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Boingo, T-Mobile team on wireless roaming

The two companies are co-developing software and services to improve roaming between Wi-Fi hot spots and GPRS networks.

Richard Shim

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2 min read **Boingo Wireless and T-Mobile USA are teaming to connect their customers.**

The two companies are co-developing software and services to make it easier for their customers to access the wireless Internet through Wi-Fi hot spots and GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) cellular networks. The chairman of T-Mobile USA, John Stanton, and chairman of Boingo Wireless, Sky Dayton, made the announcement during keynote addresses at the CTIA Wireless conference in New Orleans Tuesday.

Hot spots are areas where wireless Internet access is available to the public using Wi-Fi, which is a wireless networking technology based on the 802.11b, 802.11a and--by midyear--the 802.11g standards, which allow people to access 

a network wirelessly and share resources on that network. Hot spot locations are expected to multiply dramatically by the end of the year, which will help drive use.

The alliance is expected to improve roaming between the two types of networks, which are based on different technologies and radio frequencies. The companies' efforts will make it easier to discover and access T-Mobile 802.11b-based Wi-Fi hot spots. Bellevue, Wash.-based T-Mobile has set up over 2,200 locations with Wi-Fi access giving it a majority stake of setup hot spot locations.

Wi-Fi provides a high-speed network for Internet access but its range is more limited than cellular networks. Cellular networks have a broader range than Wi-Fi networks but data transfer rates are slower.

"Today's announcement with Boingo moves us closer to our vision of delivering customers seamless, wireless connectivity through the combined benefits of our standards-based GPRS network and Wi-Fi," Stanton said in a release.

T-Mobile is one of the first to use Boingo's Platform Services, which is software meant to help cellular carriers, wireless telecommunications companies and Internet service providers to accelerate their entry into the Wi-Fi business.

The companies will work on future versions of software to allow customers to choose which network they prefer to connect to when network access is available.

Increasingly, cellular carriers have been looking at Wi-Fi service to complement their wireless access. Verizon announced Monday it is working with Wayport to offer Wi-Fi services at indoor locations, such as airports and hotels, starting in the third quarter.



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