

■ Fixed number portability...

FNP gives phone users freedom

BARATARIA

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FOR more than a month, Trinidad and Tobago has been utilising fixed number portability (FNP), a feature officially launched by the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) on May 1.

FNP is the ability to switch telecommunications providers for a landline phone service while keeping the same phone number.

At a media launch held yesterday at TATT's Barataria headquarters, chief executive officer Kurleigh Prescod gave an overview of the FNP rollout. While unable to disclose the total cost of the initiative, he explained that two categories of expenses were involved.

'There's one set of costs for the operators to prepare their entries,' said Prescod. 'They would have had to do some upgrades, implement what they call a local database of porting numbers for them to be able to route the numbers to the right network. Another cost would even be with their IT systems to be able to receive portability requests and have them processed across the various operators.'

He added: 'Then there's the shared industry cost to facilitate the affordability. The approach that T& T adopted was we didn't purchase servers or something like that. We acquired a service-a number portability service, the clearing house.'

Prescod explained that this cloud-based service is operated out of a European country and accessed via the Internet, with a monthly subscription fee shared among operators.

'About 50,000 ports alone were used last year roughly 4,000 to 5,000 ports a month (for mobile portability). Really and truly, each port costs less than US\$5. So, I think that gives you a kind of ballpark, a gauge of what portability will cost,' he stated.

This places the monthly cost of the service at under US\$25,000 (over TT\$169,000).

Prescod noted that one of FNP's key benefits is allowing customers to switch voice providers without the hassle of notifying contacts or changing business materials.

'For businesses that would have invested in branding or marketing...yes, they could make the switch, but there's an additional cost. They would now have to redo business cards, ads, billboards, signage, letterheads- all of those are actual, real costs,' he said.

'Fixed number portability bridges that gap. It allows you to choose the best service provider without having to overcome those obstacles.'

Prescod said the new system should make providers more responsive to customer needs.

'To get here, we would have had to do considerable work in developing our regulatory framework. This has been a journey,' he said.

He traced the foundation of number portability back to the Telecommunications Act of 2004. This was followed by the 2006 Interconnection Regulations and individual operator concessions that required compliance 'as and when directed by the Authority'.

'Operators got together and executed a Memorandum of Agreement back in November 2015,' he said, noting that it outlined cost-sharing and dispute resolution mechanisms.

'A Clearinghouse Agreement signed in February 2016 facilitated the central coordination of ports and remains active today.'

Formal direction for mobile and fixed number portability came through determinations in 2016 and 2025.

'Switch if you're not satisfied'

Since the introduction of mobile number portability in 2016, T& T has seen 250,000 successful ports-including 50,000 in 2024 alone.

'This speaks to over 10% of the market- closer to 15%-exercising their right to switch providers while keeping their numbers,' he noted.

Prescod explained that porting is consumer- friendly.

'You do not go to your current provider to start your port. You go to the new one,' he added.

Customers must keep their number active and submit valid ID and a paid bill to initiate a port, which typically takes up to five days.

A 'make-before-break' system ensures no service interruption. Users can also verify number ownership via checknumber.info.tt.

'Portability exists. It's happening. Enjoy it. Embrace it. Don't be afraid to switch if you're not satisfied with your current provider,' he said.

Asked whether customers can be locked into long-term contracts, TATT's manager of Legal and Enforcement, Rajesh Ramoutar, said the Authority regulates operators through concession agreements.

'There are a lot of consumer obligations, and those are quite broad. We hold them to those conditions. That's the mechanism we use to address non-compliance,' said Ramoutar. 'We also have a Consumer Complaints Committee to deal with issues raised by the public.'

Consumers are encouraged to file formal complaints if they experience difficulties.

Healthy competition

Also speaking at the event, Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence Dominic Smith said the launch of FNP eliminates barriers to entry and promotes healthy market competition.

'As of June 15, 2025, we've already been able to see dozens of successful fixedline ports. That's something extremely commendable,' Smith said. 'I'm proud, as a vessel of the Government and of T& T, to stand alongside our Caribbean neighbours-the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados and Guyana-in now offering both mobile and fixed number portability.'

Smith congratulated TATT and stakeholders, calling the initiative a meaningful step towards citizen empowerment.

Operators who were present at the launch shared that small to medium enterprises have been embracing the offering a lot more than regular consumers.