



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

www.fia-online.co.uk

Secretary: Jane Morrison

The Manor House
BUNTINGFORD
Hertfordshire SG9 9AB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1763 273039 Fax: +44 (0) 1763 273255

e-mail: jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk

HOW GREEN IS MY BROADBAND?

by

**Mike Gilmore, Technical Director of the FIA
for Networking+ (July 2008)**

Last year CISCO predicted a doubling of broadband demand, in terms of data throughput, every 18 months but this prediction may not have taken into account the impact of increased oil prices. Recently, a senior BP executive commented that "overall motoring costs, in real terms, are currently 18 % lower than they were 7 years ago". The public perception is somewhat different, failing to recognise that the real costs of car purchases and insurance have actually fallen and focusing, instead, on the day-to-day cost of motoring. The cost of producing petrol has doubled in the last 18 months and the price at our pumps has increased by at least 25% in the same period. We also realise that this situation is not a "blip". There may be small reductions as some of the "Asian Tigers" re-balance their internal economies as they reduce the petrol subsidies that have driven up demand - but the trend is upward. This is bad news for the haulage industry and will certainly impact inflation as delivery costs increase.

As individuals, we can take steps to reduce the impact of the fuel price rises - two obvious solutions are to drive more carefully and also to drive less. Driving less is an initial, automatic, reaction to increased costs but tends to wane over time. Ultimately, for those that drive to work, there is only one real solution - stay at, and work from, home. This will, as has already started to, make companies and their employees seriously consider the possibilities of home-working. In an effort to maintain our "green" credentials, the IEEE are busy producing the Energy Efficient Ethernet (EEE) standard IEEE 802.3az for the office and in Europe the Energy Efficiency Inter-Operator Collaboration Group (EE IOCG) are focussing on broadband delivery. But how much "greener" are we really being if we work from home? We will need our own heating and lighting - which is additional to that already provided for us at our offices - even when we are not there.

However, we are not just staying at home to do the paperwork - we are talking about "unified communications": the full integration of the office and the home using video and audio support as well as simple use of e-mail. As true home-working increases, so do the demands on the broadband network.

Our current broadband service delivery is not symmetrical - we get a much faster download rate than that provided for data upload because today's broadband is designed for the world of the Internet. However, when we try to implement full home-office integration, the upstream and downstream traffic becomes more equal. Network contention on our current broadband systems and the absence of quality of service prioritisation will impact real-time applications (video, audio) - which are not at all forgiving of transmission delays and drop-outs. Our current broadband solutions will fail to provide us with the system performance that we need for true home-working.

So to be "green" in terms of cutting pollution, saving the planets oil resources and our own hard-earned cash, we will need to improved broadband delivery system to the home. GPON, the proposed delivery system for FTTx, provides a 2.5 Gb/s downstream and 1.25 Gb/s upstream split among up to 32 users. This would appear adequate to meet our home-networking needs - so all we need to do is get a regulatory framework within which FTTx can be deployed effectively in the UK. Once we have

that sorted out, we need to look at its impact on the core network - the CISCO prediction could fall well short of the mark.

If you would like to have your say on this topic, e-mail jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk.or, alternatively, you can contact the FIA Secretariat in 01763 273039.