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NAFTA's economic and political accomplishments are beyond dispute, Jim Kolbe writes in Sunday Viewpoints.



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Into the mind of...

Aric Zion

A marketing executive who helped with Tempe's initial bid for Google Fiber explains why it would be a big deal for Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tempe.

How significant is it that Phoenix-Scottsdale-Tempe is among nine finalists for a Google fiber-optic network?

That Phoenix-Scottsdale-Tempe is among nine finalists for a Google fiber network is significant in multiple ways.

From a symbolic standpoint, it's clearly a testament to how forward-thinking and evolutionary our metro area is. This area is not only attracting high tech businesses and talent, but it is also home-growing high-tech businesses and talent.

From a physical standpoint, Google Fiber would speed our metro's development not only by attracting businesses and people to the area, but by further enabling delivery of existing content and motivating the creation of new content.

How would a fiber-optic network make everyday life better?

Whether you're for it or against it, we live in an "always on" society. Smartphones, tablets, computers and set-top boxes are gateways for content delivery. Services from social networks to iTunes, Netflix and Hulu provide content.

Google Fiber helps to connect gateways and content, improving the user

experience through increased delivery speed, while at the same time widening the bandwidth "lane," if you will, to allow more services to have a pathway from content network to gateway.

Are the benefits of fiber enough for these communities to relax their insistence on underground utility lines?

That's a choice each community needs to make for itself.

With the network, we could download a movie in seconds rather than minutes. Why does that matter?

Certainly time is a resource. It has a value both in terms of the opportunity cost of how else that time might be used and often in economic terms as well.

In the case of entertainment, the benefit is generally one of convenience, but let's not forget that bandwidth further enables telecommuting and increased bandwidth increases productivity.

Are business uses more significant? Would it help attract high-tech companies?

Yes, for two reasons. First, there's the pure sexy branding value of having Google Fiber.

Second, there are the practical aspects of enabling more efficient telecommuting through increased bandwidth. Remember that many companies allow "partial telecommuting," so having employees work at home only part of the time means that increased bandwidth is still a real benefit.

Imagine a video editor opening a gigabyte Adobe After Effects file. On a 10 megabits-per-second link, that's a 13-minute-and-20-second download. On a gigabit link, that's an eight-second download.

Would there be advantages for K-12 education?

Students only spend so many minutes in each class. So the ability to save precious seconds and minutes downloading content translates into more time spent on value-added educational activities.

As Google installs fiber, does it put more pressure on cable and phone companies to match it?

Google Fiber sets the bar higher for all bandwidth providers.



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ARIC ZION
CEO, Zion & Zion