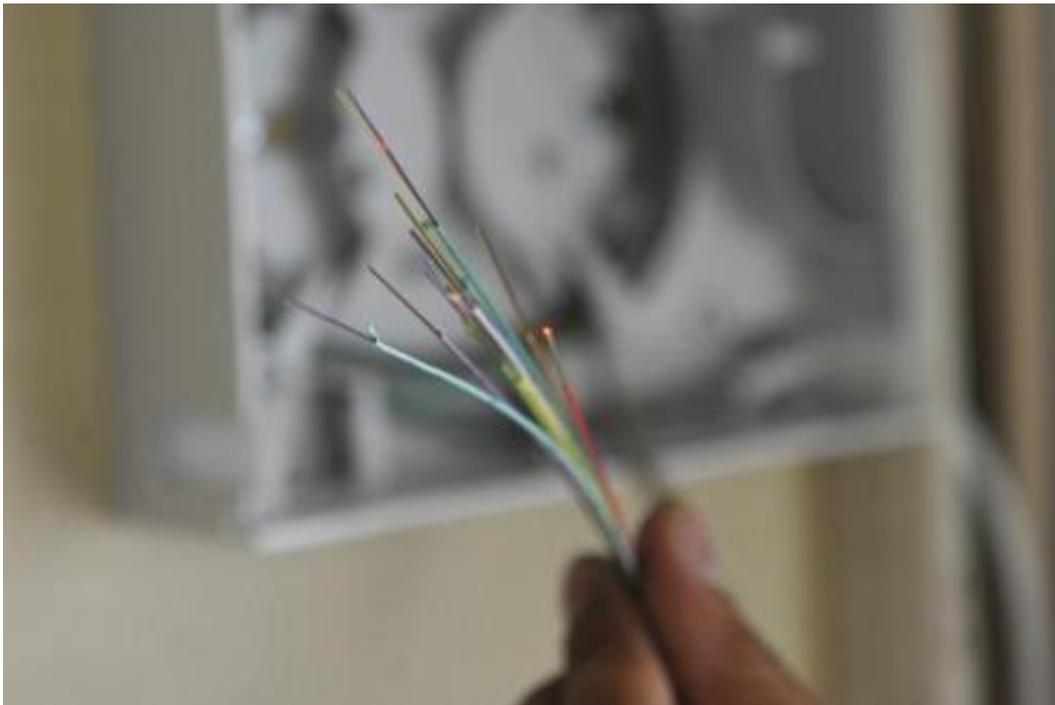


Google and Asian firms laying US-Japan underwater cable

August 12 2014



A worker connects fibre optics cables on July 22, 2010 in a junction box of an apartment in Paris

Google is partnering with five Asian telecom firms to build a \$300 million underwater cable across the Pacific Ocean in a bid to meet surging Internet use.

The project, named FASTER, would see the 9,000-kilometre (5,600

mile) fibre-optic cable stretch from two points in Japan to the United States, with extensions to other Asian locations later on, the companies said.

In the US, the cable would be extended to link major cities on the west coast including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, they said.

There are several hundred underwater telecom cables that connect various points in the world.

But "the FASTER cable system has the largest design capacity ever built on the Trans-Pacific route, which is one of the longest routes in the world", Woohyong Choi, chairman of the project's executive committee, said in the statement.

Also involved in the project are Japanese mobile carrier KDDI, China Mobile International, China Telecom Global, Malaysia's Global Transit, and Singapore's SingTel, the statement said.

Japan's NEC would build the system, which is expected to come into service in the first half of 2016, the firms said.

Google has been involved in similar projects before, including a 2008 deal to build an ultra-high-speed submarine cable to carry Internet and other traffic between Japan and the United States.

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Citation: Google and Asian firms laying US-Japan underwater cable (2014, August 12) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-08-google-asian-firms-us-japan-underwater.html>

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