

Internet will reach capacity limits by 2010: AT and amp;T

US telecommunications giant AT and amp;T has warned that the Internet's current network architecture will reach the limits of its capacity by 2010 if proper investment is not made.

Speaking at a Westminster eForum on Web 2.0 in London, Jim Cicconi, vice-president of legislative affairs for AT and amp;T, warned that the current systems that constitute the Internet would not be able to cope with the increasing volumes of video and user-generated content being uploaded.

'The surge in online content is at the centre of the most dramatic changes affecting the Internet today,' Cicconi said.

'In three years' time, 20 typical households will generate more traffic than the entire Internet today.'

Cicconi, who was speaking at the event as part of a wider series of meetings with British government officials, said at least \$55 billion worth of investment was needed in new infrastructure in the next three years in the US alone, with the figure rising to \$130 billion to improve the network worldwide, reported technology website CNET.com Friday.

'We are going to be butting up against the physical capacity of the Internet by 2010,' he said.

He claimed that the 'unprecedented new wave of broadband traffic' would increase 50-fold by 2015 and that AT and amp;T is investing \$19 billion to maintain its network and upgrade its backbone network.

Cicconi added that more demand for high-definition video would put an increasing strain on the Internet infrastructure.

'Eight hours of video is loaded onto YouTube every minute. Everything will become HD (High-Definition) very soon, and HD is 7 to 10 times more bandwidth-hungry than typical video today. Video will be 80 percent of all traffic by 2010, up from 30 percent today,' he said.

Cicconi after his speech said he believed government intervention in the Internet was fundamentally wrong.

'I think people agree why the Internet is successful. My personal view is that government has widely chosen to... keep a light touch and let innovators develop it,' he said.

'The reason I resist using the term 'net neutrality' is that I don't think government intervention is the right way to do this kind of thing. I don't think government can anticipate these kinds of technical problems. Right now, I think net neutrality is a solution in search of a problem,' he added.

Net neutrality refers to an ongoing campaign calling for governments to legislate to prevent Internet service providers from charging content providers for prioritisation of their traffic. The debate is more heated in the US than in Britain because there is less competition between ISPs here.

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