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NYC competitors combine wireless, fiber networks

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Two competitive New York City service providers are combining forces to create an end-to-end network solution that leverages the broadband wireless access assets of Rainbow Broadband with the fiber network and managed services capabilities of Atlantic Metro Communications to offer a diverse and redundant mesh network to businesses.

The collaboration will enable each company to expand its customer base, as Rainbow Broadband moves off private lines to a meshed fiber network and Atlantic Metro gets a new means of access to buildings not connected to its fiber network.

Rainbow Broadband has been providing WiMax access in New York City for about three years, using RAD microwave radio technology, said CEO Russ Hamm. “We have 100 radio pairs scattered throughout the major metro area here servicing buildings,” Hamm said. “Prior to coming together with Atlantic Metro, we used private lines for the backhaul in our network, with a star topology. We realized by getting together with Atlantic Metro, we could [use] their protected fiber rings, which give us a more robust backbone, and we could give Atlantic Metro access to certain buildings where it would be too prohibitively expensive to put fiber.”

Rainbow Broadband has wireless hubs atop eight major NYC high-rises, Hamm said, and Atlantic Metro already has fiber into some of those hubs, “So we now have a gigabit or greater backbone where we had much less bandwidth before.”

One attraction for NYC businesses is the availability of network service that is completely diverse from that of the incumbent, Verizon, said Stephen Klenert, CEO of Atlantic Metro, since many other competitors lease incumbent lines for the final access into corporate office buildings.

“We are offering a true Ethernet solution end-to-end, while many other companies are using Type 2 circuits from Verizon,” Klenert said. “We don’t see a lot of competitors doing what we are doing.”

The two companies are seeing demand from the financial services industry, and Rainbow Broadband is specifically targeting media companies, which are seeing bandwidth requirements skyrocket, Hamm said.

Atlantic Metro also can leverage the less-expensive wireless access to attract small to mid-sized businesses, Klenert said. “This lowers the barrier to entry. We can’t afford to run fiber into every building, but we can reach more small to mid-sized businesses.”