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USVI 90 Percent 5G Ready, Liberty Latin America Says

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One month after it officially acquired AT&T's wireless and wireline operations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Liberty Latin America, whose USVI and Puerto Rico operations has been renamed Liberty Puerto Rico, provided an update on the integration process, with the most standout being the company's announcement that most of the USVI has already seen the deployment of the ultra fast 5G network.

"About 90 percent of Puerto Rico and USVI's population enjoys 5G coverage, that is a combined number. For example for St. Croix alone, the percentage is 85% and for St. Thomas it is 92 percent," Victor Vera, director of Wireless RAN Engineering at Liberty Puerto Rico told the Consortium Thursday.

He added, "Still with 5G a great deal of the experience has to do with both the network and the equipment you have, some phones aren't 5G. A great deal of the construction you are seeing in St.

Croix has to do with the improvement to the network. Laying fiber underground and expanding the backhaul fiber network to the first sites will not only improve speeds and the experience in certain areas but will also create a more resilient network.”

Liberty said it is expanding the backhaul fiber network to the first sites in the USVI laying fiber underground. In the project’s first phase, Liberty is already deploying 59 miles of fiber optics throughout the USVI, which the company said will deliver improved mobile service to 50 percent of sites throughout the islands. Construction of this phase is expected to conclude in the first half of 2021.

“The mobile operations may be changing brand name in the near future, but the quality of service that customers have come to expect will always be there”, said Naji Khoury, president and CEO of Liberty Puerto Rico. “Customers are being serviced by the same excellent professionals that have been part of the operation throughout its various changes in ownership and brands.”

According to the release, Mr. Khoury began the update on the combined company’s integration process, stating that the wireless network continues to perform very well, and service has not been impacted. Regarding the call center transition from other AT&T call centers across the world to Puerto Rico, the executive added that it is a highly detailed process. Even though there have been some challenges along the way, the problems have been solved and the company is moving towards answering 100 percent of all customer service calls locally. Mr. Khoury added that the local call center also handles inbound sales.

“Currently, all key performance indicators equal those prior to closing and all our wireless team activities, especially those involving design, planning, performance, optimization, and construction, are on-going without slowing down,” added Khoury.

Regarding mobile segment offers, the company said it is having great success with its new offers featuring the recently launched iPhone 12. These offers are part of a revitalized customer focus, which extends the best equipment offers to new and current customers alike, according to the release.

Mr. Khoury emphasized that the new company now combines the fastest wireless network with the fastest fixed network in local markets. Both Liberty and AT&T’s fixed and wireless networks have been consistently recognized as the Fastest Networks in Puerto Rico, according to results from Speedtest® by Ookla®. Data from November reflects a 20 percent improvement in internet speeds compared to October.

Increased internet consumption is still a trend, but it seems to have plateaued, Mr. Khoury noted. Liberty is still at the 46 percent increase in data consumption levels that emerged after Puerto Rico's lockdown in March. He added that the company’s average household currently consumes more than 13 gigabytes a day or close to 400 gigabytes a month. To manage this consumption, the company has been increasing capacity in its fixed network throughout the year.