

The Stanford Daily

Breaking news from the Farm since 1892

Google to beta-test its fiber network on Stanford homes

Friday, October 22nd, 2010 | By Ellen Huet

Google announced Thursday that it will be partnering with the University to implement a beta test of its fiber-optic, ultra high-speed broadband network on approximately 850 faculty and staff homes.



(ANASTASIA YEE/The Stanford Daily)

The Mountain View-based company announced in early 2010 plans to unleash an experimental fiber-optic network on a community of anywhere between 50,000 and 500,000 homes, setting off a widespread rush from more than 1,100 communities around the country to become the chosen locale.

The eventual community of choice will be announced at the end of 2010, but in the meantime, Google plans to execute a small-scale version at Stanford to test the project before it expands to full size.

The mostly underground fiber-optic network will provide residences with Internet speeds of up to one gigabit per second, approximately 100 times as fast as most Internet connections today.

Google selected Stanford as a beta test location for its “relatively small size” and because the company headquarters are “close to campus, so we can keep an eye on the project,” said Google spokesperson Dan Martin. “We also liked that Stanford was very open to plans and experimentation on location.”

Groundbreaking on campus is scheduled for early 2011. The exact date when fiber optic access will be available to residents is yet to be determined.

Google will fund the entire project with no cost to the University, Martin said.

“This project is to test things we hope to scale up in the future,” Martin said. “The focus is not immediately on turning a profit. It’s an investment in future success.”

Google and the University have a three-year contract for the project, after which details will be discussed as to the network's future.

The two organizations have been in talks for "a number of months" since Google first approached Stanford about the project, said University spokesperson Lisa Lapin.

"We're treating Google just like another Comcast or AT&T," she said. "They'll be doing some digging and coordinating work with campus utilities to install the system."

"This will make Stanford one of the first places in the country where you'd have this kind of speed," Lapin added.

James Sweeney, management science and engineering professor and chair of the [Stanford Campus Residential Leaseholders](#) (SCRL) board, also felt the potential benefit from the state-of-the-art connections was the main attraction of the collaboration.

"It keeps us on the absolute cutting edge of connectivity technology," Sweeney said. "We're a community that includes a broad range of highly educated people, all of whom consider information flow very important."

Sweeney noted that some residences on campus that will be included in the project currently have lower-speed connections like DSL, and that the increase in speed would greatly change the resident's Web experiences.

"The experience of everything we do regarding the Internet will be enhanced," he said. "Once you start getting this out to people at this speed, there are going to be new applications for this technology, and we'll be positioned to take advantage of it."

Although Sweeney admitted "construction is always a nuisance," he said Google intends to experiment with new and potentially less invasive construction techniques, including "micro-trenching," which would dig a narrow trench less than an inch wide and several feet deep in which to lay the fibers.

"We anticipate that this will be less disruptive," he said. "But, of course, it's not an absolute guarantee."

The faculty and staff residences included in the project are located near Peter Coutts Road, Stanford Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard, as well as southwest of Mayfield Avenue.

URL: <http://www.stanforddaily.com/2010/10/22/google-to-beta-test-its-fiber-network-on-stanford-homes/>