

CitySwitch unveils plans to broaden its growing pipeline

CitySwitch unveils plans to broaden its growing pipeline of wireless infrastructure projects. By Kat Zeman

A pioneer in developing relationships with railroads for creating wireless infrastructure, CitySwitch has a broadening portfolio on the horizon.

The Atlanta-based company has been growing its railroad portfolio steadily in association with CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railway. Also, the company recently entered into a new agreement with AT&T to build and lease new wireless communication towers.

"American Infrastructure Funds, a San Francisco-based private equity firm, has made a strategic investment into our company earlier this year to further fuel our actively growing pipeline of new macro towers and small cell infrastructure," says Robert Raville, president and CEO.

CitySwitch is a privately-owned wireless infrastructure owner and developer. Founded in 2004, the company develops, owns and manages wireless infrastructure for broadband wireless customers across the United States. "We have a significant pipeline of several hundred new towers that will be developed over the next 12 to 18 months and the pipeline is growing," Raville adds.

CitySwitch has a lengthy track record developing and managing hundreds of towers on public and private properties with access to more than 40,000 linear miles of railway right of way in 43 states. Raville believes the company is well positioned to double its growth rate in the near future.

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- ROBERT RAVILLE President & CEO

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Specialty: Wireless Infrastructure

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Railroad Pioneers

CitySwitch has one of the nation's largest aggregation of railroad rights-of-way for tower development and leasing.

Although the company has long had a relationship with CSX Transportation, it developed a wireless infrastructure agreement with the company in 2016 as another means of strengthening the wireless access and network quality available to its carriers. "We're pioneers in the wireless deployment of assets on the railroad," Raville says. "We feel that by cultivating specific railroad relationships and demonstrating a track record of production at a high-level has allowed for us to work with our carrier customers to offer unique siting solutions."

Jacksonville, Fla.-based CSX Transportation is a railroad operating in the eastern United States and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It operates roughly 22,000 route miles of track. "CSX and City Switch are working together in an effort to deliver value by providing access on the CSX network to cellular network carriers and their customer's communication sites," says Shantel Davis, vice president of real estate and facilities for CSX Transportation.

"CSX is able to generate additional revenue and leverage communication resources through the utilization of its assets while providing City Switch a platform to deliver new and expanded wireless networks," Davis adds. "By working together, and in combination with City Switch's wireless build to suit partners, our companies are creating a unique strategic long-term opportunity."

Keeping Up With Demand

In addition to its railroad relationships, CitySwitch entered into a build-to-suit agreement with AT&T for the development of towers for future network needs. It allows AT&T to relocate its equipment from existing infrastructure that currently rests with other landlords.

CitySwitch plans to significantly increase tower construction and lease-up plans this year with AT&T and other broadband tenants. The new structures will add to the overall communications infrastructure throughout the United States and fulfill the need for new locations where towers don't yet exist.

CitySwitch's macro site build work is also part of the company's overall plan to deploy mobile 5G and keep up with increasing mobile data usage demand. AT&T reports that data traffic on its national wireless network has increased more than 360,000 percent from 2007-2017.

"With AT&T's nationwide FirstNet build project underway and 5G on the horizon, it's important AT&T addresses its network real estate needs in new and thoughtful ways," Raville says. "We are pleased to play an important role in this now and for many years to come."