

# Ascend

COMPETITIVE BULLETIN

## Cisco Announces the AccessPath System

### Summary of Announcement

On June 3, Cisco announced a new carrier-class access system, AccessPath-TS, slated to begin shipping in September. The Cisco AccessPath-TS is a modular access system that is targeted at the ISP/Carrier, and large enterprise market segments.

The AccessPath-TS combines the following Cisco products in a pre-wired rack system:

- AS5200s stacked together for dial-in support; it can support up to 24 T1/E1/PRI – up to 576 (T1) or 720 (E1) ISDN or analog calls.
- 7206 router for routing functionality (process server)
- Catalyst 5000 (Cisco's traditional LAN switch product) will be the switching fabric
- 2511 router for backup management paths
- Pre-loaded CiscoIOS with optional compression and encryption

The AS5200s have a 10M link each to the Catalyst switch, and a 100M link between the switch and the 7206 router. In addition, the system includes the Cisco AccessPath Manager, a web-based software that provides status monitoring, traffic reporting and configuration features to multiple units from a central location.

Cisco is positioning the AccessPath as a complete POP solution that, by integrating the access server, router, switch, and management, simplifies the network, streamlines product ordering, reduces costs, centralizes management and speeds deployment. Its modular design uses Multichassis Multilink PPP (MP), promising that as the product is scaled, (5200s are stacked) performance will not degrade. Finally, via CiscoIOS, the AccessPath line is promising to offer value-added services such as virtual private networking classes of service, advanced billing, security and encryption.

### Ascend Response

While Cisco makes the claim that the AccessPath is the first complete POP solution, it is really a quickly assembled interim solution to respond to Ascend's MAX TNT™ – which was announced nine months ago. Once again, Cisco is announcing a product well before its release date, hoping to stall purchase decisions through the summer. Cisco AccessPath is not a *true* high-density platform built from the ground-up.

AccessPath is four Cisco pieces thrown into one package, not a truly integrated system, and any problems suffered by the parts will likely be present in the whole. The AS5200 remains a loose mix of Microcom modems and Livingston terminal server technology with a limited track record. Stacking the 5200s using Multichassis MP and L2F tunneling will increase the CPU utilization on a 5200 chassis (at 48 concurrent sessions) to 90%. It is reported that in order to address the utilization problem and maintain performance as the 5200s are stacked together, Cisco is recommending a 7200 router be connected to the same LAN segment - an additional cost and management issue for the buyer.

The MAX TNT, with NetClarity™, is a fully integrated high-density system with end-to-end network management that offers remote access management, discovery and mapping, configuration management, fault management, performance management, integrated security (with encryption) and accounting features. The MAX TNT is a "carrier class" product capable of providing a high degree of redundancy.



## Selling Against the Cisco AccessPath

- **AccessPath is a loose mix of out-dated Cisco products:** AccessPath is three Cisco product pieces thrown into one – not a truly integrated system – and any problems suffered by the parts will likely be present in the whole; the AS5200 remains a loose mix of Microcom modems and Livingston terminal server technology with a limited track record. Stacking the 5200s using Multichassis MP and L2F tunneling will increase the CPU utilization on a 5200 chassis (at 48 concurrent sessions) to 90%. Cisco is using the 7200 in order to address the utilization problem and maintain performance as multiple 5200s are stacked together. This loose integration scheme is likely to add cost and management issues for the buyer. Ascend's MAX TNT is a fully integrated access concentrator system designed from the ground up. The MAX TNT has been designed with adequate processing power in a single system without any need for an additional router or switch
- **AccessPath cannot compete with the MAX in terms of port density per Telco rack:** The AccessPath supports up to 720 concurrent sessions *per Telco rack* (80'x 23' x 36'). The Ascend MAX TNT supports 672 concurrent sessions per three shelf system and up to 4032 sessions per Telco rack – *almost six times the AccessPath's density in the same floor space!*
- **AccessPath is expected to be available this summer and is not field-proven yet:** The MAX TNT is market tested - it has been in the field since Q4'96
- **AccessPath lacks the range of WAN connectivity:** In addition to ISDN PRI and T1/E1, the MAX TNT supports T3
- **AccessPath only promises future support of new dial-in technologies:** Ascend's MAX TNT supports Series56™ Digital Modems, IDSL, SDSL and RADSL *today*
- **AccessPath Manager provides Cisco-centric management of multiple AccessPath devices only:** Ascend's NetClarity provides total end-to-end management of multiple services and multi-vendor network devices. NetClarity also delivers all of the services - such as encryption, VPN, integrated security, billing, and classes of service- that today's network manager needs (see NetClarity Product Launch Information for more detail)
- **AccessPath is a high priced solution compared to the MAX TNT:** Cisco has revealed that the system will "start" at \$133K. Even at a "bundled" discount, this system will be an expensive proposition
  - 12 AS5200 @ \$36,300 (list pricing including modem management) = \$435,600
  - 7200 Chassis = \$5,000
  - Catalyst 5000 Chassis = \$5,000

### Note:

1. Cisco is claiming the AccessPath to be a carrier class product, but has not divulged any specifics on carrier class functionality or features.
2. The International (E1 version) of the AccessPath will support 720 sessions. The domestic version will support only up to 576 sessions.
3. Prices in US dollars for the North American Market.

**More details will be included in the MAX TNT vs. key competitors bulletin as more information becomes available on the AccessPath product.**

### Worldwide and North American Headquarters

One Ascend Plaza  
1701 Harbor Bay Parkway  
Alameda, CA 94502, United States  
Tel: 510.769.6001  
Fax: 510.747.2300  
North American E-mail:  
info@ascend.com  
International E-mail:  
air-info@ascend.com  
Toll Free: 800.621.9578  
Fax Server: 415.688.4343  
Web Site: <http://www.ascend.com>

### European Headquarters

Rosemount House  
Rosemount Avenue  
West Byfleet  
Surrey KT14 6NP, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0) 1932.350.115  
Fax: +44 (0) 1932.350.199

### Japan Headquarters

Level 19 Shinjuku Daiichi-Seimei Bldg.  
2-7-1 Nishi-Shinjuku  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-07, Japan  
Tel: +81.3.5325.7397  
Fax: +81.3.5325.7399  
Web Site: <http://www.ascend.co.jp>

### Asia-Pacific Headquarters

Suite 1419, Central Building  
1 Pedder Street  
Central, Hong Kong  
Tel: +852.2844.7600  
Fax: +852.2810.0298

### Latin, South America and the Caribbean Headquarters

One Ascend Plaza  
1701 Harbor Bay Parkway  
Alameda, CA 94502, United States  
Tel: 510.769.6001  
Fax: 510.747.2669

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