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Waiting for FiOS, Baltimore? Verizon says ‘Fuhgeddaboutit!’

by **FERN SHEN**

Verizon made it clear last week that the utility is not deploying its much-awaited, desperately needed high-speed Internet service, FiOS, in Baltimore city.

Oh, they might bring FiOS to Baltimore in the future, Verizon spokesperson Sandra Arnette wrote in email to inquiring journalists, but “we just can’t say when that will happen right now.”

Accusing the utility of redlining, the group Progressive Maryland and some city council members are pushing Verizon to provide service to Maryland’s biggest city. The company has brought their super-fast, high-speed Internet service to most of the state’s other major jurisdictions, but not Baltimore.

“City to Verizon: What are we, chopped liver?” was [The Baltimore Messenger](#)’s excellent headline on their story Wednesday.

Addressing the charge that the company’s behavior constitutes redlining, Arnette said “race and ethnicity and income are never factors...”

“Verizon does not redline. We never have and never will,” she wrote. “It’s illegal, immoral and counter to our century-old legacy of providing good service to Baltimore residents.”

So, why aren’t they serving Baltimore?

Verizon is just going to focus on “those communities where we already have approved cable franchises and where we already have begun to build our FiOS network,” Arnette wrote.

[Progressive Maryland](#) is leading the charge on this issue and a couple of city council members, William H. Cole IV and Mary Pat Clarke, are involved as well and are planning a hearing on it next month.

The coalition that has signed on to support the effort (listed on Progressive Maryland’s website) includes the NAACP, CASA de Maryland, and church and community organizations from across the city: Mount Winans, Upton, Reservoir Hill, Darley Park, Upton, Charles Village and others.

Interestingly, a slicker [campaign](#) aimed at a similar cause is being mounted now by Baltimore’s tech community. It looks beyond providers like Verizon and Comcast to a new potential broadband source: Google.

Since the search engine giant announced recently that it would pick one city to test market super-fast broadband service, a campaign called [BmoreFiber](#) has picked up steam. The idea is to convince Google to pick Baltimore, over Cincinnati, Hartford, Washington and a host of other cities vying for the spot.

This group has attracted support from some of the biggest players in town — deputy mayor Andy Frank, city schools chief Andres Alonso, First Mariner Bank, Johns Hopkins University, the Open Society Institute, the Downtown Partnership, etc. — but their goals are ostensibly the same as the little [WhereisBmoreFiOS?](#) project: to get better Internet service for Baltimore.

If the city doesn’t win the broadband lottery and snag the Google gig, maybe the BmoreFiber folks could put all that horsepower behind [WhereisBmoreFiOS?](#)