

AT&T on track with new high-speed network in 2011

January 5 2011, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- AT&T Inc. is on track to start rolling out its next-generation wireless technology in the second half of this year, as the company joined handset makers Wednesday to show off several smart phones that will take advantage of a speedier version of the current network.

AT&T previously said it planned to roll out the next-generation LTE, or Long Term Evolution, technology this year. But the head of AT&T's consumer business, Ralph De La Vega, didn't narrow it down to the second half until Wednesday. The company also said it expects to finish the new network by the end of 2013, which the company said is faster than it initially expected.

LTE is a standard technology behind the next-generation networks, known as 4G. It is designed from the ground up to carry data. Network operators expect not just higher speeds but lower operational costs with LTE. But because there is not yet a standard for carrying voice calls over LTE, LTE phones will initially use 3G networks for calls.

At a developer summit in Las Vegas ahead of the annual International Consumer Electronics Show, De La Vega also said AT&T has nearly finished its rollout of HSPA+, an upgraded 3G network that AT&T considers part of its 4G network because it offers similar speeds.

After initially resisting, the International Telecommunications Union, a standards-setting body, has approved the practice of calling upgraded 3G networks "4G" - something that AT&T competitor T-Mobile USA also

does.

Motorola Mobility Inc., HTC Corp. and Samsung Electronics Co. showed off several upcoming smart phones that will run on AT&T's HSPA+ network.

All the phones are slated to have large touch screens and version 2.2 of Google Inc.'s Android operating software, known as Froyo. They will all support HTML5, which is a catch phrase for an updated set of rules and specifications used by website programmers; HTML5 includes video playback and other graphics-intensive features.

AT&T plans to start selling several HSPA+ phones and other devices such as laptop cards and a tablet computer from Motorola in the first half of the year. It will then begin selling LTE phones and other LTE-enabled devices that will use the upcoming network but run on HSPA+ when LTE is not available.

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