



MCCC News



Fort Worth

September 2018

Dallas

AT&T and Verizon in Rural America

\$60 a month for 10 Mbps DSL broadband? That's the same price AT&T charges for its 50 Mbps U-verse service.

Talk about unfair. Millions of broadband customers in rural and underserved urban markets are paying nearly identical prices for slower DSL service as customers who have access to high-speed fiber services.

That's the conclusion from a report published this week by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), which advocates for more equitable broadband deployment.

In places where AT&T and Verizon don't offer their high-speed fiber-based broadband, they continue to sell customers slower-speed DSL service. But recently, the companies have been eliminating lower-tier plans, which has resulted in higher prices for the base cost of service. But in areas where the networks haven't been upgraded, like rural regions of the country or low-income urban markets, this means customers are paying more for slower service.

Take AT&T as an example. The company is charging \$60 a month for DSL with speeds ranging between 6 and 10Mbps, according to the white paper. This is the same price, after the first year discounts

end, that AT&T charges its U-verse broadband customers, who get download speeds between 50Mbps and 75Mbps.

Verizon's pricing is similar. It charges \$65 a month for 100Mbps Fios service, and about \$63 a month for DSL service, which tops out at between 1.5Mbps and 15Mbps.

NDIA argues that AT&T and Verizon have been eliminating their cheaper rate tiers and leaving the midrange price point. But they haven't upgraded the DSL networks and have left the speeds of those services low.

"Each company now charges essentially identical monthly prices—\$63–\$65 a month after first-year discounts have ended—for home wireline broadband connections at almost any speed up to 100/100 Mbps fiber service," the white paper said.

AT&T said in a statement that the results of this study are misleading.

"Attempting to assess internet service offerings by only looking at standard rates does not give a complete picture; the internet service market is more competitive than ever and most customers make their purchases at bundled and discounted rates," the company said in a statement.

The company says it hasn't eliminated speed tiers but instead has

"simplified" its pricing with an "entry level price point that's remained relatively constant while the speed offered has increased."

It also notes that DSL is generally more expensive to maintain. And because this service is typically offered in areas where there isn't enough population density to justify the cost of a fiber-based service, there are fewer customers, which increases the cost per customer.

A Verizon spokesman agreed.

"In terms of pricing, rural areas are challenging in that there's higher costs involved in providing and maintaining DSL and it isn't always feasible to build fiber to the home," said Raymond McConville, a Verizon spokesman. "Our products are priced competitively in all of our markets."

Verizon also disagrees with the assertion that the company is not investing in DSL upgrades in rural markets. In January, it announced it would deploy fiber to over 15,000 homes in rural upstate New York. Last week, New York state announced Verizon would deploy fiber to another 50,000 homes. Verizon has also brought its Fios fiber service to several new towns in southern New Jersey, including some areas that had limited or no broadband access, McConville added.

"In the areas where we haven't brought fiber, we continue invest-

ing to maintain and improve the performance of the DSL network," he said. "It wasn't that long ago that speeds topped out at only a few Mbps—now we reach 15 Mbps in some areas thanks to our investment in the network."

New technologies like 5G wireless could also be game-changing for delivering high-speed broadband to rural areas where deploying fiber is not feasible, he added.

Still, the report comes as policy makers take a closer look at broadband access and the digital divide that exists between urban and suburban markets and rural America. Nearly 24 million Americans do not have access to broadband with download speeds of at least 25 Mbps and uploads of 3 Mbps, according to the Federal Communications Commission.

A large majority of these unconnected or underconnected Americans live in rural areas where it's expensive to build infrastructure and deliver service. The situation also happens to be in parts of the country where there's little if any competition. And that seems to be a better predictor of whether the networks have been upgraded to higher speeds.

A report published earlier this week by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a public interest non-profit, shows that big cable and

telecommunications companies have invested most heavily in network upgrades in areas where they face competition. Meanwhile, in markets where no competition exists, network speeds lag.

"Efforts to increase investment from the largest firms in more rural areas have largely failed," the report said. "Though states have varied regulations, the same trend results in every state—investment by the large ISPs is correlated to competition rather than the regulatory Environment."

...by Marguerite Reardon
August 3, 2018
<https://www.cnet.com/news/are-at-t-and-verizon-fleeing-rural-america/>

Gorilla Glass 6 On The Way

Gorilla Glass 6 tackles the problem of cumulative smartphone damage

Coming soon to a smartphone near you: it's Gorilla Glass 6, the latest version of Corning's ubiquitous smartphone display cover. Gorilla Glass typically sits between the display and the outside world, protecting your precious pixels from damage. Lately, manufacturers have been using it for the back of the phone, too.

Every year, Corning says the newest version of Gorilla Glass is better than the last. Gorilla Glass 4 survived drops "up to 80 percent of the time" when dropped "face down from one meter," while Gorilla Glass 5 survived "80 percent of the time" from 1.6-meter drops onto a rough surface. This new glass concoction is designed to take multiple drops, though, with Corning saying it can survive "15 drops from 1 meter onto rough surfaces." (One meter is a little more than three feet.)

This year, the company is tackling repeated damage that is inflicted on a display. While a brand new piece of Gorilla Glass might survive any single drop, the micro abrasions incurred from multiple drops weaken the display panel and make it more likely to break next time. Corning says Gorilla Glass 6 should reach the market in "the next several months."

...by Ron Amadeo 7/19/2018
<https://tinyurl.com/yaeyzrh>

September Calendar

September 9 — MCCC Meeting
2:30 PM — Grand Prairie Airport
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

September 9 — Board of Director's Meeting
Approximately 4:30 PM — Location TBD

October 1 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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