

## Major ISP tells FCC BPL not a "commercially viable alternative" to cable, DSL

NEWINGTON, CT, Dec 17, 2004 [UPDATE]--Officials of Internet service provider [EarthLink](#) told the FCC that broadband over power line (BPL) cannot compete with the dominant cable or DSL technology today or in the near future. A BPL industry spokesperson subsequently criticized the ARRL apparently for reporting the company's statements. EarthLink President and CEO Garry Betty and other company officials met November 16 with FCC Chairman Michael Powell and Commission attorney Aaron Goldberger to deliver an [ex parte presentation](#) on several Wireline Competition Bureau and Common Carrier Bureau proceedings.

"EarthLink discussed that it has invested in and is in trials with several potential 'third wire' broadband transmission paths to the home, including WiFi, WiMax, MMDS and broadband over power lines," EarthLink Counsel Mark J. O'Connor informed FCC Secretary Marlene Dortch in a November 17 letter. "However, EarthLink pointed out that cable and DSL still account for virtually all consumer broadband connections and that none of these alternative technologies offer a commercially viable alternative today or in the near future."

An EarthLink analysis indicated that BPL is the most expensive of the broadband technologies it evaluated. In a chart titled "Next generation broadband," EarthLink said that wireless and BPL "are not likely to be competitive in cost and performance with cable and DSL over the last mile to the home." The company judged as "not successful" one unspecified BPL technical trial using Amperion equipment in a "wireless/BPL combo."

In discussing other trials using Ambient and Current Technologies equipment--one of which EarthLink had invested in--the ISP's assessment was that the high cost per household passed--\$125 in both instances--would require a better than 15 percent market penetration to attain a competitive cost.

EarthLink said its assessment determined that [ADSL2+](#) technology is the "best option" and can offer VoIP as well as high-speed broadband (at 6 to 10 Mbps) and video over copper wire and using on-premise consumer equipment. The company also indicated that it plans to invest in ADSL2+ technology.

ARRL's reporting of EarthLink's November submission to the FCC apparently struck a nerve at Ambient, with which EarthLink has a business relationship. In a classic case of shooting the messenger, Ambient CEO John J. Joyce [took the League to task](#) on the CBS MarketWatch.com Web site on behalf of the BPL industry. Calling ARRL "the leading opponent of BPL in the US" and his own corporation as "a leader on Power Line Communications (PLC)," Joyce seemed to suggest that the League itself had provided the EarthLink information and was spinning the company's remarks to advantage.

"The release by the ARRL clearly takes the statements of EarthLink's attorney out of context and conveniently ignores many developments in the industry that contradict ARRL's conclusions," Joyce said.

Among other things, Joyce said that "the ARRL perception of BPL's economics fails to consider that consumer broadband is only one application for a BPL-enabled utility system." he said there are other industrial applications that may augur in BPL's economic favor. He also emphasized that the projects with which his company and EarthLink have collaborated were demonstrations "never intended to be competitive installations" and are "in no way representative of BPL economics." He said Ambient "continues to refine its system and equipment design for cost efficiencies."

ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, said the League stands by its account, which Joyce characterized as a "claim" on the ARRL's part. Sumner also chided CBS MarketWatch.com for reporting Joyce's comments on Ambient's behalf but not referring readers to EarthLink's publicly available submission to the FCC, to which the League account includes a link.

"ARRL's report on the document was accurate in every way, and we stand by our report," Sumner said. "The conclusions given are not ours, but EarthLink's. Anyone who wishes to do so can read the submission for themselves."