



Citizens Want to Know

FIBER IS COMING TO AMERICAN FORK

American Fork City is partnering with Strata Networks to bring our residents and businesses a citywide open-access fiber network that is reliable, fast, and affordable.

Background

The desire for quality, reliable fiber internet for our residents is not a new idea in American Fork. Back in 2002 the city purchased an existing internet system called Airswitch. The existing system was largely coax and twisted pair internet system which the city intended to fully upgrade to fiber and contract with a single ISP to service our residents. Unfortunately, that same year, The State of Utah passed Bill 149 prohibiting cities from retailing internet. This left American Fork with a system they were struggling to support.

Because American Fork could not use our internet system, we sold it off to another company who could. In 2008 we sold our system to American Fiber Connect (AFConnect). The City decided to hold onto our Network Operating Center (N.O.C) and our dark fiber lines along I-15 from Salt Lake to Spanish Fork. Since 2005 the city has been leasing use of these assets to other entities to cover the operations of managing these assets. But the original goal of providing citywide internet to our residents was never realized.



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Public Interest

Over the last four years our city has received many requests from residents to look once again into citywide fiber. Even today, many residents have little to no options for reliable internet. Meanwhile, with the proliferation of remote work and school, residents have only seen an increase in demand for high-speed internet. So, in 2019, City staff and elected officials decided to revisit our initial goal to provide citywide internet.

As part of the City's consideration for citywide fiber, we decided to undertake the greatest public feedback effort done by any city regarding fiber. Over three years we surveyed our residents in three different ways to gauge public interest. In 2019 we hired a firm called Design Nine who conducted an open ended 20-question survey that was available to all residents. Design Nine received 870 responses. In 2020 and 2021 we conducted our own Community Survey where we asked residents what their top issues were in the city and if they would be interested in having the City provide fiber infrastructure. Both community surveys received about 1,500 responses each. Finally in 2021 we hired MDI Research to conduct a survey that would be a statistically valid representation of American Fork residents. We made sure they had a sufficient sample size, and they were surveying people in every part of the city to guarantee proper representation. MDI received 615 responses, which more than met the sample size criteria (ideal sample size is 380, confidence level 95%, margin of error 5%).

In every survey we delivered over three years, the resounding feedback every time was that our residents were interested in a citywide fiber network. In the most recent and statistically significant survey by MDI, it was determined that 90% of respondents said they would be interested in the city developing a fiber internet infrastructure. In the 2021 Community Survey residents said that poor access to affordable high-speed internet was the third highest issue in American Fork City right now. Upon reviewing the feedback, the message was clear: our residents want city fiber.



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With the support of our resident's American Fork City sent out a request for Intent to Negotiate (ITN), looking for businesses interested to install and manage our fiber network. In the ITN we clarified three important criteria based on our resident's feedback: (1) that the system would be resident owned, (2) the system would be citywide and available to every resident, and (3) that the network would be open access, meaning it would allow multiple internet service providers on the system. From that ITN we selected Strata Networks as the ideal partner to make this vision happen.

Who is Strata?

Strata Networks is the largest independent telecommunications cooperative in the State of Utah. They have been around since 1951 and have been able to continually pivot in the high-paced and ever-changing world of technology. They have been providing fiber optic networks for over 30 years. Most of their initial work has been in the Uintah Basin, where they are based. Strata has successfully installed and managed fiber networks in rural places like Duchesne and Uintah counties as well as larger metropolitan areas. They have already partnered with Lehi City and Providence City to provide the same service type American Fork City will be implementing. This is not a new for them.

The System

American Fork will work with Strata Networks in a public-private partnership to deploy a citywide open-access fiber network. American Fork will own the infrastructure, Strata will install and maintain it, and internet service providers will provide the internet to our residents. Unlike many other cities putting in fiber, this network will be owned by our residents, meaning they will enjoy the benefits of its success.

The system will follow a subscription model where only those who decide to use the service will pay for it. While the fiber lines will be citywide, only those who choose to subscribe to an ISP on the network are required to pay the service fees. While all ISPs will be invited to participate on the network, those that choose not to participate will still be allowed to provide services to residents on their own. This means residents can opt to use a different ISP provider other than those on the city fiber network system.

The network will be designed using top quality, carrier-class materials and network components to ensure the City's investment will last many years into the future and that the network will be cost-effective to maintain. The network is proposed to be built with an all-fiber hybrid Passive Optical Network (PON)/Active Ethernet architecture. The network design utilizes the placement of strategically located equipment shelters and multiple Fiber Distribution Hubs (FDHs), essentially dividing the City into multiple service zones.

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Users subscribed to the network are not impacted during peak usage periods. The proposed hybrid model allows the network to be customized to meet the needs of all customers.

Speeds, Cost, and Reliability

Thanks to this citywide network that will be coming, all residents can enjoy multiple internet options that will compete in a true market for their business. This competitive market will help improve pricing on a network that is already fast and reliable.

We expect residents and businesses to enjoy symmetrical speeds from 250 mbps to 10 gig. While pricing is not yet set, we expect it to be competitive with what's available right now. Speeds for 250 mbps could start between \$60-\$70/month and speeds of 10 gig could be around \$200.

Some residents may pay less right now for internet, but they are also getting much, much less. For those residents where price is the biggest issue, they are welcome to continue with the services and price they currently have. But they will not be getting the level of service, reliability, and speed that will be on the City's network. American Fork City's network is expected to provide what's called five-nines availability. That means the percentage of time in a year that the internet service will be available to a given resident with the service is 99.999%. This essentially means there will be no lags or breaks in service. Residents will have what they need whenever they want. And because of how robust the fiber network will be, residents will no longer have to deal with slower peak demand times during evenings and weekends. It will always be fast and reliable.

Next Steps

American Fork is currently finalizing our agreement with Strata Networks and we have begun designing the system. Ideally construction would begin in the spring/summer of 2024.

But residents and businesses will not have to wait until the entire project is finished before they can enjoy fiber internet. Neighborhoods will be able to enjoy fiber as soon as it's installed. That's why it's important that residents pre-register for services, to help the City determine the optimal places to first deploy the system. Neighborhoods that have the largest preregistration will be the first to get services. Pre-register your address at <https://americanfork.fibertomycity.com>.

Back when electricity was new, people had no idea all the different ways it could be used and just how universal it would become in everyone's lives. That is what fiber is today. More and more, fiber is becoming an essential service for everyone. Currently American Fork residents have limited access and reliability of this essential service. But with this new partnership with Strata Networks, American Fork City will soon realize our goal of a citywide open-access fiber network that is reliable, fast, and affordable.

To learn more about American Fork City's fiber network, Strata Networks, or to preregister, visit americanfork.gov/fiber.

