

Sprint Completes Spectrum Buy from U.S. Cellular, Gains 420,000 Customers

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Sprint on Friday announced that it had completed its purchase of 20MHz of PCS spectrum from U.S. Cellular that covers various Midwest markets, including Chicago, South Bend, Ind., and Champaign, Illinois. As part of the deal, Sprint also snagged 10MHz of PCS spectrum in the St. Louis market.

In addition addition to the airwaves Sprint gains from the deal, the transaction also includes approximately 420,000 U.S. Cellular customers.

Financial details of the transaction were not available.

According to Sprint those customer affected by the deal have already been notified, and Sprint will send them additional information on the exact timing and details of the transition which will last several months. Sprint and its Boost Mobile, Virgin Mobile and payLo prepaid brands are providing special offers and incentives for affected customers that the company says will significantly reduce the cost of acquiring a new device to transition from the U.S. Cellular network.

In many cases, Sprint said the affected customers can switch from their current device to another device for little or no cost and the carrier has also waived its early termination fee.

The spectrum buy comes as Sprint continues aggressively pursuing its Network Vision initiative. In its first quarter earnings call, Sprint reported more than 13,500 sites on air compared to more than 8,000 reported on Feb. 7. The number of sites that are either ready for construction, already underway or completed has grown to more than 25,000.

Sprint's iDen network has been scheduled to shut down on June 29. That spectrum will be refarmed and put to use for LTE service. Sprint has launched LTE in 88 cities, including Los Angeles, Boston and Charlotte, N.C. since the beginning of the year and expects that 4G LTE will be available in more than 170 additional cities in the coming months.

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