

Broadband Increasingly Available in Rural Areas

Broadband is widely available in rural areas and take rates are continuing to grow, according to new survey results from the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA, www.ntca.org). All of the respondents to NTCA's annual Broadband/Internet Availability survey offer broadband to at least some part of their customer base, and 15 percent of respondents' customers are taking their 200 to 500 Kbps offering, up from 12 percent a year ago. Nearly all the companies are using some type of DSL to deliver broadband, but many other broadband technologies are also in use (see table). Fiber ranks second to DSL in use. In response to competition from cable companies offering voice service, an increasing number of independent telcos are adding video offerings. Fifty-nine percent of respondents currently offer video service, with an additional 25 percent planning to deploy video

Broadband Technologies Deployed by Independent Telcos

Technology	Percentage of Respondents Using Technology
DSL	98%
FTTH/FTTC	28%
Unlicensed wireless	22%
Satellite	15%
Licensed wireless	13%

by the end of 2008. Nearly three-quarters of respondents plan to offer VoIP service "in the near future," though only 3 percent do so today. While 86 percent of survey respondents face competition from at least one other broadband provider, nearly two-thirds stated that their competitors serve only the cities and small towns in their service areas. Lack of adequate access to a primary Inter-

net backbone connection continues to threaten independent telcos' ability to compete with larger carriers in offering high-quality broadband service, the survey showed. Fifty-seven percent of respondents have access to only one or two Internet backbone providers, despite the fact that the average respondent already traverses more than 125 miles to reach its primary backbone connection.

Calix Leads Key North American Broadband Markets

Calix (www.calix.com) announced that in the second quarter of 2006 it continued to lead the North American GPON market, as well as leading in the fastest-growing equipment category of the DSL market, multi-service access platforms (MSAPs). Market research firm Dell'Oro

Group (www.delloro.com) is cited as the source for information about Calix's leadership position for GPON optical line terminals (OLTs) and optical network terminals (ONTs). Based on information from Infonetics (www.infonetics.com), Calix concludes that it captured 43 percent of

the North American MSAP market during the same period. Calix now has 180 customers that are employing fiber to the premises to deliver ultra-broadband services to more than 140,000 subscribers, as well as 150 that are delivering video services to more than 100,000 subscribers.

Rural Development Lists Corning and ADC Products

USDA Rural Development – formerly known as RUS – offers loans and grants for deployment of broadband technology to communities in rural areas. The agency maintains a list of products that can be purchased with these funds, which can be found at www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/index.htm. Recently, suppliers Corning Cable Systems and ADC announced that additional products of theirs had been added to the Ru-

ral Development Utilities Program list. Corning Cable Systems (www.corningcablesystems.com), part of Corning Incorporated's Telecommunications segment, has been listed for its complete portfolio of fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) products, including both cable and hardware. The RDUP recently added Corning Cable Systems' OptiSheath Advantage MultiPort Terminals and OptiFit Advantage Drop Cable Assem-

blies to its list of approved products. ADC (www.adc.com), a supplier of infrastructure solutions for fiber-to-the-x networks, announced that its OmniReach Hardened Connectors and Drop Cables are now accepted by the Rural Development Utilities Program for use in telecommunications systems. Like Corning, ADC already had other products accepted to the RDUP list.

IPTV: A Roadmap for Telcos

IPTV operators who want to profit from triple-play and quad-play services should investigate IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystems architecture) and SDP (Service Delivery Platform), says a new report from MRG (www.mrgco.com). These standardized interfaces and architectures can accelerate development and deployment of IPTV; minimize impact on operations and network resources; eliminate duplicative functions in billing,

digital rights management and asset management; and exploit the advantages of a standardized IP infrastructure. With these architectures, IPTV providers can create applications that go well beyond basic IPTV, voice and mobile services, says Bob Larribeau, IPTV Program Director at MRG, who also says, "Service providers will be able to combine the visual power of the TV with the communications power of voice and mobile networks."

Service providers must advance from bundling – which relies on discounting and depresses profits – to integrated applications, where the whole is more than the sum of the parts. For example, location-based services, multimedia sharing and storage (on the TV and other platforms), call forwarding to mobile, and video calling are new services that can add value, increase profits and reduce churn."

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