

Netflix meets with F.C.C. on net neutrality, Comcast-T.W.C. merger

On Monday, Netflix executives met with Federal Communications Commission staffers to talk about the Commission's "Open Internet" plans, more commonly known as net neutrality.

According to a letter sent to the F.C.C. outlining the meeting, Netflix argued that as part of its open internet plan, the Commission should prohibit internet service providers from charging for direct access to customers. Netflix has in recent months reluctantly signed peering arrangements with Comcast, Verizon and AT&T, agreeing to pay for direct connection to the providers' networks.

Net neutrality, a maxim that holds that internet service providers should treat all traffic with equal weight, would be greatly hampered under proposed F.C.C. regulation changes that would allow I.S.P.s to offer for-pay "fast lanes" to content providers.

"In the traditional telephony ecosystem, the person initiating a phone call with another would be considered 'the caller' and was responsible for paying for the call—no matter which party did the most 'talking' on the call," Netflix told the F.C.C. "The Internet ecosystem is no different. A broadband ISP's customer 'calls' Netflix and Netflix 'answers the call.' No matter that

Netflix's response causes more data to flow to the originating 'caller.'"

Netflix also responded to charges from providers—notably Comcast and Verizon—that the company deliberately chooses to send its data over congested networks in order to slow down its product and spur consumer complaints.

"This allegation is false," Netflix said. "In the case of Comcast, Netflix purchased all available transit to reach Comcast's network. Every single one of those transit links to Comcast was congested (even though the transit providers requested extra capacity). The only other available routes into Comcast's network were those where Comcast required an access fee."

Netflix has had a busy few weeks at the F.C.C. In addition to its meeting regarding net neutrality, consultants working for Netflix requested access to confidential information from Comcast and Time Warner Cable in relation to their proposed merger, according to a filing with the Commission. While the information will remain confidential, Netflix could use it to oppose the prospective deal.

Executives at AT&T, a major I.S.P., also met with F.C.C. staff this week, to argue that the current state of network connections is very competitive, and that the arguments put forth by Netflix are not applicable.

You can read Netflix's net neutrality letter here:
<http://bit.ly/1o8ZYCt>

You can read AT&T's net neutrality letter here:
<http://bit.ly/1s7apYd>

You can read Netflix's request for confidential Comcast-Time Warner Cable materials here: <http://bit.ly/UO0Kt9>