

WOWO goes AM stereo, but few can hear

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WOWO Radio is gambling \$20,000 on an AM stereo system that only a handful of people in the country can hear.

The 50,000-watt station Saturday began broadcasting full-time in stereo — one of only about 20 AM stations in the nation to do so. But because only a few stereo AM receivers exist in the nation, hardly anyone outside the station's office noticed.

WOWO is the first station to use a system developed by Magnavox Consumer Electronics Corp., formerly based in Fort Wayne, but now located in Knoxville, Tenn.

The Magnavox system is a gamble, just as any system is, because

no one knows which AM stereo system will become the most popular in the marketplace. None of the several systems under development is compatible with each other.

That means that if listeners don't buy a Magnavox system, they won't hear WOWO in stereo.

The situation developed because the Federal Communications Commission declined to name an industry standard when it allowed AM stations to broadcast in stereo on

March 5.

But WOWO decided to proceed anyway, said John Irwin, station manager. "Sure, it's a gamble. We just have good vibes about Magnavox," Irwin said. He said that from earlier testing the station believes it has made the right choice.

The largest potential market is in automobile radios, said Bud McDowell, manager of audio engineering for Magnavox's Knoxville plant. That's why McDowell and the management at WOWO are

watching the testing currently being done at Delco Electronics in Kokomo.

McDowell said Delco, the producer of car radios for General Motors, is testing the Magnavox, Motorola and Harris systems.

Because Delco makes so many radios, its decision will be crucial, affecting which system other smaller producers decide to make, McDowell said. If Delco decides to make receivers to accept the Magnavox signal, it will per-

suade others in the market to do the same.

"That's got to be some kind of milestone because that will push a lot of the major broadcasters and receiver manufacturers who are sitting on the fence," he said.