

NEW BUNDLE OPTIONS

New cost saving streamlined bundle options for combinations of Telephone, TV and Internet Service from WT Services, Inc. are now available for customers in Friona and Bovina.

In addition to top grade phone and cable TV services customers in Friona and Bovina on a bundle can upgrade to 15 meg Internet for just \$10 a month!

Call the WT Services Friona office at 250-5555 or come by at 1010 Columbia to take advantage of these great values.

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FIBER TO THE PREMISE
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OPEN INTERNET: WHAT IS IT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR RURAL BROADBAND?

If you follow press reports or telecom-specific industry news at all, there would appear to be no controversy about an “open Internet”—everyone claims to be for it. But when one gets into the weeds of how that actually happens, there hasn’t been a more hotly contested telecom-related issue.

With the FCC’s recent vote to impose strong, specific rules related to net neutrality, you are likely seeing opposing claims that these rules are either “the problem rather than the solution” or just the steps needed to police conduct that might undermine an open Internet in the future. Given the intensity of arguments and claims on both sides of the debate, this fact sheet attempts to explain what’s at issue and the impacts, if any, on rural consumers of broadband.

What is an “open Internet”?

There are any number of definitions of an “open Internet” out there. The very basic premise is that ISPs should

not interfere with a consumer’s access to content or data of his or her choosing. As noted above, however, complex questions related to how our country can best achieve this goal and what exceptions might be required to allow for reasonable management of broadband networks lead to all sorts of debates, conflicts and confusion.

Was the Internet “closed” before these rules were adopted? No. There are very few instances of ISPs ever being accused of blocking or throttling data on their networks, and most of these examples are years old and involve larger ISPs in disputes with specific content providers. In many ways, the FCC’s order appears to be more about preventing what it perceives as potential bad behavior in the future than it is about correcting bad behavior that occurred in the past.

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Friona/Bovina: Smart Communities with Fiber to the Premise—by WT Services

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Will a consumer see any change in his or her Internet service as a result of this order? No—at least not immediately. Again, there have been very few allegations in the past involving open Internet concerns, and nearly every ISP has run its network and services to fulfill consumer broadband demand to the maximum extent practicable. The order shouldn't result in near-term changes in terms of what content a consumer can see on the Internet or the speeds at which content is delivered. But it's still possible that some of the rules could over time have unforeseen effects on ISPs, their networks and consumers' services, and lead to some changes in either how services must be provided and/or the consumer experience.

Is there anything in this order that might be of special interest to rural broadband consumers? In the near term, the order appears to treat all consumers—rural and urban—largely the same in terms of the policies being adopted. But some of the reasoning used by the FCC to reach its decision could affect future debates that are important to rural consumers. Specifically, small rural ISPs often depend upon interconnection with larger providers to take data “to and from the Internet,” and many small rural ISPs also rely upon universal service support to deploy and operate the broadband-capable networks that make Internet access possible in rural areas. While the commission’s order may not directly address these issues, it appears to provide at least a foundation for future action on these issues in a way that could promote the affordability and sustainability of rural broadband.

FIBER TO THE PREMISE GOOD FOR LOCAL, NATIONAL ECONOMY

The small rural communications providers operating in Texas (and our nation), like West Texas Rural Telephone Cooperative and its subsidiary W T Services, are upgrading their networks to provide the internet bandwidth (broadband) that our rural customers need and deserve. We are building networks with fiber optics to support the needs of our business and residential customers now and for the technologies of the future.

Large wireless companies advertise that 4G wireless is the solution for broadband in rural America, with the least dropped calls. (That could well mean their service is the “best” of the underachievers.) Without wireline providers like WTRT and WTS, wireless doesn’t work. The only wireless portion of a wireless call is from the wireless phone to the electronics at the top of the cell tower. Those tubes of duct that traverse the tower connect to the wireline network where the calls (or data) are transited to the called number or internet site. Further, the wireless bandwidth decreases exponentially with the number of customers using the cell tower.

In contrast, Fiber optic cable is the most stable technology—repair calls fall silent, unless someone digs it up with a backhoe. With the electronics that light the fiber optic cable, the bandwidth available is *unlimited*.

We have just completed an upgrade to bring more bandwidth into the communities served by WTRT and WT Services. Plus, we have installed new email servers and our network is ring protected (to allow for back-up in the event of a cable cut). We are partnering with our neighboring small rural communications providers to connect our networks and further serve as a back-up in the event of an outage. Our new Operations Center is now on line. The OC is handling all service orders and dispatch of our Installation and Repair Team, creating a better customer experience. We are constantly looking for ways to improve our network and the services we provide.

We have installed Fiber-to-the-Premise in Hereford. The businesses and residences of Hereford enjoy Internet bandwidth that is not available in most urban areas. *If they need a Gig of bandwidth, we can deliver.* Many of our fellow rural providers are seeing an increase in large businesses moving to their areas because they can be served with fiber, unlike the urban areas. **The availability of FTTP is good for the economy of Hereford as it allows businesses to develop and grow.**

We see evidence of remigration of people from urban areas to rural areas. Residential consumers are wanting their children to grow up in the same atmosphere as they did. With broadband internet over fiber, these consumers can return to rural areas and still have access to shopping, education, health care, entertainment and they can build businesses.

With the majority of our legislators coming from urban areas, we are working with our association, TSTCI (Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative), to educate them on the relevance of rural Texas. It is where our food, minerals, fuel, linen, cotton, and recreation comes from. Members of TSTCI have developed a video that we are using to educate our legislators. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/118495463>.

WTRT is deploying fiber deeper into its network to allow our rural areas to enjoy greater bandwidth. WT Services has installed FTTP in Hereford and Bushland and we continue to look for ways to improve our service. **We are building smart communities with FTTP.**