

LightSquared gets first deal with a phone company

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(AP) -- LightSquared, a company building a new wireless broadband network to compete with those of AT&T Inc., Verizon Wireless and Clearwire Corp., announced Tuesday its first phone-company customer, Leap Wireless International Inc.

Leap [Wireless](#), the parent of the Cricket phone service, plans to use LightSquared's fourth-generation, or 4G, [network](#) to supplement its own.

LightSquared is funded by private-equity firm Harbinger Capital Partners, and it plans to sell wholesale network access to phone companies and any other companies that might want to resell broadband Internet access. It has already announced one other customer: Open Range, a startup Internet service provider focusing on rural areas.

San Diego-based Leap is the country's seventh-largest phone company, with 5.5 million customers. Analysts have speculated that T-Mobile USA, the fourth-largest [phone company](#), would be interested in dealing with LightSquared, but that possibility has been taken off the table with Sunday's announcement that AT&T Inc. has agreed to buy T-Mobile. The deal would give T-Mobile access to the 4G network AT&T is activating starting this year.

LightSquared has previously said it hopes to get its network operating in some areas this year and cover 92 percent of the U.S. population by 2015.

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