The 5G hype continues to grow, with the first deployments set to launch in 2018. Early 5G activity will first focus on Fixed Wireless Access then mobile broadband use cases. The path to full 5G adoption, and the transformative role of 5G-enabled massive IoT and mission-critical services, is more complicated.

Fiber
The need to deploy fixed infrastructure with fiber for 5G backhaul is expected to boost opportunities for extending fiber network availability. If current predictions for network densification hold true, the need for fiber will be significant.

Mobile broadband
Mobile broadband and fixed wireless access (FWA) services will be a focus for operators in the short term. FWA services can be deployed to extend coverage beyond the fixed fiber network, but as 4G LTE services progress further, operators may find it difficult to find new use cases that could justify or drive demand for services not already addressed by existing technologies. LTE networks are already good enough for many consumer mobile use cases.

More than 320 million LTE-M and NB-IoT connections will be in place by 2020.

In 2018 there will be 7.02 million macrocell fiber connections as the entry base, up from 4.29 million in 2017.

Private LTE
Enabling the use of off-the-shelf, 3GPP standard communications technology for private LTE deployment is extremely beneficial for industrial customers, such as oil and gas companies, which otherwise have to control the range of traditional public network cellular footprints. Private LTE is yet another proof-of-concept discussion where a technology concept is incorporated over the longer term into 3GPP standards.

In the US, more and more cities are going above 20 Mbps, which is great for more than 125 cities recently tested for mobile performance, consumers are staying connected—a boon for reliability.