

## Company expands fiber-optic network to connect Baltimore to D.C.

**FiberLight LLC says Baltimore-Washington is a growing market**

By Gus G. Sentementes, The Baltimore Sun

FiberLight LLC, a Georgia-based fiber-optic network provider, said Wednesday it will soon unveil a network that can connect commercial customers in downtown Baltimore and several southern suburbs to points in Washington and Northern Virginia.

FiberLight operates 3,000 miles of fiber-optic networks across the country, but company officials said that the Baltimore-Washington region is its fastest-growing market.

"It's a huge, growing market for us," said Judd Carothers, the company's executive vice president of network operations, engineering and construction. "It's the flagship market."

FiberLight is spending \$20 million to build the network, which will run 104 miles from downtown and western parts of Baltimore south through Columbia, Laurel and Greenbelt, where it ties into the company's existing Washington and Northern Virginia telecommunication networks.

The new network will be complete within the next 45 days, company officials said. FiberLight already has a 123-mile network based in downtown Baltimore, which also runs south of the city, and a 299-mile network throughout Washington and Northern Virginia. The Maryland, Washington and Northern Virginia market is FiberLight's largest in the country, ahead of Houston and Dallas, Atlanta and South Florida.

The company sees growth in the region's information-technology economy, where the federal government and large hospitals, universities and other sectors are looking for faster data services as networks endure greater workloads.

Improving the Baltimore region's telecommunications infrastructure has been a topic of interest this year among public officials and technology professionals. Baltimore and several other Maryland municipalities were among more than 1,100 communities nationwide to apply to Google Inc. for a pilot project that could bring ultra-fast Internet broadband access to residents.

Google would be looking to build a network for residential use for up to 500,000 households. The Internet search giant is expected to announce the pilot project winner by the end of the year.

FiberLight sells services and access to its network to other major telecommunications and cable providers, as well as to hospitals, universities and other large companies and institutions..