T-Mobile Upgrading 2G Network to LTE, Renewing Map Wars

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T-Mobile today revealed its plans to upgrade its 2G/EDGE GSM network and deploy LTE on that spectrum. The carrier plans to complete 50 percent of the transition by the end of 2014 and to substantially finish the rest of the project in 2015.

"We currently have 2G in our PCS band and some of it will be refarmed for 4G LTE. There will still be sufficient bandwidth to support 2G traffic and it will not affect current users of 2G or M2M customers," a T-Mobile spokesperson told Wireless Week.

T-Mobile's 2G network is deployed nationwide in 1900 MHz and 850 MHz. At the start of its network modernization initiative last year, T-Mobile refarmed some of its extra 1900 MHz bandwidth for HSPA+ [1].

As previously indicated by T-Mobile CTO Neville Ray [2], the carrier plans this year to begin deploying LTE on the 700 MHz A Block spectrum that it's acquiring from Verizon in a deal expected to close this year. T-Mobile said it plans to cover 250 million people with LTE by year's end.

"Our competitors want you to believe our network doesn't measure up. But that just isn't true. And American consumers are going to see right through the spin and half-truths when given the facts," T-Mobile CEO John Legere said in a statement.

During its fourth quarter earnings call [3], T-Mobile said its LTE network now covers 209 million people in 273 markets, still far behind the LTE deployments of AT&T and Verizon. But the carrier's footprint extends further when factoring in its other network technology, including HSPA+, which T-Mobile says covers 230 million Americans in many places where it has yet to deploy LTE.

To that end, T-Mobile has issued a cease and desist order to Verizon, demanding the carrier stop with its LTE network coverage map advertising. T-Mobile said in a statement that Verizon has "cherry-picked a single network technology to depict in its ads rather than accurately reflecting the many technologies widely in use today."

T-Mobile is also launching a new TV ad campaign that directly responds to Verizon's coverage map ads.

T-Mobile's legal action against Verizon Wireless' advertising echoes AT&T's similar moves against Big Red. In 2009, a federal judge denied AT&T's request that Verizon cease running ads that compared the two carriers' 3G coverage [4].

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