Mobile WiMax coming soon

July 22 2005

A GMC Yukon Denali motors down the road, while the passengers inside simultaneously receive mobile calls over the Internet, and streaming video at up to 2.5 Mbps, on a variety of devices.Cutting-edge? You bet, but that technology demonstration took place just last week in Vancouver, and it was designed by engineers to show the potential of the newest mobile-phone technology: mobile WiMax.

WiMax -- a nerdy acronym for Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access -- in the coming years may become the new mobile-phone standard, experts told UPI's Wireless World.The WiMax protocol is a new, faster way of networking computers and mobile phones with broadband Internet access.It is an advance on the well-known WiFi

technology, already popular with computer enthusiasts.

The technology demonstration "clearly shows the promise of mobile WiMax is fast approaching -- it's no longer just a futuristic new technology we simply talk about," said Vernon Fotheringham, president and chief executive officer of Adaptix in Seattle, a mobile broadband developer.Earlier this week members of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers met to discuss the standard the industry will embrace for this new technology, which is being hyped by major players such as Intel.Technologies for mobile phones and mobile computers, by 2007 at the earliest, will be based on the new standard -- what super-geek telecom engineers call the 802.16e wireless standard.

"The expectation is that the standard could be released by later this year," said Greg Phillips, chief executive officer and chief technology officer of AirTegrity Wireless in Stateline, Nev.,, a firm that was recently named one of Telecommunications Magazine's "10 Coolest Companies of 2005."

Phillips' firm is getting ready to launch a WiMax pilot project in Reno, Nev.,, and plans another one in Spain this fall."WiMax is going to start to challenge standard cellular phone technologies," he said.Right now many companies say the technology is ready for commercial use, but AirTegrity thinks interoperability trials -- to make sure the technology works with mobile phones, PDAs and mobile computers -- are needed."This standard is a big leap," said Greg Felton, AirTegrity's president."There are a lot of companies saying they can offer it right now.But that's a lot of smoke and mirrors."

Technology investors are eyeing mobile WiMax, but they too are cautious about its readiness today."We're keeping our ear to the ground about it," said Jai Deep Singh, a senior associate at Clearstone Venture Partners, an investment bank with offices in Santa Monica and San Jose,

Calif."Mobile WiMax is interesting, but it is far off.I would say three to five years away."

The primary factor driving the technology's emergence is the desire for new products to compete with the current crop of mobile phones."That's why it has gotten so much buzz," said Ron Sege, chief executive officer of Tropos Networks in Sunnyvale, Calif.,, a developer of municipal wireless networks."There's a lot of pent-up demand for an alternative to today's mobile wireless standards."

In the coming years experts expect to see WiMax-enabled mobile phones used by commuters, probably first in Europe."You'll see a lot of workers using this during rush hour in Europe, where they take a lot of trains," Singh said."Wireless networks are becoming as sophisticated as land-based networks.There will be room for WiMax in the fourth generation, or 4G, of mobile phone networks."