

GigE+ Deployment & Operational Updates

In 2015, Independents Fiber Network was able to expand its network rather dramatically by using anchor customers to drive the growth of its fiber assets. This growth expanded our network in several new key areas in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. In Ohio, our network has expanded throughout numerous counties in the western side of the state. Our footprint was already rich in this region, but our growth allowed us to expand further into Montgomery, Warren, Clinton, Darke, Lucas, Ottawa, and Williams Counties. In Michigan, we expanded our assets in Monroe County, most notably in the Temperance area. In Indiana, we are still actively building a ring that allows us to extend our network and its services in DeKalb and Steuben Counties.

The growth of our network is largely determined by understanding where our customers need connectivity and the potential needs of others in the area. This sound growth policy is strategic to us as we continue to grow, but in a financially responsible way. As expected, the larger our network grows, the more potential customers we serve grows with it. In addition, our ability to better serve our customers grows, as well. We planned our route to help create more of a honeycomb type structure. Doing this allows us to increase the paths we can utilize to provide better redundancy for our customers. Also, we placed several new PoPs (Points-of-Presence) along our network. These PoPs work as a location for us to serve our customers in the region, and also allow potential dark fiber customers a place to collocate along our routes.

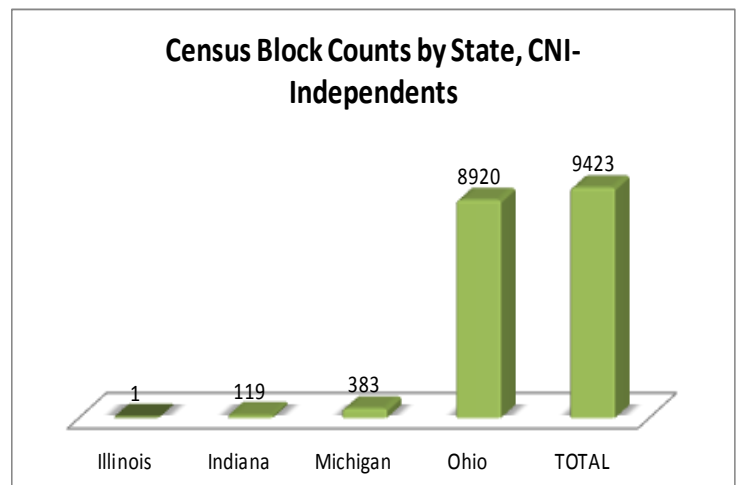
Our plan for 2016 is already being implemented. Along with scores of projects that we are actively constructing

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for customers, we also plan to focus on continuing to improve our infrastructure. We are placing a new PoP in the city of Fairborn so we can offer more services to customers in the region. In Van Wert, we are working to build a new path to the west of the city that will allow us more access to fiber and better utilization of our equipment in the area, and we are starting construction this summer on phase I of a project to place our own fiber network between Kenton, Ohio and Plain City, Ohio. This will provide a tremendous revenue savings for our company, while simultaneously allowing us better access and assets with which to serve our partners in the area.

Independents Fiber Network aggressively expanded in 2015, and 2016 will offer more of the same. With our strategic and sound growth policies, we are positioning our company to better serve new markets and existing partners. This will continue to allow for Independents Fiber Network to be a market leader in its region.

The chart below shows as of December 31, 2015 fixed broadband deployment coverage by Census Block using optical Carrier/Fiber to the end user technology





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FirstNet Releases First Set of Answers to RFP Questions; Extends Deadlines for Capability Statements, Final Proposals



FirstNet®

The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) released the first set of answers to the more than 400 questions it received on its Request for Proposal (RFP) for the deployment of the nationwide public safety broadband network.

Additionally, in response to questions received, FirstNet is extending the deadline for submitting capability statements, which are optional, by two weeks, to March 31. As a result, FirstNet is also extending the deadline for final RFP proposals by two weeks, from April 29 to May 13.

"We are pleased with the interest and questions we received from industry, states, and public safety regarding the FirstNet RFP," said FirstNet Chief Executive Officer, Mike Poth. "This is a vital next step in the iterative process as potential offerors work to craft their proposed solutions to deploy the first-of-its-kind wireless network dedicated to first responders, and FirstNet staff are diligently working to answer each question."

To read more, click HERE: <http://www.firstnet.gov/news/firstnet-releases-first-set-answers-rfp-questions-extends-deadlines-capability-statements-final>

U.S. Ethernet Market Grew by 20% in 2015, Vertical Systems Says

Vertical Systems Group (VSG) welcomed Windstream as a new entrant for its U.S. Carrier Ethernet Leaderboard results for 2015, a year marked by im-

pressive growth for the market.

In order of retail port share, the companies on the leaderboard are AT&T, Level 3, Verizon, CenturyLink, Time Warner Cable, Comcast, Cox, XO and Windstream. To qualify for VSG's Leaderboard, a provider must have 4 percent or more of the U.S. Ethernet services market.

"For the full year 2015, the Ethernet market grew by more than 20 percent, however, the second half of the year showed moderating growth going into 2016," said Rick Malone, principal at Vertical Systems Group, in a statement. "During this cycle, Windstream moved up to the Leaderboard from the Challenge Tier based on the strength of its Ethernet private line service and its presence in many smaller markets that others do not serve."

To read more, click HERE: <http://www.verticalsystems.com/vsalb/2015-u-s-carrier-ethernet-leaderboard/>



Broadband Key to Smart Cities

While the Internet has transformed everything from how we search for a job to how we communicate with friends and family, cities are looking to utilize digital technology to address stubborn challenges such as reducing traffic congestion, fighting crime, promoting economic development, and making local governments more accessible and efficient. To support such efforts, the Obama Administration this fall launched a new "Smart Cities" initiative and called for investing \$160 million in federal research to help communities address 21st century challenges and support such initiatives as smart transporta-



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tion systems that could adjust traffic management in real time or support expanded use of smart grid technology to better monitor peak energy usage.

To read more, click HERE: <https://www.ntia.doc.gov/blog/2016/broadband-key-smart-cities>

Expect Mobile to Push the Boundaries in 2016



According to some predictions, global Internet traffic will grow by three fold over the next 5 years. Users will begin to download movies that could take up to 80 gigabytes. Ultimately, our smartphones are becoming our gateway to everything connected. When you think about it, it wasn't that long ago that we started relying on our smartphones to take pictures, or to help us navigate to our destination. Now we are seeing where mobile devices are being used to start a car, unlock doors, or turn the channel on the television – or even replace the TV altogether. In 2016, we will see companies start to push the boundaries on networking speeds. We are already seeing the end of the two-year contract for smartphones, allowing for quicker upgrades. In 2015, the average premium smartphone came with 38.9 GB of storage. By 2018, the average capacity will nearly double to 77.2 GB worldwide, according to SanDisk Market Intelligence.

As mobile device dependence increases, we will see it continue to converge with the "Internet of Things" trend to create capabilities in 2016 that were never before possible. Whatever changes are on the way, it is imperative that having fast, diverse broadband

will undoubtedly be pivotal to ensuring we deliver a good user experience.

Broadband Is More Than Infrastructure

Communities are developing a wide variety of strategies to tackle the digital divide.

For local governments that invest in broadband infrastructure, a critical component of success is ensuring that their communities have access to the infrastructure and take advantage of its benefits. Access to high-speed broadband Internet is becoming vital for businesses and economic development, and most cities recognize its importance. Broadband adoption and use, which were once commonly overlooked, are equally important for economic development and are now beginning to get their fair share of attention.

To read more, click HERE: http://www.bbcmag.com/2016mags/Jan_Feb/

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