

Debunking “The Net is Neutral” Myth

The term “Net Neutrality” is misleading because it insinuates the Net is neutral today; in fact, it is not neutral. Imposing Net Neutrality would not maintain the status quo, but force big changes in the Internet’s operation.

Net traffic treatment is not neutral:

- The Internet engineering community has long recognized a passive (neutral) Internet is a dysfunctional Internet; it’s been developing “active queuing” (prioritization) to avoid service degradation or “Internet meltdown.” See *Internet Society, April 1998, RFC 2309*: <ftp://ftp.rfc-editor.org/in-notes/rfc2309.txt>
- Keynote[®], the Internet’s Performance Authority, tracks how Internet connection speed varies among carriers and how performance (jitter & latency) varies between routes, among other Internet differences.
- Internet transmission has never been “neutral” or a “level playing field.” Large entities that invest more in infrastructure and pay more than smaller operators or bloggers, routinely get better Internet service:
 - Akamai’s caching services, provides advantage of faster, more reliable downloads of large files;
 - Owning high capacity “fat pipes” tied to peering exchanges provides a performance advantage;
 - Employing additional QOS services (quality of service) affords a performance advantage; and
 - Hosting in multiple strategically-located, high-end data centers provides superior performance.
- Google’s massive server farms give Google a big Net performance advantage over other search engines.

Internet backbone peering is not neutral:

- The Internet backbone has long been tiered, based on amounts of traffic exchanged. Peering, the *voluntary* interconnection of networks, is unequal and thus tiered based on the *reach* of a network.
- Internet backbone Tier 1 networks sell to, or peer with, every network, but *do not pay* for transit. Tier 2 networks peer, but *pay for some* transit over the Internet. Tier 3 networks *must pay* to reach the Internet.
- Internet backbone peering has never been regulated and most Internet traffic is in fact *privately* peered.

Net access pricing is not neutral:

- Internet access price differentiation is the norm. Consumers can choose from a wide variety of Internet price/speed tiers: *Dial-up* (free to ~\$20 monthly), *DSL* (~\$15 to \$60+), *Cable* is (~\$20-60+), *Satellite broadband* (~\$50-100+), *WiFi* (free to ~\$30+) *Wireless broadband/Wimax* (~\$50-80+).
- Prices differ greatly depending on which bundled products/services one buys and for what time period.

Net usage is not neutral:

- Internet use is not equal. A small slice of users consume most of the Internet’s bandwidth because they use highly-bandwidth-intensive applications like peer2peer video-file-sharing/gaming, high definition video. The most commonly-used applications require relatively little bandwidth i.e. email, web surfing.
- **5% of Net users use 51% of the bandwidth and 25% use 85% overall**, per Time Warner Cable.
- Net neutrality average pricing is reverse Robin Hood: average users must subsidize bandwidth hogs.

Net regulatory/legal precedent is not neutral:

- 30+ million cable modem and satellite broadband users have *never* been subject to net neutrality.
- In 1993, Congress ruled wireless competitive, meaning *no* net neutrality for 210 million wireless users.
- In 2005, FCC decided to not apply net neutrality to DSL -- ruling it competitive and unregulated.
- Snowe-Dorgan would create new one-size-fits-all regulation for *all* broadband providers even free ones.

NETCompetition.org is an e-forum to debate the merits of net neutrality. It is funded by broadband telecom, cable and wireless companies who believe in free and open Internet competition, not Net regulation. See www.netcompetition.org.