

MetroPCS to launch 4G phone before Verizon

March 24 2010, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- MetroPCS Communications Inc. plans to be the first wireless carrier to introduce a phone using a new network technology that provides faster data access. It's beating Verizon Wireless, the country's largest carrier.

Samsung Electronics Co. said Wednesday that it's supplying a phone for MetroPCS' rollout of a wireless technology known as Long Term Evolution, or LTE, starting with cities including Las Vegas in the second half of this year.

Both MetroPCS and Verizon are planning to use LTE, a so-called fourth-generation, or "4G," wireless technology. Verizon estimates that it will provide data speeds roughly ten times faster than today's "3G" networks, and that figure will rise as the technology matures.

Verizon is planning to launch LTE in 25 to 30 cities before the end of the year, but the first devices available for it will be laptop modems, with phones coming next year.

Samsung provided no details on its phone for MetroPCS, so it's unclear if the LTE capability will yield benefits beyond faster Web surfing and movie downloads.

MetroPCS, a Dallas-based carrier that targets customers of modest means, had 6.6 million subscribers at the end of last year, making it the fifth-largest carrier in the country. By contrast, Verizon has 91.2 million

subscribers and nationwide coverage.

MetroPCS may have an easier time than Verizon experimenting with LTE because of its smaller size and limited coverage.

On Tuesday, [Sprint Nextel](#) Corp. announced that its first 4G phone will be out this summer. The phone will have a front-facing camera to encourage video calling - one way to exploit the faster 4G speeds.

Sprint isn't using LTE but a rival [4G](#) technology called WiMax. It's been available for a few years, but most carriers have opted to wait for LTE instead.

AT&T Inc. is planning to start a build-out of LTE next year. In the meantime, it's focusing on increasing the speeds of its existing 3G network.

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Citation: MetroPCS to launch 4G phone before Verizon (2010, March 24) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-metropcs-4g-verizon.html>

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