

# THE SUN

## Coalition presses Verizon to bring high-speed Internet service to Baltimore

City bypassed on FiOS, bus billboards will say



Matthew Weinstein, in suit, regional director for Progressive Maryland, and coalition members show the bus advertisements that will press Verizon to bring its high-speed fiber-optic Internet service, called FiOS, to Baltimore. Verizon's building is at far left. (Baltimore Sun photo by Algerina Perna / March 16, 2010)

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Using a bus billboard campaign, a coalition of 20 churches, labor groups and community organizations is trying to pressure Verizon Maryland to bring its next-generation, high-speed Internet service to Baltimore.

The service, marketed as FiOS, is available or being rolled out in several counties around the city and in Washington, but critics accuse Verizon of leaving Baltimore out of expansion plans. With high-capacity fiber-optic wiring, FiOS can offer television, telephone and Internet download speeds of up to 50 megabits per second - many times faster than a typical digital-subscriber line or cable-modem connection.

"As anyone who is a native of Baltimore knows, there's a long history of [companies](#) not investing in Baltimore," said Matthew Weinstein, Baltimore regional director for Progressive Maryland, the nonprofit that organized the coalition.

Weinstein, who kicked off the campaign at a small rally outside Verizon Maryland's headquarters in downtown Baltimore, accused the company of "redlining" Baltimore - of avoiding poor inner-city neighborhoods and choosing instead to invest in more affluent suburbs. The bus billboard that Progressive Maryland commissioned states: "This bus isn't the only thing passing you by. Verizon's bringing high speed Internet everywhere but Baltimore."

Sandra Arnette, a Verizon Maryland spokeswoman, denied that the company is ignoring Baltimore.

"Not once have we ever said we're not coming to Baltimore City," Arnette said.

But, she said, Verizon has already agreed to build the FiOS network in other parts of the state and has put a halt on new deployments nationwide so that it can focus on building out the areas where it has existing commitments.

"There are other major cities where we're not currently offering the service," Arnette said. "But that's not to say we won't be looking to move into those areas in the near future. We just ask people to be patient."

Verizon FiOS is available to communities in 16 states, Arnette said. The company is offering the service at least in some parts of several major cities, including Los Angeles, Washington, New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Richmond, Va., and a handful of cities in New Jersey.

In addition to Baltimore, FiOS is not available in Boston, Syracuse, Albany or Buffalo, Arnette said.

In Maryland, Arnette said, FiOS is in various stages of deployment in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's counties.