

MTS Beats Crowd to 4G in Moscow, But There's a Catch

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An MTS office in central Moscow

Mobile phone operator MTS became the first company to activate 4G service in Moscow, beating out competitors who have so far only fired up LTE networks in the far-off city of Novosibirsk.

The upgraded network will function inside the Garden Ring Road in a test regime and will allow users to reach data transfer speeds of up to 100 MB per second, the company's operations vice president Alexander Popovsky told Vedomosti.

But for now, MTS can't charge for the service, since the company still has not received rights to use the frequencies necessary to operate the technology.

The upside for consumers is that MTS will offer the service for free for those who have devices that can connect to the network.

But another stumbling block stands in the way. Currently, there are no smartphones or tablet computers on sale in Moscow with the capabilities to connect, meaning the only way to access the network is by purchasing an MTS modem or a Yota brand modem with 4G capability.

So far only MegaFon and Skartel, which operates under the Yota brand, are offering 4G services to their customers, and only in Novosibirsk, Russia's third largest city by population hidden away deep in Siberia. Both companies have said they will begin to offer 4G services in Moscow in the first half of May.

MegaFon offers its customers access through Skartel's network, as Skartel is the only company that currently has rights to operating the frequencies used for the technology. The other players, including MTS and VimpelCom, will have to wait for the long-delayed tender process that will distribute the rights for the frequencies.

The tender process, which was to have been held by Feb 1, has still not been announced.

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