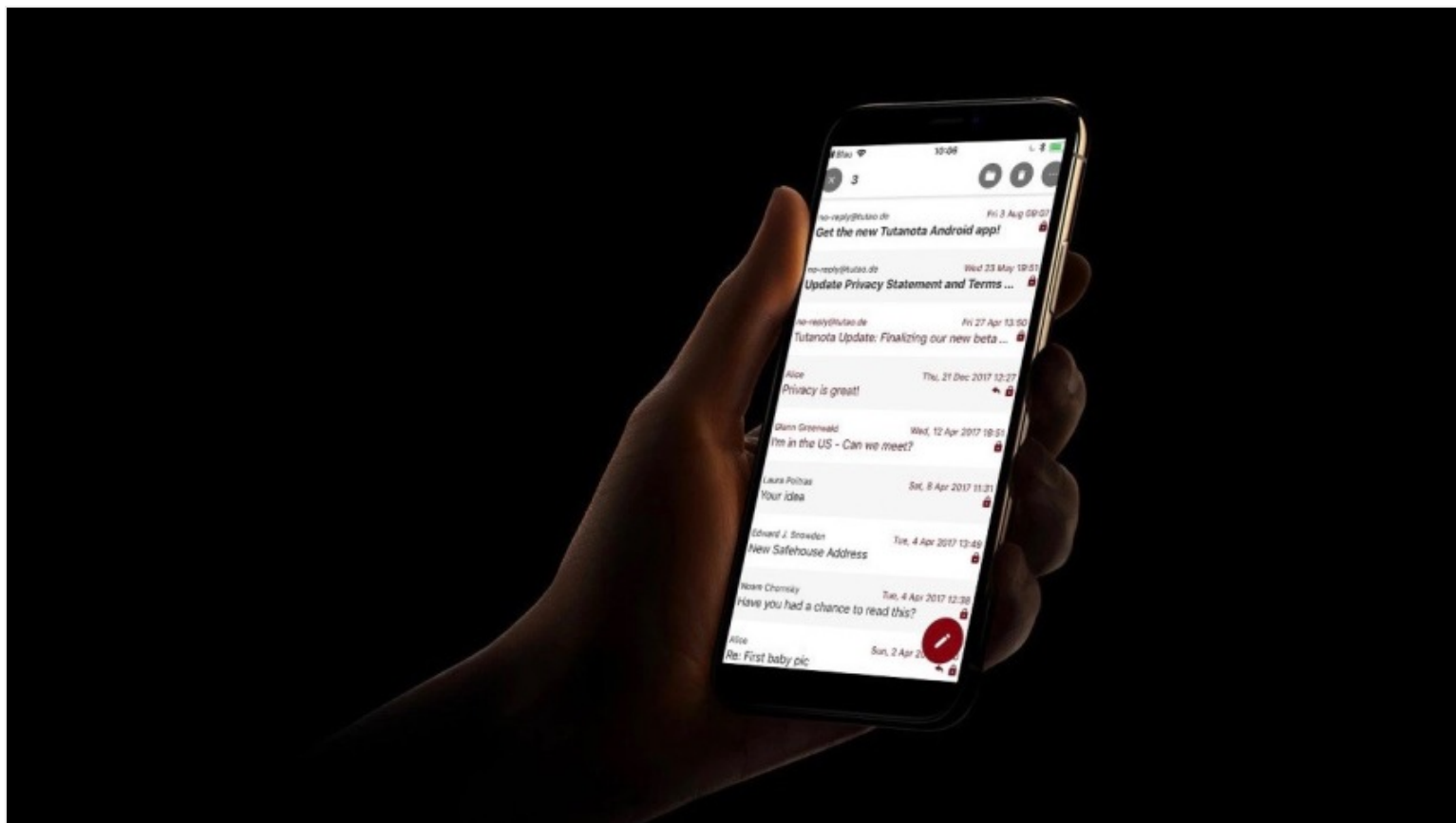Home  >  News  >  Networking

# Email Provider Tutanota Says AT&T Is Blocking User Access

'Such outages demonstrate how much power ISPs...are having over our online experience, and it is shocking,' according to the German email provider, which says the situation underscores the need for net neutrality protections.

By Michael Kan

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**UPDATE 2/14:** AT&T says it's now fixed the connection errors. "As I mentioned yesterday, there was never any blocking," the carrier's spokesman told PCMag.

Tutanota, meanwhile, plans on monitoring customer feedback to verify that the problem has been corrected.

An encrypted email provider is calling out AT&T for blocking user access to the company's website and app.

Since Jan. 25, Tutanota has been receiving complaints from some US-based users, who say they've been unable to access their inboxes on AT&T's mobile connections.

"As AT&T has not fixed the issue after more than two weeks, we are reaching out publicly in the hope of getting the attention of the right people at AT&T," Tutanota wrote in a blog post on Thursday.

The email provider is based in Germany, so it hasn't been able to confirm the problems firsthand. However, Tutanota told PCMag AT&T customers based in Chicago, Omaha, and St. Louis have all reported the connection errors.

The email provider also claims AT&T is aware of the issue; Tutanota points to a tweet the carrier posted on Feb. 5, in which it said "Our team is investigating, but they need more information."

However, AT&T is rejecting Tutanota's accusations that the mobile carrier is deliberately throttling access to the email service.

"We are not blocking anything," an AT&T spokesperson said. "We are aware that some of our customers have reported trouble accessing Tutanota email service. We are working with Tutanota to resolve this as quickly as possible."

PCMag was able to access Tutanota via an AT&T mobile connection in California. Why other customers are having trouble remains unknown. Nevertheless, AT&T's slow response has prompted Tutanota to say the whole situation underscores the need for net neutrality protections in the US.

"Such outages demonstrate how much power ISPs (internet service providers) are having over our online experience, and it is shocking," the email provider said. "If ISPs can block access to certain websites or services, they control the internet. It would be naive to believe that American ISPs will not use this power. Without net neutrality ISPs can —and will— ask for extra fees."

In late 2017, the FCC voted to repeal Obama-era net neutrality rules, which were designed to prevent ISPs from throttling internet access to websites based on their content. Current FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has defended the repeal, claiming the Obama-era rules were saddling the internet industry with "heavy-handed regulations" that threatened to stifle investment and innovation.

To prevent ISPs from engaging in content blocking and speed throttling, the FCC has handed off enforcement to the US Federal Trade Commission.

As for Tutanota, the company is recommending affected customers on AT&T use a VPN service or the Tor browser to get around suspected blocking.

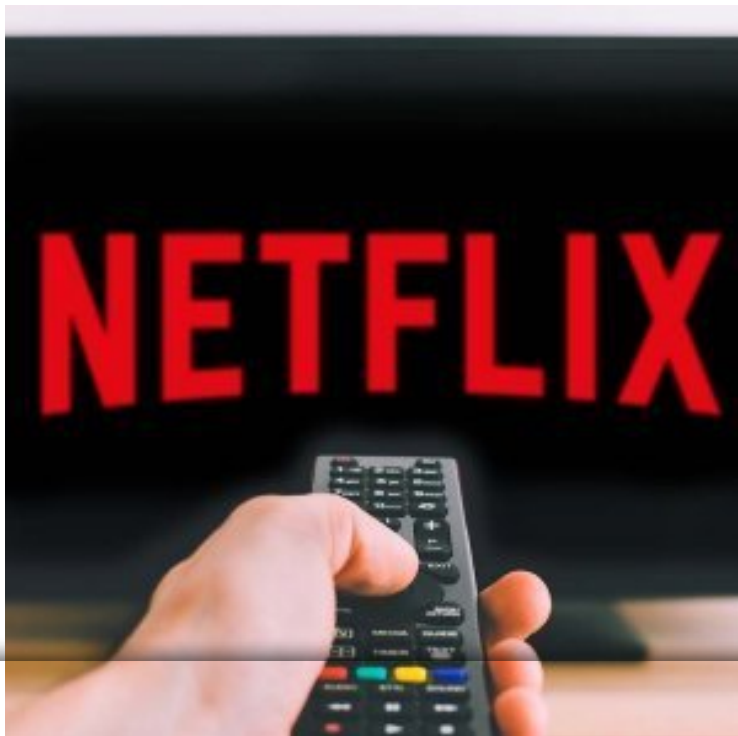**Editor's Note:** *This story has been updated with comment from AT&T.*

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# About Michael Kan

Michael has been a PCMag reporter since October 2017. He previously covered tech news in China from 2010 to 2015, before moving to San Francisco to write about cybersecurity. He covers a variety of tech news topics, including consumer devices, digital privacy issues, computer hacking, artificial intelligence, online communities and gaming. You can reach him at michael_kan@pcmag.com

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