



The Bolivar Commercial

Cleveland, Mississippi

Internet service awaits approval to offer free wireless in state

Sara Coleman, BC Staff Writer, July 30, 2007

If an up-and-coming Internet service provider based in northern Virginia has its way, free wireless broadband Internet will soon be available to residents in Mississippi and eventually across the nation. M2Z Networks wants to provide consumers with free Internet that is six times faster than dial-up no matter where they are - home, work, the local coffee shop or just anywhere, according to John Muleta, CEO of the company.

“What we’re trying to say is, ‘If I can go buy a computer for \$300 and then I have to spend today anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 a year to connect that computer to the Internet, it makes no sense.’ We are trying to solve that problem,” Muleta explained.

Solving that problem involved figuring out how to fund the service while making it available to consumers at no cost, something no other Internet company is doing on a nationwide level.

“That’s where we come in. Some people want to use us at home or at the office or anywhere they go. That’s part of our innovation,” said Muleta. “We figured out how to do that and how to pay for it.”

The free Internet will be paid for by connecting advertisers with potential consumers in specific areas using the service, but Internet users won’t have to pay for a thing and will see advertisements more specifically-g geared toward their area.

“The money’s coming from Internet advertisers like Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Ask.com. A lot of businesses would spend money on Internet advertising if they knew that the people actually looking at the advertisements were in their area,” Muleta explained. “We, as a wireless service, know down to the zip code where a consumer is and we can pass that information

on to local advertisers. We would share in the profits of that. We would partner with people - the Googles of the world, as well as local newspapers and classified advertisers.”

The basic wireless broadband service is free and fast, but a faster higher-grade service will also be available for a cost of \$20-30 per month, which is still well below the fees charged by DSL, cable and satellite Internet services, which can range upwards of \$70 per month.

As part of its service, M2Z Networks will prevent pornography from making its way to computers on its network, Muleta said.

“When you provide free Internet, you don’t really know if the person looking at that Internet is 12 or 18. One of the things that we’ve committed to do as a volunteer commitment and condition of our license is to filter Internet pornography and other indecent materials off of the network, so that as a parent you don’t have to load software and manage your children’s experience ... no one else in the United States is doing this on a national scale.”

When asked why Mississippi was chosen as the starting point of the project, Muleta said, “Unfortunately, Mississippi is last in broadband adoption rankings and so we know that there is a lot of demand in Mississippi that is unmet. Secondly, a number of congressmen and senators from Mississippi are involved in telecommunications issues and they have been highlighting that there is a need in Mississippi. Finally, folks in Jackson welcomed us with open arms and said, ‘Let’s see if we can make this thing happen here.’”

After renting towers from the city of Jackson, free broadband Internet would be made available to Jackson residents and, if successful, the program would



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eventually spread through Mississippi and the rest of the country.

Currently, the free Internet project is being held up because M2Z Networks has not received a license from the Federal Communications Commission, an independent agency of the U.S. Government that regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. M2Z Networks filed their application in May 2006 and has not received an answer.

“This system uses a radio spectrum and you have to receive authorization from the Federal Communications Commission. We’ve been waiting for a little bit over a year now. We hope to get an answer soon, so that we can get started,” said Muleta. “In the mean time, we’ve been working to get the word out because we think that folks in Mississippi really want a service like this across the board.”

An answer from the FCC is expected between September and December, according to Muleta, who noted that the slow process is due, at least in part, to opposition from existing pay-service Internet providers.

“A lot of the existing companies - the AT&Ts and the Verizons of the world - are opposing us. They use the Washington (D.C.) process to prevent interesting new competitors from coming in and shaking up the market ... this (service) is very reasonable, very practical and the only reason that it hasn’t been approved yet is because some companies have opposed us.”

Despite opposition from some powerful companies, M2Z Networks has received support from many groups throughout the United States, who view free Internet as the way of the future.

“There are people from the National PTA all the way to TechNet, which is the largest high-technology industry group, that support us. We have people from affordable housing to conservative and family groups

that support us ... We are a new company and we have to go out there and convince people in Washington (D.C.) that sometimes you can do well by doing right. That is the process that we are engaged in.”