

Verizon says fast 4G wireless coming to 38 cities

October 6 2010, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Verizon Wireless said Wednesday that its new wireless broadband network, which offers higher data speeds initially for laptop users, will be live before the end of the year in the cities on the Boston-to-Washington stretch as well as in California, Chicago, Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Seattle and other areas.

In all, Verizon aims to cover 38 cities and a third of the country's population with its so-called fourth generation, or 4G, network before the end of the year. In addition, it's lighting up more than 60 airports.

Verizon had previously said that it aimed to cover 25 to 30 cities by the end of the year, without identifying them.

The target market for the 4G service is initially business users who need Internet connections on the go. Verizon says phones and tablet computers that can take advantage of the higher speeds will come next year.

Sprint Nextel Corp. already has a 4G network run by its Clearwire Corp. subsidiary, but it uses technology that's incompatible with Verizon's. Verizon, on the other hand, is using LTE, or Long-Term Evolution, a technology that's set to be adopted widely in the industry. AT&T Inc. and T-Mobile USA have a greater ability to upgrade speeds on their current networks and are waiting for LTE to mature before introducing it.

Verizon, the country's largest wireless carrier, was beaten to the LTE punch by MetroPCS Communications Inc., the fifth-largest carrier. Last month, MetroPCS launched LTE coverage in Las Vegas. It plans to add a few more cities before the end of the year. MetroPCS is adopting LTE not so much because of the higher data speeds but because the technology helps lower operating costs.

Also Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported that Apple Inc. is set to start producing a version of the iPhone that could be used on Verizon's current 3G network. However, Verizon Wireless CEO Lowell McAdam repeated the company's line that it does not expect to sell a 3G iPhone but would like to do so for its 4G network. A 4G iPhone is probably at least a year away, both because the network is still being built and because of technical challenges on the phone side.

Verizon Wireless is a joint venture of Verizon Communications Inc. of New York and Vodafone Group PLC of Britain.

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