

1. Internet access in Boskloof

We were chartered to check into the ongoing DSL problems in Boskloof and to evaluate other providers for high-speed internet access.

We had a look at the providers available.

Wireless access like 3G, iBurst etc. are available, but for for what most residents demand it is far too slow and more so for what is needed in future.

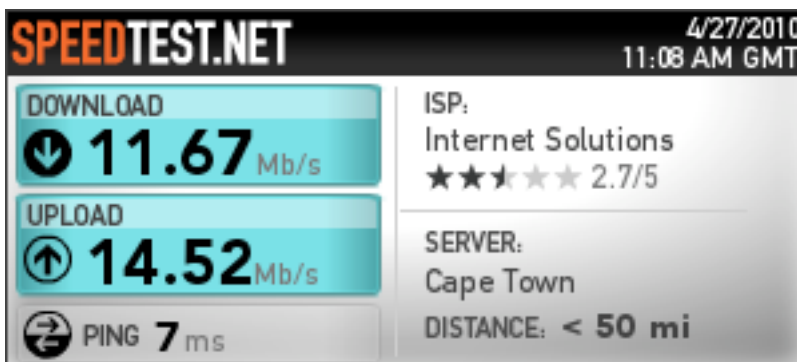
Many of use have problems with DSL, especially if the distance from the gate is far. The reasons in a nutshell are too long copper lines and noise from our electric fence.

Telkom was not willing to connect us to a UMC (optical DSLAM) to "shorten" the copper lines. After we came up with a competitive alternative, Telkom understood that they will loose their customers and are now connecting us on the UMC. (Amazing how well competition works!).

I expect this to be a major improvement for DSL users in Boskloof, but nevertheless the speeds will be limited because of the noise introduced by our electric fence. We will know more within the next 2 weeks.

We started to look into alternatives and found one operator who had quoted for an installation that looked o.k., but they would have charged us a large amount for setting up the infrastructure. We then found a second provider ("TheWeb") who offered to do the installation for free, offers higher performance and lower cost per month.

We then agreed to do a test installation to evaluate if they can walk the talk. With all the bad experience Boskloof has made with internet providers in the past, we agreed that the only way to do a good evaluation is a real test implementation. The mast up on the hill uses two high speed links for redundancy and a short range link into the estate. The power is less than half a watt in the 5GHz range and therefor a fraction of the power of a cell phone. The first test results are well above the original expectations. Here is an actual speed test:



For those who have better things to do than dealing with this technical nonsense: compared to a 512/256 typical DSL connection, this connection is 23 times faster for a download and 60 times faster for an upload. If you 20 digital photos

at 3MB each for example, your upload time is 34 seconds versus 33 minutes on a 512/256 DSL link.

This test we are doing is for fast internet and VoIP (allows standard phone calls over the internet and free phone calls for participants within the estate)

The provided bandwidth allows to connect cameras etc. to secure homes.

TheWeb offered us to lay optical fibers to all homes free of charge if we want this and their aim is to lay optical fiber to Boskloof as soon as possible. This would be the ultimate "fat pipe" for high performance usages like security cameras, IP-TV and alike.

Next steps:

a) Beta testers to test speed and availability for a few weeks.

More testers are needed and should come online in a week or so. Please let me know who is interested.

b) Beta testers to report back to excom and at the AGM and to do a recommendation pro or con.

If the tests are successful, the mast needs to be properly strapped, painted etc., the exact location needs to be determined and the proper contracts need to be done with Boskloof.

The medium term goal is to replace the radio transmissions with fiber to the home. This company offers to lay the fibers to the homes at their cost!

If the tests are not successful, all hardware including the mast will be taken down again and we need to find an alternative solution.