

Bridge to the future ▼

Meeting user demands for speed, full redundancy, end-to-end managed services and global coverage are the reasons Stratos Global gives for the development of the most recent addition to its maritime broadband portfolio, Inmarsat XpressLink. According to Michiel Meijer, the company's maritime solutions manager, the fully managed service also delivers a "bridge to the future" in that it is the only approved link to Inmarsat's Global Xpress Ka-band service that will deliver speeds of up to 50Mbps when released globally in 2014.

Meijer told SASI that XpressLink is an enhancement of the company's FBBPlus, launched this February, and combines the high-volume capacity of VSAT with the full global coverage of FleetBroadband to meet these user demands on the basis of one fixed monthly fee. "Data use is unlimited and through a link-up with [VSAT provider] Ship Equip – now part of Inmarsat – we are able to have two terminals operating on two separate satellite networks to ensure there is always a back-up in case of a failure or shadow problem [an issue with line-of-sight reception]," he explained. Higher volumes of data to support critical applications and greater demand for crew communications "are increasingly important for maritime business, and this requirement for full redundancy is in common with a trend we are seeing for other critical onboard equipment, such as radar and ECDIS," he added.



XpressLink provides both VSAT and FleetBroadband terminals, operating on two separate satellite networks [photo: Stratos]

XpressLink delivers Ku-band bandwidth at 512kbps, with a minimum guaranteed bandwidth of 128kbps, and includes guaranteed free upgrade to Ka-band antenna for Global Xpress, which will achieve full global coverage in 2014 following the launch of three satellites. Meijer confirmed that a hybrid antenna for both bands is available now. The XpressLink service will be rolled out in a phased approach: the 'step up' product (Phase 1) is available now while the network integration between Stratos and Ship Equip is being completed. Phase 2

will be available in Q2/2012.

As with all Stratos-managed services, XpressLink separates the operational network from the crew network. It is able to offer five voice lines in total, four of them via VSAT and one via FleetBroadband.

Meijer expects that XpressLink will provide a seamless transition to GlobalXpress. He said it will supersede FBBPlus when the network integration between Stratos and Ship Equip is completed.

For more information, go to www.stratosglobal.com