

AT&T, Verizon get more airwaves: Expect more mobile capacity

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Consumers may see improved networks after AT&T and Verizon, the two largest U.S. wireless companies, spent billions in the government's latest airwaves auction.

The additional airwaves, or spectrum, will allow [wireless](#) companies to offer more capacity for mobile data services, helping ease congested networks.

The auction, which ended Thursday, will raise \$41.3 billion for the U.S. Treasury and various federal programs. AT&T Inc. bid \$18.2 billion and Verizon Wireless \$10.4 billion. T-Mobile US Inc. had \$1.77 billion in winning bids. Sprint Corp. did not participate.

AT&T plans to start using the new spectrum in 2017 or 2018 to improve performance and offer additional capacity for mobile data—particularly for video, which is one of the largest uses of data capacity. AT&T says it expects the new spectrum to be primarily used for downloads, rather than sending video and other data. Verizon and T-Mobile haven't specified what they will do, citing a quiet period.

Beyond the national carriers, Dish Network Corp. won \$10 billion worth of spectrum through two companies it invested in. Unlike its cable rivals, the satellite TV provider has had trouble bundling an Internet service with TV. The spectrum will help Dish offer a broadband service wirelessly.

The Federal Communications Commission has been trying to free up spectrum from various government agencies and other holders, and it has been offering the freed airwaves to companies through these auctions.

To get the spectrum in the latest round, companies must make their payments by March 2.

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