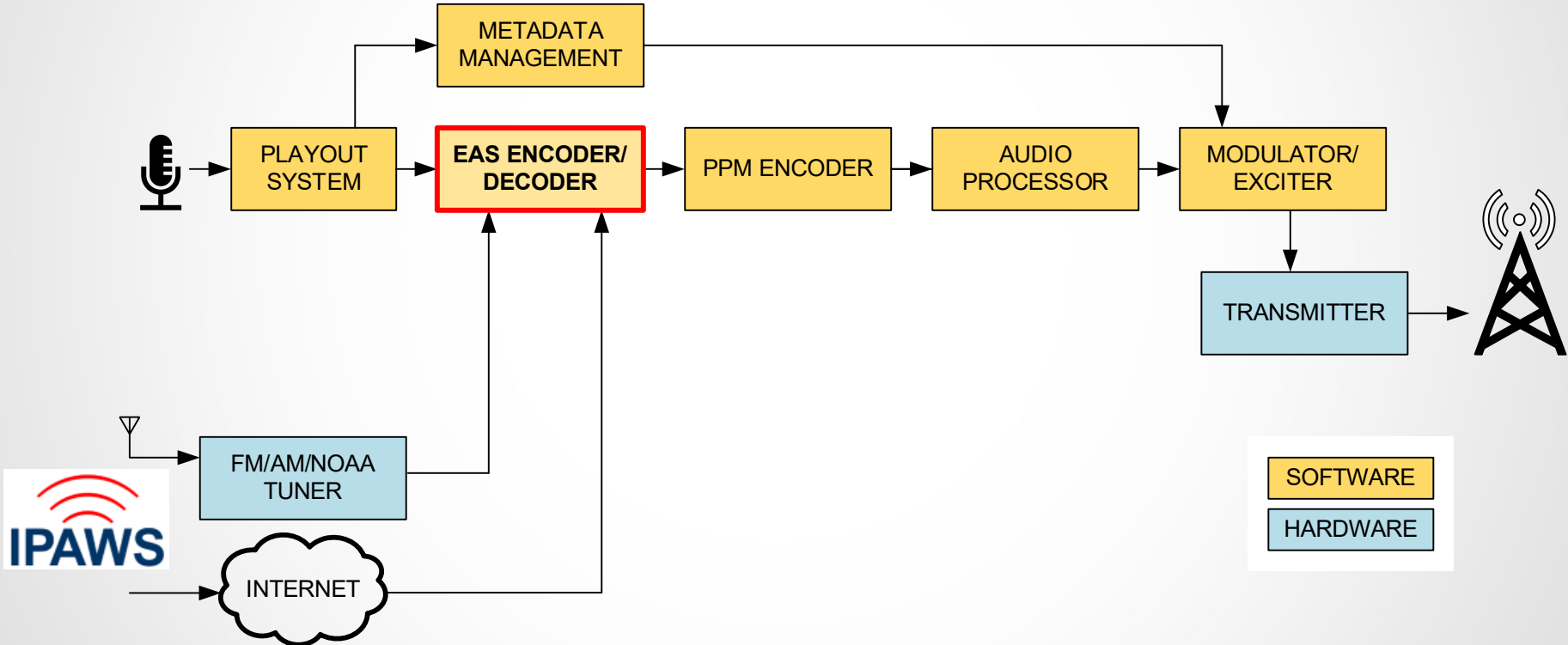 - Host of benefits would be realized

EXISTING

PROPOSED

Modernization of EAS encoder/decode box

- Allow for use of software-based EAS encoders/decoders
  - Hardware solutions are becoming obsolete, unwieldy
  - EAS hardware has become the sole un-virtualized component
  - Would support EAS enhancements (e.g., multilingual alerts)

- Guiding principles:
  1) **Function seamlessly within EAS system** – new software products will function with legacy EAS, broadcast systems
  2) **Backwards compatibility** – no impact to baseline operations and functionality of EAS
  3) **Optional for broadcasters** – no mandatory adoption requirements

Benefits of EAS encoder/decoder virtualization

- Simplifies radio broadcast plant
  - Easier to support at transmitter site, eliminating studio-to-transmitter link

- Greatly improves EAS system resiliency and operational readiness
  - Eliminates down-time resulting from repair of malfunctioning equipment
  - Reduces time to implement security-related patches

- Software-based architecture allows for immediate fail-over
  - Supports multiple instances in diverse geographic locations

Benefits of EAS encoder/decoder virtualization

- Greatly improves system monitoring and alerting
  - Near-real time, automated collection of activity data

- Streamlines ability to manage and route messages to different broadcast streams
  - Analog, HD Radio main and multicast channels

Software approach widely supported in Proceeding

- Wide support for this proposal from broadcaster and equipment suppliers

- Recognize need for effective framework in developing next-gen, software-based EAS

- EAS community (FCC, FEMA, broadcasters, manufacturers) can come together and make this happen

Summary

- NAB is ready to work with manufacturers and others to expedite modernization of EAS

- Eager to understand any concerns or hear any suggestions that the FCC might have on this subject

- Manufacturers may be hesitant due to lack of clarity on how this would be supported by FCC rules