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BRIDGEWAVE TOUTS GIGABIT RADIOS AS A VIABLE BACKHAUL OPTION

Jun 2, 2010 4:56 PM, By Lynnette Luna

When it comes to backhauling data traffic in wireless networks, whether on enterprise campuses or within public-safety departments, fiber and microwave have been the two main choices. But Bridgewave Communications is making inroads to both environments using Gigabit wireless radios that operate in the high-frequency 60 GHz and 80 GHz bands to deliver higher capacity connectivity than microwave and at a cheaper price than fiber.

Paul Obsitnik, senior vice president of business development with Bridgewave, said millimeter wave technologies are becoming viable alternatives to traditional network backbones for a couple of reasons. First, the spectrum is plentiful. Second, the total cost of ownership is more affordable because the licensing requirements are less stringent than microwave licenses.

One drawback is that the distance capabilities are short — about 2.5 miles for a Gigabit radio. However, capacity is about 1.2 Gbps today with a doubling of that speed expected next year to 2.4 Gbps.

"Compared to leasing fiber, which is especially common in deployments at college campuses, deploying Gigabit wireless radios are a much more affordable alternative," Obsitnik said.

BridgeWave said it has seen traction with the enterprise customer base looking to expand corporate LANs, while the health care industry has adopted Gigabit wireless radios because they help keep such companies compliant with security laws since the radios feature narrow beam widths and AES encryption.

On the public-safety side, Bridgewave is working with governments and police departments to set up video surveillance. For instance, the Dallas Police Department is using Bridgewave radios to provide the backbone for carrying video traffic to 24-hour monitoring stations after the city realized its congested network couldn't accommodate the additional traffic load. The network uses Firetide's mesh technology, complete with zones for aggregating video traffic and then backhauling it to the monitoring stations via BridgeWave's 60 GHz point-to-point Gigabit wireless link — which can carry traffic for up to 10 video cameras in hub-and-spoke and repeater configurations — as well as an additional 100 Mbps wireless link. According to Obsitnik, backhauling the traffic at 60 GHz leaves lower microwave frequencies open for other public-safety applications.

While mobile operators historically have been wedded to fiber and — to a lesser extent — microwave, Obsitnik said that Bridgewave now is making progress into the mobile operator space as mobile data traffic skyrockets. He added that the Gigabit radios are ideal for denser populations, given their relatively short range.

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