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When Taylor Firestone shopped for homes in Nashville's Edgehill community, imminent Google Fiber access was among the perks his landlord mentioned.

But Firestone, who moved to Edgehill in July, still does not have access to Google Fiber, despite the company's announcement last year that Google Fiber had expanded to the neighborhood. Instead of turning to AT&T and Comcast, Firestone says he is holding out for Google Fiber and relying on his phone service's hotspot for internet connection, at least for a few months. He prefers Google's prices for gigabit speeds to AT&T's and said he's been stood up by Comcast installation teams too many times in other cities to return as a customer. "I am just waiting," Firestone said.

Residents across the city have been waiting for the highly anticipated Google Fiber internet service since [Google announced its expansion](#) to Nashville three and a half years ago. While parts of several neighborhoods and apartment buildings have access to Google Fiber, many Nashvillians continue to renew contracts with existing providers they pledged to drop when the city rolled out its red carpet to Google.

The soft, grey Google Fiber T-shirts with a dotted map of Tennessee are still seen around town, a sign of residents' early interest, but many wearing them are not yet connected and have few insights on when and if their homes will be capable. "It's still complicated," Nashville Google Fiber Manager Martha Ivester said. "Building this fiber optic network throughout the whole city is a long process, and we never expected it wouldn't be a long process. Obviously, we have had our challenges here."

Since it began installation in 2016, Google Fiber has connected 52 Nashville apartment buildings and single-family homes in parts of Charlotte Park, Edgehill, Sylvan Heights, Sylvan Park, East Nashville, Burton Hills and most recently, North Nashville. The company declined to offer specific adoption numbers.

Google Fiber [announced in October 2017](#) that it also was expanding to Midtown, Acklen Park and Music Row neighborhoods, but has since retracted. Those areas were taking longer than expected and the company wanted to "set customer expectations appropriately," Ivester said. Google officials, city leaders, business owners, remote workers and movie watchers celebrated Nashville's selection as a possible Google Fiber city in 2014 and again in 2015, when the expansion was made official. Nonprofit leaders praised the company's focus on bridging the digital divide and the potential Google's efforts had for Nashville. "Google Fiber's presence here will enhance the work done.. by making collaboration, the exchange of good ideas, faster and easier," said then-Mayor Karl Dean, welcoming Google Fiber at the Nashville Entrepreneur Center in 2015. "This is the city where people make things happen, and once Google Fiber is up and running they'll be able to do even more."

Meanwhile, AT&T and Comcast launched their own gigabit networks across Nashville after Google Fiber announced the company was exploring Nashville in [February 2014](#). AT&T now offers gigabit speeds to more than 250,000 homes and small businesses and more than 500 multifamily family buildings. Comcast offers gigabit speeds through fiber or modem technology across Middle Tennessee, according to the company.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial: Don't take a lifeline – The poor, elderly rely on subsidized phone service

Associated Press Pennsylvania to start pre-qualifying residents for a Real ID

Associated Press Wagner says Wolf wants to 'run out the clock' on answers to voters' questions

Google **announced in 2016** that it was pausing fiber expansion in several cities and shifting its focus to wireless high-speed internet, but the company **remained firm in its commitment to Nashville**. Earlier this week, the Tennessee Public Utilities Board granted Google Fiber a two-year extension on meeting deployment requirements. The company had to connect 30 percent of homes in its proposed coverage area within three and a half years of its franchise application, but in July, Google Fiber officials told the board that the company would not be able to meet those requirements.

Google Fiber's Davidson County coverage area at one point included satellite cities Forest Hills, Oak Hill, Belle Meade and Berry Hill, but in 2017, the company asked for those to be removed because of construction delays. Google Fiber said it planned to add those areas back in the future. "Given our deployment challenges, it made it very difficult to meet," Ivester said of the franchise agreement. "We just asked for an extension in timing, given that it has taken us a little longer."

The deployment challenges Ivester refers to stem from a contentious legal battle over how internet and cable companies are allowed to add new lines to utility poles. In Middle Tennessee, where a sheet of limestone lays beneath much of the surface, Google looked to the utility poles to roll out its network. But under Metro law, the company had to wait on existing providers to make room on utility poles before Google could add a new cable. The process could take several months for each existing provider to prepare a pole, a painstaking time frame for a company seeking to deploy a massive fiber network and for a city eager for greater internet competition.

Instead, Google proposed an alternative "One Touch Make Ready" process that would allow independent contractors to move all existing cables in one session, accelerating the installation process and reducing disruption to streets. It was met with staunch opposition from Comcast and AT&T, which owns 20 percent of Nashville poles. Nashville Electric Service owns the remaining 80 percent. Comcast and AT&T said the new proposed policy would violate contracts with existing workers and could pose safety issues. It could also lead to more traffic hazards if the work is done improperly.

After weeks of contentious meetings debating whether to approve One Touch Make ready, Metro Council sided with Google Fiber. The council vote quickly prompted lawsuits from AT&T and Comcast that claimed Metro lacked the authority to regulate utility poles. After the city spent roughly \$140,000 on legal fees to argue the case, a **federal judge** in November sided with AT&T and Comcast, ruling that only the Federal Communications Commission could regulate poles owned by AT&T. A separate judge ruled in January that the city did not have the authority to allow One Touch Make Ready on poles owned by Nashville Electric Service. "I think no one would have expected it would have been as hard to get on poles as it was," Ivester said. "There was certainly a lot of push back on that and so I think that that would have been a speedier process."

The FCC **issued an order in August** allowing One Touch Make Ready, but the ruling does not apply to NES poles in Nashville, according to the FCC. It is up to NES to determine if it will allow One Touch Make Ready in Nashville and the municipally-owned power provider indicated that it will stick with the status quo process of moving each line separately, without elaborating on its reasons for doing so. "NES is committed to the efficient and effective deployment of broadband for our customers," Vaughan Charles, NES engineering manager, said in an emailed statement. "NES has our own pole attachment process, and we are not required to follow the OTMR policy regulated by the FCC."

AT&T has since shifted its tone on One Touch Make Ready. In 2016 council hearings, the company pointed to union contracts and safety issues in their opposition and their lawsuit focused on jurisdiction. More recently, Joan Marsh, who leads AT&T regulatory department, said the FCC's order seeks to balance the needs for a level playing field, fast deployment and safety. "The order promotes fair competition by placing all providers on a path to pole attachment rate parity and incorporates many improvements to the new one-touch-make-ready pole attachment process," Marsh said in an emailed statement.

Facing utility pole headwinds, Google Fiber turned to underground installation through a technique they describe as shallow trenching. The company has pulled more than 24,000 permits to lay the fiber through shallow trenching, an installation strategy that has become their leading choice for deployment. The fiber-laying process has also been accompanied by construction issues, which Google cautioned residents about **ahead of installation**. According to **WSMV, citing Metro Public Works**, Google Fiber lines have been torn up in at least six locations during road repaving projects. The city has mandated that the lines are placed at least four inches deep. "We work very closely with Metro and

Public Works because we, obviously, want to avoid any disruptions in service," Ivester said. "There are accidents that happen... In most cases we have great dialogue and we are able to get ahead of it."

While Google Fiber has not met the initial terms of its franchise agreement for overall deployment, it has fulfilled the requirements that 25 percent of homes offered connection belong to low-income residents. Metropolitan Development Housing Agency's Edgehill Homes and J. Henry Hale Apartments in North Nashville have access to free Google Fiber internet through MDHA's [ConnectHome](#) program. Google Fiber does not share adoption rates but said the response has been positive. "The reception has been amazing," Daynise Joseph, Google Fiber's community impact manager, said. "It makes a difference in someone's budget not having to pay for internet."

Comcast and AT&T have also joined the ConnectHome initiative and offer \$10 monthly service. Google Fiber is still committed to Nashville, Ivester said, and she asked residents for their patience. In recent weeks, Google Fiber added North Nashville and teams are knocking on residents' doors to sign up residents. "We see new customers coming on everyday," she said. "There is the door-to-door team that is out there everyday. We are happy to see those numbers continue to go up."

Ivester emphasizes the value the company offers to consumers when they are able to connect. The company does not do hidden fees, data caps or long-term contracts, she said. "It is just better customer service and better customer experience overall," she said. Ivester, who announced earlier this month she's moving to Denmark, has also been waiting for Google Fiber connection. She and her family, living in West Nashville, also are eager for the gigabit speed internet she and her colleagues have championed since 2015. Paying a bill to a competing internet provider each month is not a good feeling, she said. "We have a couple of employees who have Google Fiber," Ivester said. "We are all quite jealous of them." – **Nashville Tennessean**

Although the more cynical among us might opine it's too little, too late, we like the fact that Gov. Rick Snyder is working right up until his state employment expires at the end of December. And after all is said and done, an initiative he rolled out late last week on broadband access might very well end up being among his administration's longest lasting and most important plans.

Choosing an educational setting - the Escanaba High School - Snyder unveiled the Michigan Broadband Road Map, a move that aims to provide universal access to broadband, high speed internet to all of the state of Michigan. "As technology continues to rapidly change and evolve, having access to fast, reliable internet is now a necessity for everyday life," Snyder said in a press release. "There are many regions of Michigan where internet is inaccessible or ineffective, and this plan works to make broadband internet available to Michigan residents in every corner of the state."

Many of the places that are not serviced by broadband internet are in the Upper Peninsula, typically rural venues that aren't currently serviced by a broadband provider. Overall, Michigan ranks 30th in the nation for broadband availability. More than 350,000 households lack access to high-speed internet service. Another two million households only have access to a single, terrestrial internet service provider. Snyder's office says there is approximately \$2.5 billion in potential economic opportunities available for these regions if that gap is reduced.

There are lots of unanswered questions, of course, a construction timeline and specific funding sources, for example. But that said, it's an important step in what we believe is the right direction. It'll be interesting to see if the next governor takes the broadband ball and runs with it. – **Marquette (MI) Mining Journal editorial**

President Trump on Tuesday accused Alphabet Inc.'s Google search platform of elevating critical news stories about his presidency at the expense of friendly conservative voices, declaring that it is a "very serious situation" that will be addressed. On Twitter, the president wrote in a pair of early morning tweets that a search in Google for "Trump News" yielded only "the viewing/reporting of Fake [News] Media." "In other words, they have it RIGGED, for me & others, so that almost all stories & news is BAD," he wrote. "Fake CNN is prominent. Republican/Conservative & Fair Media is shut out," he wrote. "Google & others are suppressing voices of Conservatives and hiding information and news that is good. They are controlling what we can & cannot see. This is a very serious situation-will be addressed!" Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Republicans have criticized social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter over their treatment of conservatives on their platforms. Last week, the president **accused social media platforms** of “silencing millions of people.” Earlier in the month, Mr. Trump also **claimed that tech companies are “totally discriminating against Republican/Conservative voices.”** pledging that his administration “won’t let that happen.”

Google News’s search algorithm is opaque, and news media outlets expend considerable energy and resources optimizing their online content to win better placement in search results. Accusations that Google tampers with search results are not new or uncommon. Those accusations took on a new life during the 2016 presidential election when some conservatives claimed that the technology giant was censoring controversial subjects as part of an effort to purge the internet of fake news reports.

In recent weeks, tech giants Facebook Inc., Apple Inc., Alphabet Inc.’s YouTube platform and Spotify Technology S.A. **stripped their sites of content from far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones**, saying the Infowars star had violated terms of service barring certain hateful or offensive speech. Mr. Jones still retains his Twitter account. In April, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Robert Goodlatte (R, Va.) warned tech executives in a hearing that while social media companies were “exercising great care and discretion to ensure that their services are not abused,” there is a “fine line between removing illegal activity and suppressing speech.” – *Wall Street Journal*

Penn State football fans can watch Nittany Lions and other Big Ten games on Xfinity this year, without having to worry that the **24-hour college sports network will go dark**. Comcast Corp., the nation’s biggest cable company, and the Fox Networks Group have reached a new carriage deal. The existing one expires on Friday.

According to the companies, the Big Ten Network will be broadly available in all states with Big Ten teams, which include Pennsylvania (Penn State) and New Jersey (Rutgers). Reversing its earlier decision, Comcast also will make available the Big Ten Network on an extra-charge sports package in states — such as those in the West and South — without Big Ten colleges. These packages cost \$10 a month.

Earlier this year, Comcast cancelled the option for Xfinity customers outside of Big Ten’s home turf to watch the games on the sports package. Comcast says it will make the Big Ten Network available in the “coming months” in those states outside the Big Ten as part of the \$10-a-month sports package. “We are pleased to continue our partnership with Comcast, ensuring that Xfinity customers everywhere will have access to Big Ten action on BTN and FS1,” Fox Networks Group said in a statement. FS1 is a 24-hour sports network also owned by Fox Networks. Penn State’s first game is against the Appalachian State on Saturday in Happy Valley, Pa. Rutgers’ first game also will be played Saturday, against Texas State, in Piscataway, N.J. – *Philadelphia Inquirer*

