

'New T-Mobile' announces budget plan for \$15 monthly and 5G coming Dec. 6

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T-Mobile plans to light up its 5G network on Dec. 6 and, with it, is making long-term commitments to low-income families and first responders.

The nation's No. 3 wireless carrier plans to give away [internet access](#) to [low-income families](#) with school-age kids. It is dropping its lowest-priced plan by half to \$15 monthly for up to 2GB of high-speed data. And it announced a \$7.7-billion, 10-year commitment to make unlimited talk, text and smartphone data free to first responders in the country.

CEO John Legere made these announcements in a webcast that seemed at least partly aimed at convincing the states still seeking to block T-Mobile's merger with Sprint. The companies cleared major hurdles when both the Justice Department and Federal Communications Commission blessed the pairing.

These latest "Un-Carrier" initiatives, the first under what would be a post-merger "New T-Mobile," remain contingent on the deal going through.

While the \$15 monthly prepaid plan, called T-Mobile Connect, is aimed at customers with modest incomes, it will be made available without any restrictions to everyone. Consumers who pay \$25 a month get up to 5GB.

But T-Mobile also says it will give customers an additional 500MB of data per month, every year under T-Mobile Connect for the next five

years, without raising prices. Customers will be able to tap into 5G at no extra cost, as well.

But keep in mind that using 5G may consume more data, which would push some users into stepping up to a more expensive plan.

To placate the Justice Department, T-Mobile and Sprint, among other concessions, had previously agreed to sell discount prepaid carriers Boost Mobile and Virgin Mobile to Dish Network.

Legere believes the \$15 plan will further satisfy critics.

"Part of what people are trying to sort out right now 'Is ...T-Mobile going to be competing down at the low end (of the market)? So we answered that question," Legere said in an interview.

Separately, the \$10-billion "Project 10Million" initiative is designed to eradicate the "homework gap." The company says there are 35 million households in the U.S. with school age children, and of those, about 15% have no home internet. That's despite that around 7 out of 10 teachers assign homework that requires online access.

T-Mobile plans to launch Project10Million soon after the merger goes through, assuming it does, but hasn't spelled out all the details on which families will qualify. The company says it will work with local governments and non-profits to determine the criteria. Those who do qualify will get free internet access over the next five years, up to 100GB annually and will also receive a free mobile Wi-Fi hotspot, plus the option to purchase select Wi-Fi enabled devices at the same price T-Mobile pays.

Meanwhile, the Connecting Heroes plan for eligible [first responders](#) that Legere also announced will give them "priority" access on any T-Mobile

network plan, no matter how much data they use. Legere said that within 90 minutes of announcing Connecting Heroes the company has heard from organizers looking to sign up.

Consumers who want to tap into T-Mobile's 5G network when the carrier flips the switch next month will be able to use either Samsung's Galaxy Note10+ 5G or the OnePlus 7T Pro 5G. T-Mobile says its 5G network will cover more than 200 million Americans and more than 5,000 cities and towns across the country, including millions in rural areas.

T-Mobile is starting with a version of 5G that will provide more ubiquitous coverage but not at the most blazing speeds.

"They'll be substantially higher than today's (speed)," says president and chief operating officer Mike Sievert, "but nothing like where we're going."

Eventually, T-Mobile is promising speeds that are 14 times those that are available today. Post-merger, according to Sievert, more than 90% of Americans will be able to reach speeds of 100 megabits per second.

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