

Performance

CenturyLink still uses T1-level circuits (1.5Mbps) to connect at least some of their remote D-SLAMs, according to Siefert, which helps the phone company extend DSL service to homes and businesses far away from the company's central office. The net result is that customers fight for the bandwidth on an insufficient backhaul, which dramatically reduces speeds during peak usage times. In Helena, Montana CenturyLink "daisy-chains" D-SLAMs to support customers over a single T3 line, creating latency problems, packet loss, and further reductions in speed and performance.

MIC is capable of providing a total of 252Mbps per distribution site. The incoming next generation of wireless technology will increase that to 1.4Gbps. Additional distribution sites can divide the traffic load similar to how new cell towers can reduce demand on other nearby towers.

Speeds

CenturyLink sells speeds "up to" a certain level without guaranteeing customers will actually get the speed they are paying to receive. Siefert says CenturyLink customers in Montana currently can manage up to 7Mbps in some areas.

MIC says it can commit to its customers they can receive 10-40Mbps (and 80Mbps by the end of 2012) over its wireless network.

Independent Netindex.com suggests MIC does offers faster service on average than CenturyLink provides in Montana:

- Montana (statewide average): MIC 5.04Mbps vs. CenturyLink 3.8Mbps
- Helena: MIC 5.08Mbps vs. CenturyLink 2.73Mbps

The Wireless Internet Service Provider Association says their members are not eligible for federal Connect America subsidies, and most wireless providers are privately financed operations built with the support of their rural customers.

Said Richard Harnish, WISPA's executive director, "We find it hard to believe that a company like CenturyLink that gets millions of dollars in federal support now wants more free money to overbuild unsubsidized rural broadband networks that WISPs already successfully operate. To do this, CenturyLink has attempted to discredit the taxpayer-funded National Broadband Map and invent its own standards in an effort to show that they should receive more than \$30 million in additional subsidies. Our strong opposition reflects WISPA's view that CenturyLink's arguments are factually and technically flawed. We thank the other associations, state agencies and WISPs that support our views."