

Frontier Airlines in talks with SpaceX about adding Starlink Wi-Fi

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Frontier Airlines “recently” held discussions with SpaceX about adding its Starlink satellite internet service to its planes and is more hopeful about adding such a product than in previous years, the carrier’s CEO told CNBC on Thursday.

Adding Starlink’s Wi-Fi would be a departure for the budget carrier, which doesn’t currently offer inflight internet service. CEO Barry Biffle says skipping Wi-Fi for now allows the airline to be more “green” because it limits weight on board.

Representatives for SpaceX didn’t immediately comment.

“The challenge is I don’t want the weight and I don’t want drag,” Biffle said in an interview on the sidelines of an aerospace conference in Washington, D.C. “I don’t carry business travelers.”

Most major U.S. airlines offer Wi-Fi on board for a fee, though many are trying to improve the quality and lower the cost.

Elon Musk's SpaceX is currently building its Starlink broadband network, which includes more than 3,000 satellites in orbit so far and has around 500,000 total customers — most of whom are individual consumers.

In June, **the FCC authorized SpaceX to provide mobile Starlink internet service** to boats, planes and trucks. The company recently signed a deal with cruise line **Royal Caribbean**.

Denver-based Frontier has explored adding Wi-Fi on board before and frequently talks with other providers but, so far, hasn't been able to justify the cost. That's changing, Biffle said.

"We're more hopeful now that with Starlink coming in there's going to be some rationalization of cost and pricing," Biffle said. "When the price gets cheap enough, I'll put it on."

He said the carrier doesn't have a timeline for adding internet service on board and noted it could ultimately partner with a different provider.

Starlink signed its **first deal** to provide inflight internet with a major carrier in April with **Hawaiian Airlines**, a service that carrier said would be complimentary for passengers.

Biffle said Frontier would likely charge for Wi-Fi on board, when the service eventually rolls out.

"I have no ancillary products that don't make money," he said.

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