

Speaking as both an internet user and a former employee of Comcast, laws surrounding network traffic neutrality are very, very important in how they currently and will shape the future of the human race.

That sounds like a broad statement, but it's really not when the power of the communication medium called the internet is considered - I, have in front of me, a device that can retrieve for me nearly any kind of knowledge about nearly any kind of topic, and let me communicate with other people almost anywhere in the world at the same time.

Laws regarding the regulation of traffic for the company that provides me access to it is an absolute necessity. If left alone and without oversight, companies like Comcast are able to stop or slow down traffic according to its whims and goals, to hold content providers hostage, and in the same fashion that a Brigand or Bandit guards a bridge and demands a crossing "toll", they can legally, and have already, demand anything of anyone attempting to cross it.

One might ask; Well, they own the bridge, shouldn't they be able to charge people to use it? Shouldn't they be able to manage traffic over it as they see fit?

And I would reply; Yes, of course. Rewarding a person or a group of persons for contributing to the betterment of society is a good thing. We need that, as a species, to continue to evolve, advance, and be better. The problem arises when one considers exactly how much benefit society is reaping from their work. Let's set up a scenario of bridges; Bob lives on an island, and builds a bridge connecting his island to the main land. He rightfully charges people to cross the bridge that he worked so hard to build:

Bob's bridge is the only bridge. He charges people a flat, affordable fee to cross it, and is making a modest amount of money after long ago recovering his building costs. That is a major boon to the society of the island!

Now, there is a hospital on the mainland, but not one on the island. Bob continues to charge people the same flat, affordable fee to use it. That is still a benefit to the society of the island, but now there is a "Pay Wall" for access to critical services, like medical care. Luckily this "Pay Wall" is small, but it is still there - denying anyone without the ability to minimally pay access to the hospital.

Now Bob begins to charge a yearly fee for high-speed passes. He sections off a few of the lanes of traffic and declares them as reserved for people who hold the high-speed pass. This slows down the regular traffic a lot, and it forces the people who won't or can't pay more for the use of his bridge to use the slower lanes, delaying their commutes, travel times, and even access to the only hospital.

This point is interesting, because now Bob has a tricky game to play. He can't lower the price of his high-speed passes to levels that everyone can afford - after all, if everyone has a high-speed pass, no one does - but at the same time, he can't make them too high either, or he risks having no one use the high-speed lanes and not making more money. This is bad for the society on the island - now Bob is personally selecting which people will have easier, happier, and healthier lives based on their ability to pay him the money he demands. Money is not a representation of how much one contributes to the happiness of others in the society you live in. Bob is not rewarding Teachers or Firemen, he's rewarding people who know how to do a specific thing very well - make money - and in reality that commonly ends up harming others, not helping them.

Now, a second bridge is built by Jacob. This bridge is physically identical to Bob's bridge in every way, except that he charges a flat, affordable fee to cross it - the same way Bob did at the beginning. He even offers a limited number of government organizations usage of the bridge for free, because Jacob does not want to force sick people to pay to be healthy again.

This is bad for Bob's ability to make more money, but now Bob's negative impact on

7521119500.txt

society has lessened significantly. Now, people on the island have the choice of using either bridge to get to the hospital, and they don't have to wait through Bob's slow traffic or pay him the demand money for a high-speed pass if they don't want to. Bob is no longer as much of a bad guy as he seemed to be when he controlled the only access to the basic services the islanders require. This is an example of equal competition.

Let's scratch Jacob's bridge for the moment, and imagine that Bob's bridge is the only bridge again.

Now the government on the island passes laws that regulate how Bob is able to legally manage his bridge. They pass a law that says he is not allowed to discriminate against people who pay more and people who pay less for use of the bridge, that he may only charge people for access to it, and that the amount he charges must be somewhat reasonable. They understand that it's his bridge and that they wouldn't have it at all if he hadn't built it, but they also understand the negative impact his management actions were having on the society of the island. His work and effort is still being handsomely rewarded, but now the reward he receives is closer to the benefit he actually brings to the society he lives in.

At its most basic form, the argument over network traffic neutrality is the argument over who (or what) controls something that has become an essential and mandatory tool for modern human life. Companies are driven by profit. They do not care at all about you, or the society you live in unless you impact that profit in a significant way.

Laws that regulate how service providers like Comcast are legally able to manage the traffic on their networks will help ensure that we all have neutral, un-biased, and free of ulterior motive access to each other and to the content we generate.