

Amazon launches test satellites for its planned internet service to compete with SpaceX

October 7 2023, by Marcia Dunn



An Atlas 5 rocket with the Amazon's Project Kuiper Protoflight spacecraft lifts off from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Friday, Oct. 6, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Terry Renna

Amazon launched the first test satellites for its planned internet service on Friday as a rival to SpaceX's broadband network.

United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket blasted off with the pair of test satellites, kicking off a program that aims to improve global internet coverage with an eventual 3,236 satellites around Earth.

Amazon plans to begin offering service by the end of next year.

Elon Musk's SpaceX has a huge head start over Amazon and its founder Jeff Bezos, who has his own rocket company, Blue Origin.

SpaceX flew its first test Starlink satellites in 2018 and the first operational satellites in 2019. It has since launched more than 5,000 Starlinks from Florida and California, using its own Falcon rockets.

Europe's Eutelsat OneWeb also is launching internet satellites, with around 600 in orbit.

Amazon originally agreed to put the satellites on the debut launch of ULA's Vulcan rocket. But with the Vulcan grounded by problems until at least the end of this year, Amazon switched to the long-established Atlas V.



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Crowds on the beach at Lori Wilson Park in Cocoa Beach, Fla. watch as the launch of a ULA Atlas V rocket with the Project Kuiper Protoflight mission for Amazon onboard launched from Launch Complex 41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Friday Oct. 6, 2023. Credit: Malcolm Denmark/Florida Today via AP

When licensing the program, the Federal Communications Commission stipulated that at least half of the planned satellites be operating by 2026 and all of them by 2029.

Amazon has reserved 77 launches from ULA, Blue Origin and Europe's Arianespace to get everything up.

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