

Closing Broadband Gaps:



The Potential Benefits of IP-based Networks and IP-enabled Services for Minorities.

AT&T's IP Transition Proposal

AT&T recently filed a petition at the FCC that asks the agency to begin a national dialogue and start an incremental approach to accelerate the nationwide transition to IP-based networks. Specifically, AT&T requests that the agency permit a number of market trials on a geographically-limited basis that would help test the transition to all-Internet Protocol (IP) networks.

A well-managed transition that establishes a clear path for investment in and deployment of nationwide next generation IP-based networks should help boost affordability and the rate of broadband adoption among communities of color, enhance broadband service quality, generate economic growth, maximize private investment, and strengthen U.S. global competitiveness.

Benefits of a Well-Managed Transition

Outdated regulations mandating the continued use of older technologies, specifically the antiquated, voice-centric network, in programs for low-income and rural consumers can tie these consumers to technologically inferior, and increasingly expensive, services.

An effective transition holds special promise for minority communities, whose members have lagged in broadband and in areas such as education and health where deficiencies can be eased by broadband. Advocates in the African American, Hispanic American, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities have strongly endorsed AT&T's requested relief for the FCC to conduct IP-transition market tests. Specifically, completion of the IP transition would:

- Expand economic opportunity to help alleviate high unemployment among African American, Latino, and Asian communities such as Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong Americans. A study by economists Robert Shapiro and Kevin Hassett, for example, shows that the transition from 2G to 3G wireless alone created about 1.6 million U.S. jobs.
- Boost broadband adoption, especially among diversity and lower income communities, by increasing competition and making home broadband more affordable.
- Enable easier communication with family members in other countries – a particularly valued benefit for Asian Americans and Latinos born outside the United States.
- Empower communities of color with new communications options to help balance historic underrepresentation in traditional communication mediums.
- Improve access to quality health care, improve health outcomes, and cut health care costs. Broadband enables access to distant health care specialists and services and helps overcome language barriers that can interfere with care in diversity communities. A range of health applications, including remote monitoring, enable better management of chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes that are common among some diversity communities.
- Enhance educational opportunity for diversity students through distance learning and blended learning. High-speed broadband enables K-12 students to participate in advanced coursework not available in local schools and also makes it possible for learners of all ages to enroll in job-skill and university course work to earn professional certifications and college degrees.