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Google Fiber, Nashville's newest internet provider, says delays surrounding utility pole attachment agreements are slowing expansion in the city as the company pushes a new Metro ordinance that addresses its concerns.

The Metro ordinance, which will be considered Tuesday on a first of three council votes, is designed to streamline what Google describes as a cumbersome process to attach its cables onto utility poles. Under current law, existing providers must move their own lines before a new provider can add another cable. AT&T and Comcast are opposed to the ordinance, referred to as One Touch Make Ready. "The current process is slow and ineffective for a project of the size and scale of Google Fiber," Amol Naik, Google Fiber's Southeast head of external affairs, said in an emailed statement. "To build quickly and broadly in Nashville, we need a sensible policy like One Touch Make Ready."

The issue sets the stage for a lobbying battle at the Metro Courthouse between a trio of corporate giants seeking to attract and hold onto customers as Google expands its presence across the U.S. Comcast has mocked Google's offerings in television commercials, and AT&T has sought to block Google Fiber-led ordinances in other cities.

To connect Nashville homes to gigabit speed internet, Google Fiber needs to attach its fiber-optic cables to the city's nearly 90,000 utility poles, which already are used by its competitors. Google said since January it has submitted between 1,000 and 1,500 pole move applications weekly and only a few hundred poles have been made ready for Google, leaving local residents frustrated with the pace.

Lead bill sponsor Councilman Anthony Davis, who said the legislation has about 15 co-sponsors in the 40-member council, called the proposal a "no-brainer" measure to accommodate "a new era of telecommunication" in Nashville. "Yes, obviously Google is the new player in the market, and they are being very slow coming into the market largely because of the poles policy and other folks moving their lines," Davis said. "But once you investigate it further, it seems like a policy that really makes sense." Davis said he doesn't believe the ordinance would give Google Fiber an unfair advantage over other telecommunication companies in Nashville. "I think they're at a major disadvantage right now," he said. "I don't think it gives them an advantage."

Google officials said the pole attachment issue has become a significant hurdle in Nashville because of the region's deep limestone that limits underground installation. Ninety percent of Google's 3,200 miles of fiber will be connected through utility poles, as a result. In addition to fixing Google's immediate issue, the company called the

plays for Pa. voters: Analysis	proposal "a necessary step" that will benefit other companies as Nashville grows. The ordinance would give Google Fiber, or any other provider seeking to add a line, the ability to hire an approved vendor to move all the lines at the same time. Instead of closing roads and sidewalks when each provider adjusts the pole, the ordinance would allow the work to be done once. AT&T said its union contract with Communications Workers of America would be violated under the proposed ordinance because non-represented workers could be changing the lines. The company says pole attachment regulation is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Communications Commission, not municipalities, a point the company is **arguing in a lawsuit** against Louisville, Ky., concerning a similar ordinance in that city. "Like other providers have previously stated we also have serious concerns with other companies being allowed to perform work on our facilities without providing us notice," AT&T Tennessee spokesman Joe Burgan said in an emailed statement. "We already have a national agreement with Google to give them access on a city-by-city basis. We're glad to grant them access to our poles like we have for others, but Google attempting to change the rules for their benefit is ridiculous." In an email sent Monday, AT&T President Joelle Phillips urged AT&T workers and retirees to voice opposition to the proposed ordinance, calling it "government overreach." "The Council should not interfere with AT&T's relationship with the CWA, or to take work away from union-represented AT&T employees," she said in the emailed statement. Comcast is pushing for more discussions ahead of the Metro Council meeting Tuesday, where the ordinance is up for first reading. The company said it has not delayed any Google Fiber activity and that it coordinates weekly with Google Fiber to prioritize which lines to move first. "All broadband providers face numerous challenges in Nashville with the make-ready and permitting processes that have impacted timely deployment and expansion of broadband facilities," Comcast said in a statement. "We believe that the appropriate next step would be to conduct a meeting of all impacted stakeholders — including AT&T, Comcast, Google Fiber, NES (Nashville Electric Service), and Public Works — to review the make-ready and permit process and discuss areas for improvement. This should be accomplished prior to any proposed legislation." Assuming the bill clears a procedural first vote, the legislation would be voted on second reading in two weeks. That timeline would set up final approval in September. NES, which oversees most of the city's poles, has not taken a position on the legislation. A spokesman for Nashville Mayor Megan Barry's office said the administration is neutral for now. Behind the scenes, some of Nashville's most high-powered lobbyists are prepared to fight over the ordinance. Google is represented by an army of Metro lobbyists led by Tom Ingram's The Ingram Group and DVL Seigenthaler public relations firm, while Comcast is backed by prominent attorney James Weaver of Waller Law. Other bill sponsors include council members Jeremy Elrod, Bill Pridemore, Russ Pulley, Mina Johnson, Angie Henderson and Robert Swope. Despite the strong early backing of the bill, some council members say they want to learn more about the issue before signing on. At-large Councilman John Cooper said he's still looking for answers from both sides of the debate, including over property rights questions he said are raised in the legislation, and more importantly, the effect on the consumer. "That's what I'm going to be looking for as the discussion unfolds," Cooper said. "It should not be about how one telecommunication monopoly can make more money more quickly. It needs to be about how can an action, particularly by a public body, benefit the public. The onus is on Google to demonstrate that."

Elrod said he believes the legislation is “business-friendly” by promoting competition for internet service in Davidson County. “Right now, it’s anti-competitive for the other two service providers to literally not get out of the way so that Google Fiber can also offer internet service. This is just to level the playing field and to allow any internet service that wants to come to Nashville, that’s willing to pay to make those poles ready, to offer their services.” – ***Nashville Tennessean***

KentuckyWired hit a speed bump when the planned fiber optic network meant to spread high-speed internet throughout the state became entangled in longer-than-expected efforts to gain access to utility poles, lawmakers were told Monday. As a result, completion of the project's initial phases could be delayed by 10 to 12 months, said Chris Moore, executive director of the Kentucky Communications Network Authority, which oversees and maintains the KentuckyWired project. Now the target date for completing those first phases is the third quarter of 2017, he said.

The entire project could be wrapped up by the first quarter of 2019 — about four to eight months later than anticipated, Moore said. The slowdown in the initial phases drew concern as a Kentucky legislative panel received an update on the vast project's progress. "Now why would it take that long?" said Rep. Rita Smart, D-Richmond.

Moore said that 85 percent of the fiber optic cables will be attached to utility poles, mostly in rural areas. The rest of the cables will be placed underground, mainly in urban areas. Project managers had to obtain agreements from owners of the poles, he said. "We ran into delays in getting pole attachment agreements with two of the largest pole owners in the commonwealth," Moore said.

Those agreements are now in hand, he said. But another potential slowdown has been obtaining easements from private landowners, he said. Potential cost overruns are "yet to be fully developed," but project managers are working to minimize any additional costs, he said. KentuckyWired is one of the signature initiatives of the Saving Our Appalachian Region group, founded by Republican U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers and former Democratic Gov. Steve Beshear.

Last year, a group of private companies borrowed more than $270 million to begin constructing the network. The state provided $30 million in bonds, which Moore said is being used to purchase materials to build the fiber network. As part of the funding plan, Kentucky government officials promised to pay about $28 million a year for the Internet service to help with the debt service.

Due to the delays in getting the network started, however, KentuckyWired won't generate revenues in the current fiscal year, Moore told lawmakers. And in the fiscal year that begins next July, the network is expected to muster only $3.5 million to $5 million in revenue, he said. Afterward, Moore said the goal is to ramp up those revenues in coming years. "We're focusing on getting the construction completed in the most cost-efficient manner and as quickly as possible," he told reporters.

Moore also reported signs of progress during his presentation to lawmakers. Managers have purchased or ordered about 2,000 miles of fiber optic cable and are working to finalize remaining pole attachment agreements, mostly in western and south-central Kentucky, he said. An agreement with Cincinnati Bell to partner on construction costs in northern Kentucky will save about $3 million in project costs, he said. A letter of intent has been reached with East Kentucky Network on broadband network construction in the state's Appalachian region, he said. – ***Associated Press***

Hollywood producer Craig Piligian pitched a reality show to major television networks last year, and every one passed. Then, after an October meeting, the nation’s largest cellphone carrier snapped it up. “They stepped up big time. It was broadcast-network money,” Mr. Piligian said of the deal with Verizon Communications Inc. Verizon agreed to finance more than 100 short episodes of “The Runner,” about contestants who try to cross America without being caught by other players, including viewers. The show, which plays online and on Verizon’s smartphone video app, is part of a more than $10 billion gamble by Verizon to build a digital-media business to compete with Facebook and Google for advertising dollars.

Verizon gained some ad technology and websites last year by buying AOL Inc. It doubled down in July by agreeing to pay $4.8 billion for Yahoo Inc. It is a radical move for a corporate giant long treated by investors as a utility with a safe dividend, and is a strategy that has previously stymied other players, including Yahoo itself. Even if it succeeds, it may have little impact “on the battleship that is Verizon,” said Craig Moffett, an analyst at MoffettNathanson.

Verizon cemented its wireless dominance three years ago by acquiring Vodafone Group PLC’s 45% interest in Verizon Wireless. Revenue growth and profits, however, have plateaued in the wireless industry. Last quarter, Verizon’s revenue fell 5%, its first quarterly decline in six years, even though data usage on Verizon smartphones surged 44%. Competition is too intense. “Any time a business stands still like this and tries to just live on what you’ve done, you’re beginning the death spiral,” Verizon Chief Executive Lowell McAdam said in an interview.

For Verizon, part of the answer is Hollywood and Silicon Valley. The plan is to own and distribute online content and use data collected from mobile phones to target advertising to tens of millions of users. Talking to analysts earlier this year, Verizon’s new-business chief Marni Walden described the company’s ambition by flashing a slide labeled “create ‘ Viacom’ of tomorrow”—referring to a media conglomerate with $13 billion in revenue.

Verizon isn’t alone among telecom carriers in trying to figure out a different form for the future. AT&T Inc. also had sought Yahoo, and last year AT&T spent $49 billion to acquire DirecTV and become the largest U.S. provider of pay television. Mr. McAdam said the core of Verizon’s business will always be its wireless network and he isn’t expecting quick returns from the media investments, which are about 5% of capital spending. “It’s not a bet-the-company kind of play,” he said.

The executive has a history of making unorthodox moves. When he ran Verizon’s wireless unit, he joined with Google to develop what became the Android operating system for smartphones. That paid off, helping counter AT&T’s then-exclusive deal for the iPhone. Success in Hollywood may prove tougher. Producers are enjoying a seller’s market. Broadcast networks, cable channels and tech firms such as Amazon.com Inc. and Netflix Inc. all are paying big money in search of the next hit.

Yahoo several years ago spent heavily producing content such as the show “Community” and hired Katie Couric for an online news program. Yahoo eventually scrapped most of this, then in January shut the website for viewing its shows. “We couldn’t see a way to make money,” Yahoo’s chief financial officer, Ken Goldman, said last fall. Verizon’s mobile video app, called go90, is off to a slow start. Launched last fall, it has several million monthly active users but ranks 55th in the iPhone app store’s entertainment category, according to tracking company App Annie.

Go90 grew out of a company called OnCue, first envisioned as a console plugged into a TV set to let users stream national and local TV content over the internet. Verizon was able to buy it cheap in 2014, but at first wasn’t sure what to do with it. Verizon set up focus groups of people who let Verizon executives record them in their living rooms while interacting with content on their TVs, computers and smartphones. The executives found that young people didn’t just sit around a TV screen but shared short video clips on their computers and phones. Verizon decided to turn the OnCue service into a mobile video app, which became go90.

It needed technology to target advertising to go90 users. At a 2014 conference in Sun

Valley, Idaho, Mr. McAdam met Tim Armstrong, who was building up AOL's ad-technology business, and they talked about ways to work together. "In the beginning it was more using his ad-tech capability," Mr. McAdam said. "A commercial discussion with him went quickly to an M&A discussion." AOL became the repository for Verizon's digital-media efforts. "Which then leads you to Yahoo, which just helps you scale AOL," Mr. McAdam said.

In March, Verizon and Hearst Corp. linked up to develop programming for go90, with a site called RatedRed.com aimed at young people in the heartland, and Seriously.TV, a comedy network focused on politics. A month later, Verizon bought a stake in AwesomenessTV, which produces short shows featuring YouTube stars, and joined with Hearst to acquire Complex Media, a music and pop-culture website and print magazine targeted toward 18- to 24-year-old men. Complex will help drive its followers to Verizon's go90 app, which also has some live games from the National Football League and the National Basketball Association.

Gabriel Conte, a 21-year-old YouTube star, had never used Verizon's app when the company hired him for a lead role in "Mr. Student Body President," a scripted show coming to go90 in the fall. On his YouTube channel, Mr. Conte posts comedic musings with his friends and siblings about teenage life. "We're just telling our fans to watch our shows," he said. "What go90 has done is taking these people and crossing them over."

Drawing on the popularity of YouTube stars is central to the strategy. One of go90's few successes so far was a show about high school called "Guidance." The lead actress was Amanda Steele, who gained millions of followers on YouTube posting cosmetic tips. For Verizon, all this means stepping outside its comfort zone. Its content-acquisition efforts are led by Brian Angiolet, a veteran of Verizon's Fios TV service and of ad buying. He said his experience in the two areas gives his team the ability to navigate the media world.

A year ago they went to Hollywood to see talent agencies, in meetings brokered by Mark Dowley, a former partner at William Morris Endeavor Entertainment who serves as a media adviser to Verizon. He said the company told the agencies it sought original programming that is digital-friendly and interactive, but not necessarily short-form or low-budget. Communications between data-driven telecom executives and creatively driven entertainment people can be like strangers speaking different languages. "They're different cultures that need to coalesce," Mr. Dowley said. "The Hollywood guys have to get used to dealing with telecom companies that are very metrics-driven."

Some ad executives have been critical of Verizon's approach and early advertisements. "This feels like something a big corporation would push out in order to seem cool to young people, rather than an actually cool startup or product," said Tim Leake, senior vice president, creative marketing and innovation, at ad agency RPA. Several noted that Verizon was encouraging potential go90 users to rotate their phones 90 degrees and hold them horizontally to watch videos—just as Snapchat was exploding and urging people to watch video vertically on their mobile devices.

Ad buyers said go90's ad prices have been too high. According to several, the company was seeking $10 million minimum commitments for individual marketers last year and $50 million deals for large ad-agency holding companies. Publicis Groupe SA signed up for an ad buy on go90 last fall that included multiple advertisers. The deal has been a disappointment for Publicis as go90 hasn't delivered the audience it promised, said people familiar with the matter.

Verizon declined to provide specifics of agency contracts, though a spokeswoman said the deals included more online content than just go90. The company's Mr. Angiolet said go90 is working through some of the app's "hiccups," and performance

	and viewership have improved since a July overhaul. "The Runner," which is also produced by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon and premiered last month, was meant to be Verizon's first hit with broad audience appeal. It was developed at ABC network in 2000, but the logistics of managing a nationwide chase prevented it from reaching the air, particularly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Yahoo even tried to make "The Runner" in 2006, during an earlier stab at original content. Yahoo bought rights to the project but canned the idea when its strategy changed. Last year, Mr. Piligian, whose Pilgrim Studios is owned by Lions Gate Entertainment Corp., and other producers figured they could revive the idea by using mobile technology to enable the chase and get viewers involved. After networks passed, they brought up the idea casually during a meeting with Verizon's Mr. Dowley in New York and were astonished when he wanted to acquire it. "The Runner" has more than a million viewers. While the numbers are far lower than the millions who watch even a modestly successful TV show, executives at Verizon say they are pleased with the results. – ***Wall Street Journal***

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