

The Oregonian

CenturyLink plans broader fiber rollout, gigabit speeds, in Portland neighborhoods

*By Mike Rogoway
August 05, 2014*

Portland residents, long starved for high-speed Internet and cable TV options, may suddenly have a full menu of choices.

CenturyLink announced early Tuesday morning that it plans a broad rollout of fiber-optic service to Portland through next year, bringing ultra-fast "gigabit" service to select neighborhoods across the city.

At the same time, CenturyLink is negotiating a new video franchise with the city that could enable it to offer cable TV in the near future.

CenturyLink's upgrade comes as Google Fiber contemplates its own rollout across the metro area, offering fiber-optic gigabit service and a cable TV option. Together, they present a formidable challenge to Comcast, the city's dominant cable and residential Internet company for more than a decade.

Unlike Comcast, though, CenturyLink and Google Fiber won't serve the whole city. They'll pick neighborhoods where demand is greatest, and they have the best chance of recouping the huge cost of their network upgrade (the city estimates Google's investment would total \$300 million), potentially leaving parts of Portland behind.

The competition isn't driving down prices, at least not yet. CenturyLink's discounted, introductory rate for its gigabit service is actually \$10 higher than Google Fiber's standard, \$70 a month price. (A gigabit is 1,000 megabits per second, roughly 100 times a typical broadband connection today.)

Instead, the three companies are offering variations on each other's plans, collectively giving subscribers a multitude of options.

"We all have different philosophies in the way we roll it out," said Chris Denzin, CenturyLink's general manager for the Portland area.

While Google Fiber offers a single, flat-rate, \$70 a month for its gigabit service, CenturyLink will offer three different residential fiber tiers – 40 megabits per second up to a full gig. CenturyLink's prices range from \$30 a month up to \$150, depending on speed and whether customers subscribe to other services, too.

Google's pricing and marketing strategy, which involves neighborhood "fiber rallies" to qualify for service, reflect its status as a new arrival, according to Denzin.

"When you have no market share you have a very different approach," he said. "You build the hype. You build the buzz."

Whether it's hype or marketing savvy, Google is a master at attracting attention. Its fiber pricing is tailored for subscribers who want straightforward, top-end service. CenturyLink's pricing, like Comcast's, is more complicated, targeted toward consumers willing to give up some speed in exchange for a better price.

"We've chosen to offer a hybrid approach," Denzin said. "We'd like to have an offering available to everyone to meet their individual need."

The resulting competition, if Google comes through, will put each company's strategy to the test – and could give subscribers a variety of options and some real bargaining power to play one company off another, at least initially.

CenturyLink isn't disclosing which areas have access to its fiber, where it plans to expand, or how much of the city it ultimately plans to serve. The company says it's keeping its plans to itself for fear of alerting the competition, but will notify eligible customers with door hangers and mailings. (Online reports suggest the rollout has begun in parts of inner Southeast Portland.)

CenturyLink has been dabbling in residential fiber for a few years, and service is already available in a handful of homes, apartments and condos. The broader residential rollout, announced Tuesday in Portland and nine other cities, including Seattle, reflect the company's push to move beyond its legacy landline phone business.

(Vancouver is not part of the broader rollout. For now, at least, CenturyLink says it will only string fiber to new, "greenfield" developments in Vancouver.)

The Louisiana-based company came to Oregon in 2011 when it bought Qwest Communications, then the state's largest phone company. Landline phones have been in precipitous decline in Oregon as elsewhere – CenturyLink had just 600,000 phone lines statewide at the end of 2012, less than half the number Qwest had a decade earlier. (See the graph at the bottom of this article.)

So CenturyLink has aggressively added business services, providing enterprise-class Internet connections and cloud computing. In addition to residential fiber, CenturyLink said Tuesday that it plans a push to make fiber more available to smaller businesses beyond the Portland's downtown core.

The drive toward fiber reflects the Internet's growing role in every day life for web surfing, games, radio, music streaming – and especially for video. Denzin, for example, has 14 Internet-enabled devices in his home – video streaming boxes, laptops, tablets and smartphones used by various members of his family.

Few people need gigabit service today, because there are few online services that can accommodate speeds that fast. But the proliferation of gadgets throughout the home put ever-growing demands on home Internet connections and will eventually compel consumers to upgrade speeds and capacity.

As CenturyLink builds out its fiber, it's evidently contemplating cable TV, too. In December the company quietly received a two-year extension on a Portland cable TV franchise it inherited from Qwest, and is now negotiating its own, 10-year agreement.

CenturyLink offers an Internet-based cable TV service called Prism in 12 other markets and appears to be eying Portland, too, capitalizing on the capabilities of its nascent fiber network.

"It would be great to have some real competition," said Mary Beth Henry, director of Portland's Office for Community Technology, who is negotiating with CenturyLink on the new franchise.

When Portland approved a broadband franchise for Google Fiber in June, the city agreed to eliminate several of the conditions that Comcast is required to fulfill. Among those: Google doesn't pay a 3 percent "PEG" fee to support public access and governmental programming, and Google doesn't have to serve the whole city.

Similar terms would be available to CenturyLink or any other prospective broadband provider, according to Henry, in the interests of attracting more broadband options to the city.

"I'm being very encouraging of them," she said, "because I think it'd be great for Portland to have more competition."

Google Fiber offers a cable TV service to its Internet subscribers for an additional \$50. CenturyLink isn't saying whether it plans to do so in Portland, but is hinting strongly in that direction.

"I'd say: Stay tuned," Denzin said.

Southeast Portland artist plans to take over Last Thursday, tells city: 'I don't need your authority'

*By Casey Parks
August 05, 2014*

A Southeast Portland artist has created a nonprofit with the intent of taking over Last Thursday. But city leaders say he does not have the authority.

Michael O'Connor emailed staff in Mayor Charlie Hales' office Friday informing them that his nonprofit, Artists United, will now control the Northeast Alberta Street fair. Artists United will take over charging and registering vendors, O'Connor wrote in an email to project manager Chad Stover.

"It's now my job to communicate with these people," O'Connor wrote. "If there is something you want to communicate to the vendors, get in touch with me and I'll relay the information."

Stover, who has led a team that has studied and managed Last Thursday over the past year, said O'Connor is not authorized to take over the fair or charge vendors a fee.

"As a private citizen you have no authority to charge vendors set up in the public right-of-way or public space without having been given permission from the City of Portland in the form of an actual permit," Stover wrote in response to O'Connor's email.

O'Connor replied an hour later: "I don't need your authority. We'll collect money if we want on behalf of our organization and the community. I am taking over the responsibility of managing this event whether you give me permission or not."

O'Connor was a member of Friends of Last Thursday, the volunteer group that ran the festival for a few years until 2013 negotiations with Hales' office about permits broke down. He left the group in 2012 to form a nonprofit to manage the Southeast Belmont Street art fair Hump Day.

He held a fundraiser in July to raise \$600 to pay to register his new Last Thursday nonprofit with the state, file proper paperwork with the IRS and set up a website.

Alberta-area residents have complained for years that their monthly street fair, meant to highlight the neighborhood's art scene, has become more of a street party. All-night revelers partied too loud and drunken people routinely urinated on neighborhood yards, they said. The city took over management of the festival last year.

Hales has said he is considering charging vendors a fee to offset the \$80,000 a year the city spends on portable toilets, barricades, street closures and more for the street fair. The mayor's office has also begun closing the event earlier and enforcing noise and open container rules.

O'Connor said he formed his new nonprofit in response to the regulations, which "cause harm to good people."

Hales spokesman Dana Haynes said city leaders are still looking for a nonprofit to take over the fair, which brings between 15,000 and 20,000 people to Alberta Street each summer. Haynes said city staff have not received much other criticism about the rules.

"The changes are coming slow and thoughtfully," Haynes said. "So far, the Last Thursday community has been pretty cool. It remains a neat event."

Portland Timbers fill seats, help boost success of \$12 million city bet on stadium renovations

*By Andrew Theen
August 04, 2014*

This week, Providence Park, the home of Major League Soccer's Portland Timbers and one of the crown jewels in American soccer's stadium universe, takes center stage.

Some of the best soccer players in the world descend on the Rose City for the MLS All-Star Game, featuring the top talent in the U.S. league pitted against the stars of Europe's FC Bayern Munich.

It's a key moment for the club in just its fourth full season as an MLS franchise, and it's a moment that likely wouldn't be possible without Portland taxpayers.

In the past 13 years, Portland pumped more than \$50 million in public dollars into the city-owned stadium, including a \$12 million gamble on the Timbers franchise in 2010 that helped make the latest renovations a reality. So far, the bet appears to be paying off.

Susan Hartnett, Portland's spectator facilities fund and development manager, said the Timbers are paying the bills and filling the seats at Providence Park. "The Timbers did very well last year," she said, calling the team's ability to sell tickets "foundational" to the city's bond deal penciling out.

In each of the three previous seasons, the team more than met its minimum ticket revenue guarantee. In 2013, the team paid \$321,172 in additional ticket revenue, beyond the \$640,920 guaranteed under the lease arrangement.

Here's our primer on the city's bet on the stadium and how it's worked out.

WHAT DID THE CITY AND TEAM AGREE TO?

In February 2010, the Portland City Council approved a \$31 million renovation of then-PGE Park to make it a soccer-centric and MLS-ready facility. That arrangement formally ended the era of the Portland Beavers, a Class AAA baseball team. The Timbers' 25-year lease deal required the team to pay annual rent payments as well as a 7 percent tax on stadium ticket sales. In exchange, the city agreed to pay \$12 million toward renovation. Paulson paid \$8 million up front, plus \$11.1 million into the city's Spectator Facilities Fund as prepaid rent and a construction loan. The team guaranteed a minimum ticket revenue amount each year. In 2011, the newly renovated stadium opened, and the Timbers began life as an MLS team.

HOW WAS THE DEAL RECEIVED?

The City Council voted 4-1 to approve the renovation and lease arrangement. At the 2010 meeting, then-commissioner Randy Leonard raised a question that seemed to hang in the air from detractors. "What's in it for Merritt? If this deal is so good for the city, why would Merritt agree to it? The answer is simple. Merritt's going to make a lot of money, and Merritt knows he's going to make a lot of money, because soccer is going to be popular in Portland," Leonard said. So far, Leonard's comments seem to be prescient, with Timbers merchandise ubiquitous in Portland and game tickets a hot commodity.

HOW DOES THE CITY GET PAID?

Parking and ticket surcharges at the Rose Quarter and the soccer stadium funnel into the city's spectator facilities fund, and that revenue is used to pay down the stadium renovation bonds. The city finished the 2013-14 fiscal year with \$6.4 million in the spectator fund. In 2010, Amanda Fritz, the only City Council member to vote against the deal, wondered whether the Trail Blazers would effectively subsidize soccer. "I honestly hope that MLS soccer succeeds in Portland," Fritz said. "I hope the day arrives that the revenues generated will pay for the cost of operations and debt service. In the meantime, I hope the Blazers fans will be hugged by every soccer fan, because they are the ones that will pay for this."

WAS FRITZ RIGHT?

Four years later, Hartnett said Fritz is correct that most of the spectator facilities fund comes from events at the Rose Quarter, primarily the Moda Center and associated parking. Hartnett said it's not only the Blazers who've made the fund healthy. "Playoff runs are pretty lucrative," Hartnett said, and both the Portland NBA franchise and the Portland Winterhawks hockey team extended their seasons this year. New franchises such as Portland Thorns women's soccer and Portland Thunder Arena Football League squad also brought in more money to the fund.

DIDN'T THE CITY PAY \$38.5 MILLION TO IMPROVE THE STADIUM?

Yes. A 2001 renovation to the stadium for the Beavers included the addition of box seats and other improvements. City officials refinanced that debt in 2013, saving an additional \$1.3 million over the life of the bond and adding value to the spectator fund in the short term. More than \$20 million in principal remains on those bonds, with \$3.6 million in additional interest costs. The annual debt service payment for the 2001 bonds is roughly \$2.4 million, with the last payment scheduled for 2023.

HOW IS THE CITY PAYING OFF THE DEBT ON THE LATEST BONDS?

Portland is currently paying \$400,000 a year in interest on the \$12 million bonds. Once the 2001 renovation payments expire in 2023, the city plans to boost annual debt service payments to \$3.4 million. All of the debt will be paid off by 2027.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SPECTATOR FUNDS DROP OFF?

Both of the stadium bonds are "full faith and credit" issuances, meaning they are backed by the city's general fund. Hartnett said if attendance dropped for the Timbers or Blazers and revenue for the city

spectator facilities fund fell short of what's needed to make debt payments, the city would tap into the general fund. "We manage the spectator facilities fund very carefully to make sure that doesn't happen," she said.

Portland Timbers' annual lease, ticket revenue payments to city			
Calendar Year	Rent Payment	Min. Ticket Revenue	Excess Revenue
2011	\$875,000	\$612,500	\$60,652.51
2012	\$900,000	\$626,500	\$125,389.02
2013	\$925,000	\$640,920	\$321,172.37

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales wants highway tolls: 5 takeaways from Oregon transportation forum

*By Joseph Rose
August 04, 2014*

With America's bridges and highways showing their cracks, U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer hosted a forum Monday in Portland to discuss how Congress' political demolition derby over long-term transportation funding is affecting Oregon.

Held at Portland State University, the event brought together everyone from libertarians and labor unions to trucking companies and elected officials to discuss ways of developing a responsible, sustainable system for funding future transportation needs.

It was a healthy discussion, but not exactly groundbreaking. In fact, for anyone even casually following the ongoing local, state and national debates over transportation spending, much of dialogue was little more than a retread.

Here are five things I took away from my 90 minutes at the forum:

1. **Portland Mayor Charlie Hales wants his city's highways tolled -- and pronto.** Let's face it, we probably have a better chance of jet-packing to work this election year than Congress coming up with a sustainable way to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent. With that in mind, Hales thinks it's high time that drivers start paying tolls to keep the metro area's highways paved and maintained. "We call them freeways," Hales said. "Will we call them that 25 years from now?"
2. **Bicyclists felt left on the side of the road.** A photo of the Hawthorne Bridge's bike and pedestrian lanes was projected on huge screens for the duration of the event. But Portland bicycle advocates weren't exactly thrilled about what they were hearing from the podium. Actually, judging from the comments popping up on Twitter, it was a matter of what they weren't hearing -- love for pedal-powered commuting.
3. **Steve Novick decided it was the perfect place to throw a few grenades at the press.** The Portland city commissioner thinks one of the biggest obstacles to getting a Portland street fee -- and possibly other transportation-related taxes -- rolling is a "pessimism and cynicism" infecting the public. And, to a large degree, the Portland city commissioner blames "an increasingly unpleasant media environment." Novick primarily took aim at The Oregonian and Willamette Week ("which used to be a progressive newspaper"). Watch the video.

4. **The political sniping over transportation funding in Washington isn't just Democrats and Republicans.** In fact, Blumeneuer, a dyed-in-the-wool Portland Democrat, said this: "The Obama administration has not been a profile in courage on the gas tax." Of course, it would have probably been hard to find anyone in the room who disagreed. At the same time, Blumenauer pointed out that the president would support a gas tax increase if Congress supported it.
5. **The biggest surprise:** The trucking and building industries sounded open to increased taxes to support transportation projects.

Willamette Week

Don't Bogart That Tax

Portland is looking to tax weed—even before voters legalize it.

*By Aaron Mesh
July 30, 2014*

Come November, Oregon voters will decide whether to legalize recreational marijuana, giving the state the authority to regulate and tax weed sales.

But Portland city leaders aren't waiting to grab a share of tax dollars from the cash crop.

In June, Mayor Charlie Hales began convening a 20-member city marijuana advisory committee. The Oregonian first reported last week that the committee is discussing when and where pot stores would be allowed to sell within city limits.

But WW has learned that the committee serves another purpose: It's crafting a city sales tax on marijuana.

"We have discussed that possibility," says Josh Alpert, Hales' director of strategic initiatives. "But we haven't waded into the conversation yet. There are issues that will need to be addressed, such as what will be the right tax amount, and what the legal ramifications are."

One legal detail is clear: The Portland City Council would need to pass its marijuana sales tax before voters approve the November ballot measure backed by New Approach Oregon.

That's because the measure's language specifically bars cities from collecting any taxes other than the state tax that would be imposed on growers—\$35 an ounce on flowers and \$10 an ounce on leaves.

Portland would be betting that if the council passes a sales tax before Oregonians legalize weed, the courts would rule the city's tax must be grandfathered into the new law. Hales' committee could bring a tax to the City Council by September.

That sets the stage for a battle over who gets coveted tax revenue from the newly legit grass industry. Hales' opposition could include state officials—and the backers of legal weed.

New Approach Oregon spokesman Peter Zuckerman says his group's measure prohibits additional city taxes to keep the price of legal weed competitive with the existing black market for marijuana.

"Local governments have the right to go to court to fight to raise taxes," Zuckerman says. "But if they do, they'll be violating the will of Oregon voters."

Portland officials got the idea to sneak a municipal weed tax under the wire from Ashland—the Southern Oregon town best known for its annual Shakespeare festival.

Ashland city councilors voted unanimously this month to authorize a tax of up to 10 percent on recreational weed, and up to 5 percent on medical pot. If Ashland finalizes that vote next week, it will become the first city in Oregon with a recreational marijuana tax.

Dave Kanner, Ashland's city administrator, says the city passed its weed tax hoping it will supersede any state ban.

“What we were thinking is, if we had our tax in place before this measure is passed, that language does not apply to us,” Kanner says. “I’m not going to lay odds on it. But if we don’t adopt the ordinance, we can’t even make the argument.”

Officials in both Portland and Ashland say they haven’t estimated how much tax money they could collect from pot. An ECONorthwest study funded by the legalization campaign says the state could raise \$38.5 million in the first year. (The measure says 40 percent of Oregon tax revenues will go to schools, and 35 percent to state and local police.)

This isn’t the first time this year Portland has chased tax dollars from activities that are still illegal.

City officials cut a deal earlier this year with Web startup Airbnb to collect hotel taxes from its room rentals, which currently violate city code. The City Council is poised to legalize many Airbnb rentals—but more than half of the company’s properties paying taxes will still be breaking city rules.

Alpert says Hales is looking for ways to offset the costs of regulating new economies.

“It is completely normal and expected for the city to look closely at potential revenue,” Alpert says. “But bear in mind that most new funding sources come with added expense as well.”

The Daily Journal of Commerce

Blog: A new blueprint for Portland’s future

*By Brian Campbell
August 4, 2014*

Well, it’s finally out. After many years of public meetings, extensive staff research and discussions with other agencies and among city bureaus, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has produced the 2035 Comprehensive Draft Proposed Plan.

This is a very rich, complex document, and it will be hard for the average citizen to relate to as a whole due to its sheer size. Yet delving into individual sections and taking it in smaller doses provides a clearly articulated plan for the city over the next 20 years, and the document can prove very enlightening even for the uninitiated.

From my perspective, the most interesting part of the document is section 3 Urban Form (starting on page GP3-1), which shows the proposed long-term physical direction that is envisioned for the city.

At first glance, it appears not to be all that different than what exists. Yet by carefully reading the policies that accompany the maps, one can discern major ways this document could shift the way Portlanders experience their city. It essentially builds on the successful Comprehensive Plan policies of the past 40 years, but articulates ways for all parts of the city to benefit from the city’s ongoing success and provide quality urban living for all its citizens.

It’s worth noting the history of this document. It has its roots in the values discussions initiated during Tom Potter’s term as mayor, and is directly related to — and implements parts of — the Portland Plan that was completed at the end of Sam Adam’s term as mayor.

With that basis, it’s no wonder that this new Plan is much more extensive than the normal Oregon-required comprehensive plan. As exhaustive — and exhausting — as the previous efforts have been, they do provide Portland with a solid foundation for continuing its success at city building.

OP-ED: As parks and roads suffer, tough choices loom

*By Christian Steinbrecher
August 4, 2014*

The city of Portland in the next election season is facing some interesting choices in regard to infrastructure. On the one hand, the bond measure for park improvements is expected to be on the ballot. On the other hand, additional funding for roads and streets likely won't be resolved.

Portlanders will voice their opinions as to what is needed and what would be nice to have. Do parks fall into the nice-to-have category? Is infrastructure really needed?

Many people will argue that parks are an essential part our daily lives and enhance our day-to-day existence. That argument will resonate with those in the urban areas where mobility is primarily public transit, walking or bicycles.

While a large number of fortunate individuals can manage their day-to-day lives with these modes, a large number of Portland residents still are unable to find work close to where they live and have no choice but to commute longer distances. These longer-distance commutes require adequate infrastructure.

As the economy has improved, traffic has gotten consistently worse. The Oregon Department of Transportation reports that traffic counts have increased, and anecdotal evidence indicates that commutes into and out of town are taking longer. For those who live on the north side of town, they know that commuting to North Portland in the late afternoon has become a difficult proposition.

But infrastructure is more than just a people mover. Good roadway infrastructure provides freight mobility to allow products to be moved around the area. Many jobs are still dependent on the physical movement of goods and services around the metropolitan area. In fact, the latest economic indicators are showing the manufacturing sector making gains in the Portland area. Employment in the manufacturing sector provides good wages and forms a solid base for an improved economy.

We also know that abundant recreational opportunities, including community centers, make for a more satisfied population as well as provide alternative activities for those who may not otherwise have the opportunities to engage in them.

In the short run the question will be how to finance both of these necessary services. For all to appreciate the value of the services, none should be exempt from the additional costs involved.

Fundraising should be based on participation and not on property ownership. The arts tax, which has been challenged in many areas, may be the germ of a more equitable seed in which everybody provides financial support for something that benefits everyone. The payment should connect the fee payer to the benefit. Severe cases should be accommodated in the contribution calculations; however, exceptions should be limited to those truly in need.

By making a direct connection between the benefit and the fee payer, the administrative entities executing these programs should feel a greater need to be more efficient in the way in which they carry out their parts of these programs. At the end of the day, however, adequate financial strategies must be developed to carry both of these efforts forward on a sustainable basis.

It is difficult to make long-range capital project plans without a consistent financial base. The dilemma with the degradation of both parks and infrastructure is that it happens slowly, and the user becomes gradually used to the deteriorated condition. It is only when there is a catastrophic event that attention is suddenly focused on the need.

Christian Steinbrecher is president of Columbia River Port Engineers Inc. and the immediate past president of the Oregon Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He is the editor of ASCE Oregon's Report Card on Oregon's Infrastructure. Contact him at cfs@carpengrs.com.

The Portland Business Journal

Airbnb heads list of active Portland lobbyists

*By Andy Giegerich
August 5, 2014*

A look at the city of Portland's lobbying reports for the last quarter reads like a roundup of recent news stories.

For instance, Airbnb, which is working with the city to formalize rules regarding temporary lodging (and which also recently announced it would establish 160 jobs in Portland) was one of nine entities that spent more than eight hours lobbying City Hall officials during 2014's second quarter. Another company that exceeded the eight-hour lobbying figure, CenturyLink, announced this morning it would unveil a super-fast Internet offering in Portland.

Other companies and groups exceeding the eight-hour limit included:

Oregon Health & Science University.

The Portland Business Alliance.

Portland General Electric Co.

Schnitzer Steel Industries.

CenturyLink unveils fiber Internet service in Portland

*By Malia Spencer
August 5, 2014*

CenturyLink Inc. has fired the latest shot in Portland's increasingly competitive Internet speed wars.

The telecommunications company announced today that residents and businesses in certain Portland neighborhoods can sign up for super-fast (1-gigabit per second) Internet.

The news comes just after executives from Frontier Communications revealed that company's plans for gigabit Internet service in the Portland suburbs. The area also continues to await word on whether Google will bring its fiber Internet service to town.

"In a city that boasts some of the top technology providers, it's critical that residents and businesses have leading technology available to them," said Chris Denzin, CenturyLink general manager and vice president for Portland. "We choose Portland for this next-generation technology because the city's tech-savvy customers demand it."

CenturyLink has been laying its fiber infrastructure for years and will continue to roll out an expansion of the Portland infrastructure through 2014 and 2015.

Denzin declined to give specifics on how many customers are now eligible for the service or how much of the city is covered, citing competitive reasons.

But he noted thousands of customers could receive the service.

Gigabit Internet service offers speeds equal to 1,000 megabits per second. That's 100 times faster than the download speed of the average U.S. broadband subscriber. At these speeds, users stream high-definition videos with little to no delays and can download movies or songs in seconds.

Plus, as more devices become connected, more bandwidth will be needed. Denzin noted that today the average consumer has 3.6 connected devices at home. By 2020, that number is expected to be 20.

"Those devices will require bandwidth, and we want to be in front of that curve," he said.

Consumers can check CenturyLink's site to see if their address falls within a fiber service area. If the service is available, it can be installed in three days. If it isn't available, people can sign up for updates on the service's future build out.

CenturyLink is offering gigabit service for \$79.95 a month if it is bundled with another service. The price would go up after the first year. If consumers only want the Internet offering, the intro price is \$109.95 for 12 months and \$151.95 per month after that. There are also activation and installation charges.

Denzin declined to say how much CenturyLink has invested in the infrastructure.

"It's been a strategic investment over the last three years," he said. "(Today) we are enabling the service. Some people won't have to wait at all."

For business customers, it's a similar story.

The infrastructure is already installed by "a good portion of the businesses in Portland and they can get the service," he said.

CenturyLink will work with business owners to evaluate needs and create a package of service that is appropriate. Because of the varying services many businesses want, Denzin didn't offer a price range.

However, he noted small and medium sized business, many of whom could never afford a gig-service custom build out, could now receive service for well under \$1,000.

The company will likely soon reach out to business owners about the service, he added.