

# Cable guys to FCC: ISPs aren't the bottleneck, Google is!

You would think that the National Cable and Telecommunications Association would be thrilled that cable performed well in the latest [broadband quality report released today](#), that it wouldn't resort to some kind of attack on content companies that make its broadband service so compelling to end customers. You would be wrong.

Even at a supposed high point for the cable guys, they just can't let their beef with Google and Netflix go. Today's dig comes courtesy of this [blog post](#), which lauds cable's achievements in today's FCC report, and then turns around to blame the web world for delivering slow-loading sites and services that can't make use of the TOTALLY AWESOME speeds cable provides.

From [the post](#):

With two successful tests of wireline broadband providers under its belt, it may be time for the Commission to turn its attention elsewhere. For example, as described in a recent article in the [Boston Globe](#), slow speeds on content provider websites often prevent consumers from receiving the full benefits of the "last mile" broadband access service they have purchased. Consequently, to obtain a fuller picture of the performance consumers are experiencing, the Commission may want to solicit the participation of popular content and application providers, such as Netflix and YouTube, in developing a voluntary testing regime for application providers.

In other words, cable's service is amazeballs but those lunks in Silicon Valley are gumming up the works, so the FCC should totally stroll over to Mountain View and track how well Google's

site loads. If you click over to the *Boston Globe* article, you'll see that the cable guys are distorting the problem (surprise!) that the newspaper is discussing. The Globe's story focuses on Verizon's new 300 Mbps service and covers two issues. The first is that customers may not find value in faster speeds because there aren't a lot of web services out there to take advantage of them, and the second is the idea that those speeds are irrelevant because data centers on the back end can't ship content at 300 Mbps. From the [Globe article](#):

The problem is that most of the Internet isn't transmitting data fast enough to take advantage of such rapid broadband speeds, [Roger Entner, an Internet analyst for Recon Analytics LLC] said. If a server computer transmits an Internet video at, say, 20 million bits per second, having a 300-million-bits-a-second connection won't make any difference. "The website you are connecting to is the bottleneck," he said.

Hold on there, Entner! The idea that a 300 Mbps connection is pointless because Google isn't pumping out YouTube streams at 300 Mbps is laughable. Then add NCTA's idea that the people at the FCC should investigate the contents of Netflix's data centers in order to ensure that the over-the-top-streaming company is not somehow scamming customers (or interfering with Big Cable's ability to make money selling faster pipes), and you have a straw man the size of the Empire State Building.

**Between your computer and Google's servers are a lot of steps.**

A lot happens between Google's servers and your router when you request a YouTube video. There are connections between the cores on the chip processing your request, connections between servers in the data center that look up the video you asked for and then the possibility of multiple hops between different providers to get the packets that make up that video from Google

to your screen (including that hop on your home wireless network which may also be constrained). And the important thing to realize is that at every one of those points there are multiple providers who compete to deliver the fastest possible speeds while optimizing for cost and quality.

The primary point is there isn't a lot of competition is the last mile, where the packets hop onto a cable, DSL or fiber network. And that's why the FCC needs to keep its eye on cable, DSL and fiber providers. Because the truth is that as long as ISPs cap their services and drag their feet when it comes to speed upgrades (Time Warner's [transition to DOCSIS 3.0 was a long time](#) coming in AT&T dominated markets), some of the services such as [4K video streams](#) that require at least a 12 Mbps connection and can consume several gigabytes of data per movie, won't launch. It's hard to [push the fast and fat apps](#) before the broadband cart.

### **Don't miss the big picture**

So the big picture on the FCC's broadband quality report has nothing to do with Google's servers and everything to do with Google, Netflix and others trying to serve their customers in a market where broadband resources are constrained by caps or where operators refuse to invest in their networks. If you doubt me, look at Netflix [begrudgingly lowering the quality of its streams in Canada](#) or [Google building out its own fiber network](#) just to get people thinking about what apps a superfast gigabit network could enable.

Only in a market where their access to the end customers is interrupted by a monopoly would it make sense for Netflix to deliver a lower quality product or Google to spend billions in a working around that provider. So yeah, cable, congratulate yourselves on being better than DSL, but don't try to get all high and mighty trashing the companies that make your product worth buying.

