



WIRELESS

Samsung eyes 5G growth with regional U.S. operators

By Monica Allevan

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Samsung

5G

fixed wireless access

3GPP



Samsung is pitching its technology to regional operators that are just now starting to deploy 5G in a meaningful way, according to TJ Maan, senior director of Regional Operator Sales. (Art by Midjourney for Fierce)

- **Samsung supplies 5G gear to big companies like Verizon and Dish, but it's also got its eye on regional carriers**
- **Samsung has structured its back-end organization to cater to regional carriers**
- **Smaller operators are looking at adding FWA to their service offerings**

It seems like there's already been a ton of consolidation in wireless among Tier 2 and 3 carriers in the U.S. and T-Mobile's proposed [acquisition with UScellular \(https://www.fierce-network.com/wireless/t-mobile-buy-most-uscellular-44b\)](https://www.fierce-network.com/wireless/t-mobile-buy-most-uscellular-44b) is the most recent example.

But Samsung Electronics America sees a lot of promise for expanding its U.S. business among the regional carriers, especially as the prospects for fixed wireless access (FWA) catch on.

Samsung's first big win in the regional category was with UScellular a few years ago.

While some of the big carriers are taking their time to roll out commercial 5G standalone services, regional operators, as a category, are just now starting to deploy 5G in a meaningful way, said TJ Maan, senior director of Regional Operator Sales in the Networks Business at Samsung Electronics America.

Given the success that operators like T-Mobile and Verizon are seeing with FWA-based home broadband services, it's no wonder that regional operators would want to jump on that bandwagon too.

“We see a tremendous amount of interest in using 3GPP-based 5G technology to deploy fixed wireless into rural communities,” he said.

The idea of using 3GPP systems to deliver home broadband is not entirely new, but it’s a fairly recent development among certain carriers, he said. There’s an emerging class of operators that are not just relying on mobile services to support their business but want to integrate FWA into their models. In the past, a lot of operators relied on proprietary systems operating in the 5 GHz band – hundreds of WISPs offer that kind of service.

“Operators sort of now are finding out that hey, we could have a more reliable service, especially when it comes to non-line of sight and near line of sight with 3GPP LTE and 5G,” he said. In addition, there’s a wide ecosystem of CPE devices based on 3GPP technology.

Samsung has put in place back-end support teams to serve regional carriers specifically, according to Maan. Most of the regional U.S. carriers or WISPs that Samsung is engaged with are using C-band, CBRS, 6 GHz and/or 28 GHz, and sometimes 2.5 GHz.

Part of what makes Samsung so optimistic is the amount of federal dollars that are being made available. For example, the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) fund will make \$42.5 billion available to close the digital divide in unserved areas of the U.S. Even though the government has shown a preference for fiber, it’s clear that FWA will need to be considered for extremely high-cost areas.

Another factor in play here is the fact that Tier 2 and 3 U.S. carriers are required to replace Huawei and ZTE gear in their networks.

The whole package

One of Samsung’s big claims to fame these days is the ability to offer an end-to-end solution – that is, from network equipment to the phones that work on the network. Ericsson and Nokia got out of the handset business years ago.

That helps as it seeks more business from regional operators. “They’re the only ones who still make the phones,” said Earl Lum, president of ETL Wireless Research. “I think that’s a great opportunity” for Samsung, both in the U.S. and Canada.

Beyond that, Samsung has started to make a name for itself in the U.S. wireless infrastructure business, touting its expertise in Massive MIMO technology and multi-user MIMO.

“We see a lot of growth ahead of us,” Maan said.



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