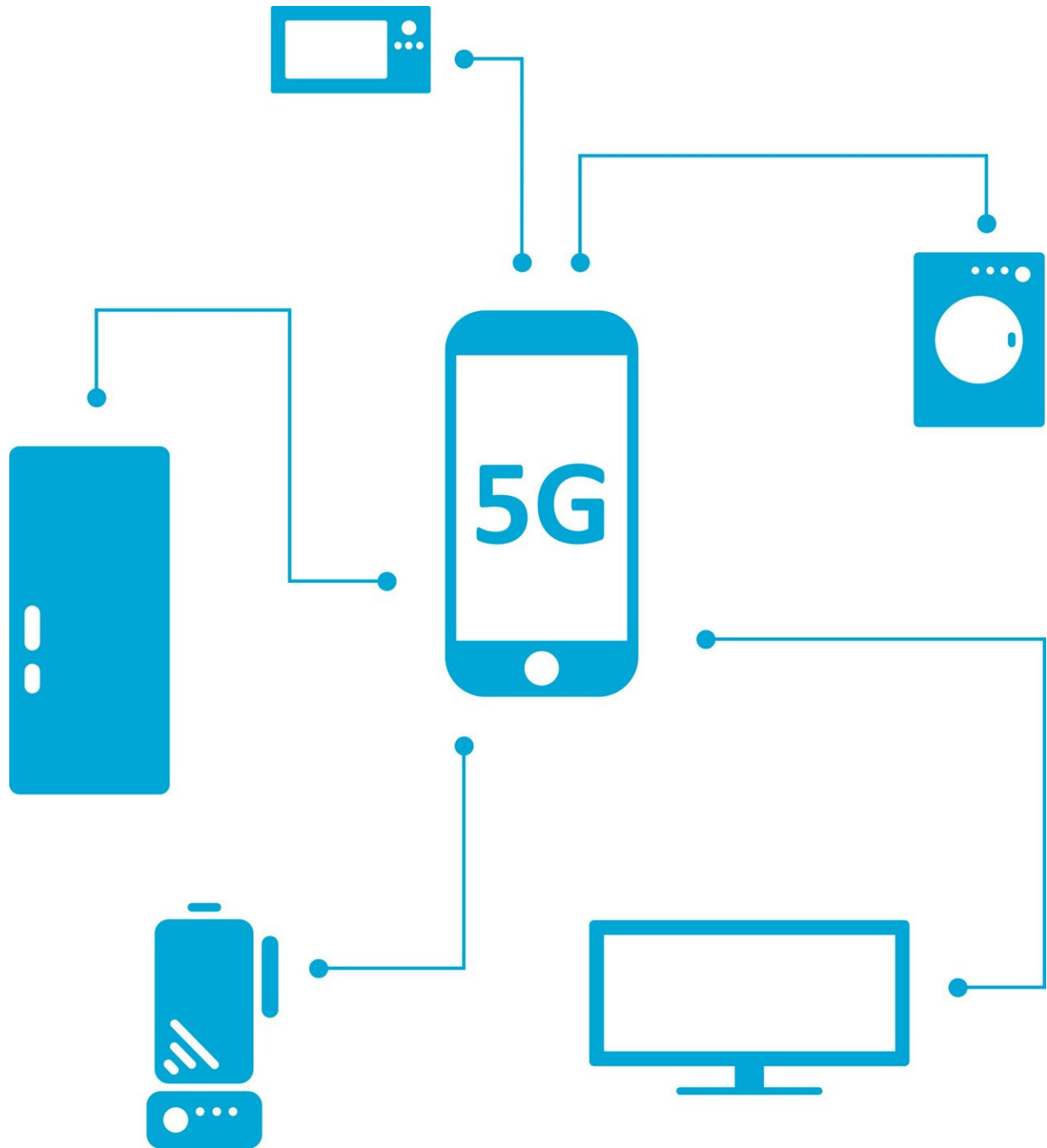


AT&T takes its 5G wireless network nationwide as evolution to super-fast connections continue

July 24 2020, by Mike Snider, Usa Today



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AT&T says its 5G network now is officially nationwide.

The wireless provider Thursday announced 5G coverage reaching 395 markets across the U.S. covering 205 million people.

AT&T hoped to achieve nationwide coverage during the first half of the year, but the coronavirus crisis pushed back its plans slightly. As of last month, AT&T's reach was 355 markets and 179 million people.

AT&T has achieved its coverage with a mix of 5G technology. Super-fast millimeter wave signals, which can be five times the speed of current 4G signals, are available in parts of 35 markets, the company says. Making up the rest of the network are so-called "sub-6 GHz" signals, which travel farther and provide more reliable, robust coverage but deliver speeds similar to current connections.

The rollout of 5G networks has been more than three years in the making and been accompanied by plenty of hype. But the true promise of 5G connectivity—widespread ultra-fast, low latency connections everywhere—remains a work in progress. "This is the starting point, not the end point," said Gordon Mansfield, AT&T's vice president for mobility and access architecture. "This new network will continue to evolve to introduce new experiences that are possible to be delivered with 5G."

You can check AT&T's 5G coverage for your region on att.com.

As consumers opt for new 5G smartphones and other devices and 5G networks expand their reach and robustness, app developers will begin to focus on projects that take advantage of the standard's improved capacity, reliability and speed, Mansfield says.

AT&T's competitors are helping drive 5G along, too. Competitor T-Mobile laid claim to completing a nationwide 5G network in December 2019. Having merged with Sprint in April, T-Mobile now says its 5G

[network](#) reaches nearly 6,000 cities and 225 million people. And Verizon has 5G wireless availability in parts of 35 cities across the U.S., and 5G home service available in six cities.

But always-connected everywhere 5G signals are still being constructed. Eventually, carriers will combine various channels to deliver better connectivity. "It's kind of like going from a one-lane road to adding a few more lanes and all of a sudden traffic gets to go faster," said Bob O'Donnell, the president and chief analyst of TECHnalysis Research and a U.S. TODAY technology columnist. "This is sort of the completion of the one-lane road, so to speak."

As that construction continues, consumers may have to decide when it comes time to buy a new smartphone whether they want to "future proof" their phone, O'Donnell said.

Even though you won't be able to experience all of 5G's capabilities for some time, "over time it will get better and if you buy a 5G phone now the benefit is your phone will get better without you having to buy a new phone," he said.

Beginning Aug. 7, AT&T is adding 5G access to its AT&T Unlimited Starter wireless plan, which starts at \$35 monthly for four lines. That's the same prices as AT&T's current plan; other wireless plans including AT&T Unlimited Elite (which also comes with HBO Max) can add 5G for no additional cost, too.

Among the 5G phones available from AT&T: a 5G version of the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip (\$1,449.99, available Aug. 7) and the LG Velvet smartphone (starting at \$10 monthly on a 30-month payment plan and new AT&T Unlimited plan).

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