An FCC Update on Its Network-Measuring Speed Test App

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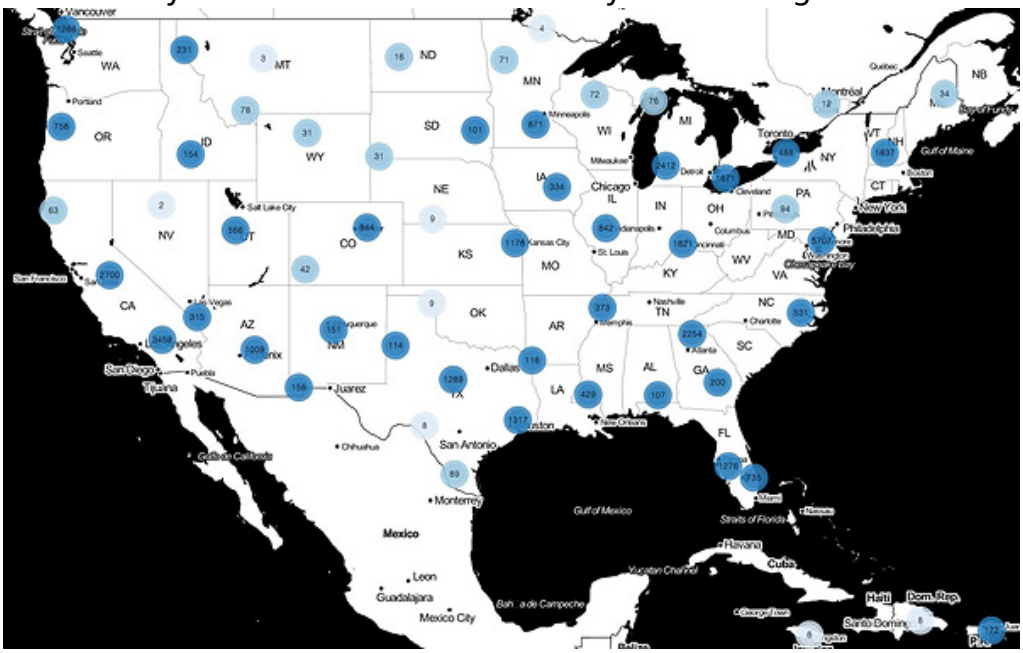
It’s been almost a month since the FCC released its Speed Test mobile application and the Commission has already released some of the early data sets gathered



after releasing the crowd-sourced cellular network tool, the FCC announced 40,000 collections of broadband measurements [1] covering upload, download, latency and packet loss. With the information Speed Test is bringing in through users, the FCC plans to next year release an interactive map that will show how individual carriers fair in individual markets, providing consumers with a metric for finding the best service in their area.

from the app. A week

We reached out to the FCC for further updates on the process and James Miller, senior attorney advisor at the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology, answered our questions via email. He sounded optimistic about the Android app, confirmed the iOS app is still on schedule for January, said there’s no current plans for a Windows Phone app and talked about consumers’, stakeholders’ and innovators’ roles in making the app a valuable source of data.

Wireless Week: How’s the consumer response been so far?

James Miller: So far, we’ve had over 36,000 downloads, over 260 reviews in Google Play (with a 4.4 rating), and over 600 Google Plus recommendations. The vast majority of reviews are very positive.

We have noticed that some consumers have rated the app lower because the app runs its tests on the network that the phone is connected to (either mobile or Wi-Fi). Because the data is flagged as coming from Mobile or Wi-Fi, separating this data will

allow us to get a better understanding of mobile network use. We are also working on ways to provide users with ways to better understand the differences between Wi-Fi and mobile cellular broadband performance on their own smartphones.

WW: What's the operators' response been to the app? Any chance they could write off the consumer data used in collecting the information?

Miller: We have worked collaboratively with CTIA – the Wireless Association, AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon throughout the development of the FCC Speed Test app, and we look forward to their continued involvement as we move forward and get more results.

WW: The FCC has pretty well mapped out how it will analyze and present data collected in 2014. Any ideas for the data beyond that?

Miller: We're excited about our plans for tools and visualizations of the data in 2014. We plan to reach out to consumers, public interest groups, and academics for further ideas about what will be the most meaningful and in order to increase the value of the data.

WW: Will the data collected at all figure into the rulemaking process for the upcoming spectrum auctions?

Miller: There are no current plans for using the data in any particular rulemakings. However, our goal for the FCC Speed Test app is to create an accurate and valuable dataset to help the agency make decisions based on the true state of the mobile broadband networks.

WW: Have any developers approached the FCC yet about improving upon or modifying the application?

Miller: Not yet. However, in line with our principles of openness and transparency, the software is open source. We want third parties to use it, verify our work, or give us feedback. The value of the app will only grow as consumers, stakeholders, and innovators provide their insights on how to improve it. The code is available at https://github.com/FCC/mobile-mba-androidapp.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/19/2014 - 8:12am*):
http://www.wirelessweek.com/articles/2013/12/fcc-update-its-network-measuring-speed-test-app

Links:
[1] http://www.fcc.gov/blog/fcc-speed-test-app-our-first-results