The comparison of cheap routers

AC1200 Standard



We present another test of routers. In the previous article we wrote about cheap AC750 routers. This time we want to focus on wireless ones operating in **802.11ac 1200** standard.

Nowadays, replacement of a router operating in the 802.11n mode is nearly necessary. The expectations of customers are getting greater than in the past. Practically everyone demands high-speed data transmission, which is essential for watching videos in full HD, 4K or VoIP telephony.

The ISP operators offer access to higher bandwidths, but many people don't realize that changing the offer to "faster" one, also requires the change of their equipment to the unit of a stable access point able to transfer large number of data in a very short time.

Thanks to **AC1200** standard we have 867Mbps at 5GHz and 300 Mbps at 2.4GHz at our disposal by using channels width to 80MHz, or even to 160MHz! Routers operating in 802.11ac are far ahead of their predecessors.

AC1200 increases wireless performance and its coverage in the crowded 2.4GHz band and thanks to this fact we can enjoy the access to high-speed Internet via Wi-Fi.

It is worth to mention that 802.11ac standard also introduces a lot of improvements such as, for example, **beam forming technology**, which automatically increases the signal strength directly towards the device connected to the router. The idea of this action is as follows. Antennas in the router operating in **"beam forming"** technology automatically detect the

direction of a receiving signal, and then they focus on a transmission exactly towards this way.

Briefly, this technology increases the signal's strength and stability which is transmitted, for instance, through walls. Tests involve routers with price range between 100-200 PLN, to show that the improvement of network's standard is not related to a big expense for a user.

We chose three most popular routers operating in **AC1200** standard.

- Totolink 3002RU
- Tp-Link Archer C50
- Netis WF2780

We tested them on the basis of several key features:

- Functionality
- Signal strength
- Efficiency and practical application

Therefore, let's get to the tests...

1. Functionality

At the beginning let's check these routers in the terms of their hardware functionality which is extremely important factor when it comes to universality and practical application at home or in an office.

The table below presents the comparison of routers on the basis of key aspects:

- The number of operating modes (Wireless ISP Client Router, Wireless Client, Repeater, Router, Bridge with AP, Client)
- Hardware functionality (speed of LAN and WAN ports)
- Access control functions (MAC, URL, IP, PORT Filtering)
- Functionality on the network (VLAN, IPTV, Multi SSID, QoS, IPV6)
- Multimedia functions (DLNA, FTP, Media Server, Print Server)

On this basis we are able to choose the most universal device which works with practically any network topology - while meeting all of its requirements.

Producent	TOTOLINK	TP-LINK	NETIS	
Model	3002RU	Archer C50	WF 2780	
Picture		With the second	THE STATE OF THE S	
Warranty	36	24	12	
Hardware Features				
Button	1*RST Button 1*WPS Button 1*Power ON/OFF Button	1*WPS/RST Button 1*WiFi ON/OFF Button 1*Power ON/OFF Button	1*WPS Button 1*RST Button	
Interface	4*1000Mbps LAN 1*1000Mbps WAN	4*100Mbps LAN 1*100Mbps WAN	4*1000Mbps LAN 1*1000Mbps WAN	
Wireless Features				
Capacity	1200Mbps	1200Mbps	1200Mbps	
Data Rate	2.4GHZ up to 300Mbps 5GHz up to 867Mbps	2.4GHz up to 300Mbps 5GHz up to 867Mbps	2.4GHz up to 300Mbps 5GHz up to 867Mbps	
Wireless Security	64/128-bit WEP, WPA/ WPA2, WPA-PSK/ WPA2-PSK (TKIP/AES)	WEP, WPA/WPA2, WPA- PSK/WPA2-PSK	WEP/WPA-PSK/ WPA2-PSK	
Software Features				
Operation Mode	Router/Repeater/Bridge with AP/Wireless ISP Client/ Wireless Client/ Client	Router/Access Point	AP/AP+WDS/WDS/Client	
Schedule	Wireless Schedule Reboot Schedule	✓	X	
IPV6	✓	✓	X	
Access Control	MAC, IP, PORT, URL Filtering	IP, MAC, HOST Filtering	IP, MAC, Domain Filtering	
TR-069	✓	X	Х	
VLAN	✓	✓	✓	
IPTV	✓	✓	✓	
Multi-SSID	✓	X	✓	

QoS	✓	✓	✓		
USB Share	FTP, Samba, DLNA, Print Server	FTP, Media Server, Print Server	Х		

You can immediately notice that the most functional router is **Totolink 3002RU** because it is equipped with many practical functions such as e.g. big number of operating modes, power on/off schedule of wireless network and router's rebooting. Moreover, TR-069 allows you for remote management through ACS servers. Totolink also supports VLAN's, IPTV and USB Share function.

Probably the most important aspect is the **36 months of warranty**.

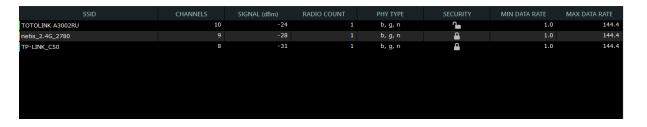
2. Signal strength

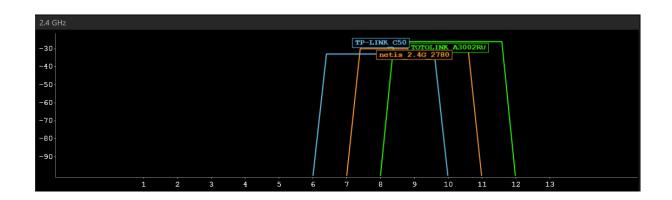
Further tests concern checking the signal strength. Program inSSider 4 and HP ProBook laptop equipped with the Totolink A2000UA USB card. Our measuring station is AC1200. The signal's strength was measured under the following conditions:

- 5m + wall (2.4 and 5GHz)
- 10m + wall (2.4 and 5GHz)
- 30m + wall (2.4 and 5GHz)

Here are the results obtained by inSSider application:

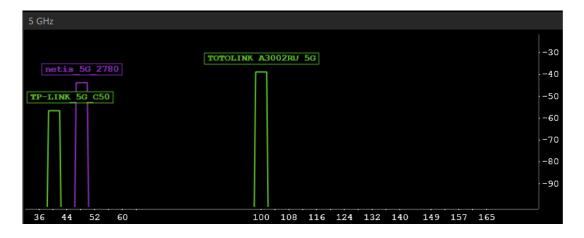
2.4GHz 5 meters + wall





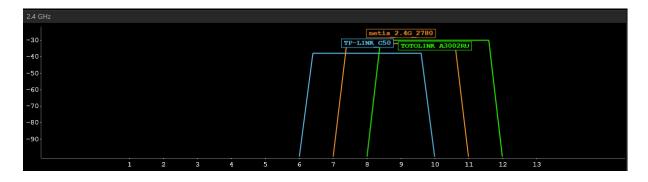
5GHz 5 meters + wall

SSID	CHANNELS	SIGNAL (dBm)	RADIO COUNT	PHY TYPE	SECURITY	MIN DATA RATE	MAX DATA RATE
2310	CHAININELS	SIGNAL (dbill)	KADIO COUNT	PHITTPE	SECURIT	MIIN DATA KATE	WAX DATA KATE
netis_5G_2780	48	-42		n, ac	<u> </u>	6.0	360.0
TOTOLINK A3002RU 5G	100			n, ac	-	6.0	360.0
TP-LINK_5G_C50	40	-55		n, ac	<u> </u>	6.0	400.0



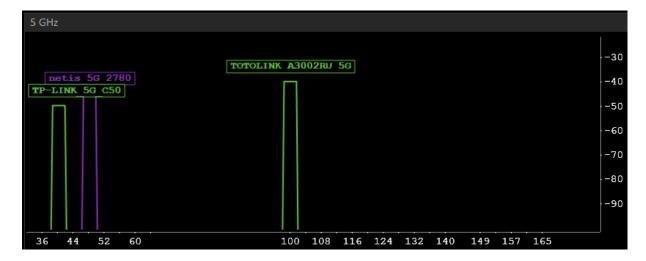
2.4GHz 10 meters + wall

SSID	CHANNELS	SIGNAL (dBm)	RADIO COUNT	PHY TYPE	SECURITY	MIN DATA RATE	MAX DATA RATE
TP-LINK_C50	8	-36		b, g, n	•	1.0	144.4
netis_2.4G_2780		-30		b, g, n	<u> </u>	1.0	144.4
TOTOLINK A3002RU	10	-28		b, g, n	<u>-</u>	1.0	144.4



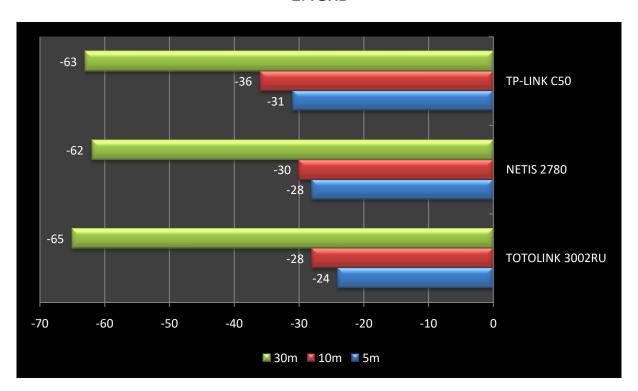
5GHz 10 meters + wall

SSID	CHANNELS	SIGNAL (dBm)	RADIO COUNT	PHY TYPE	SECURITY	MIN DATA RATE	MAX DATA RATE
netis_5G_2780	48	-43		n, ac	<u> </u>	6.0	360.0
TOTOLINK A3002RU 5G	100	-38		n, ac	-	6.0	360.0
TP-LINK_5G_C50	40	-48		n, ac	<u> </u>	6.0	400.0

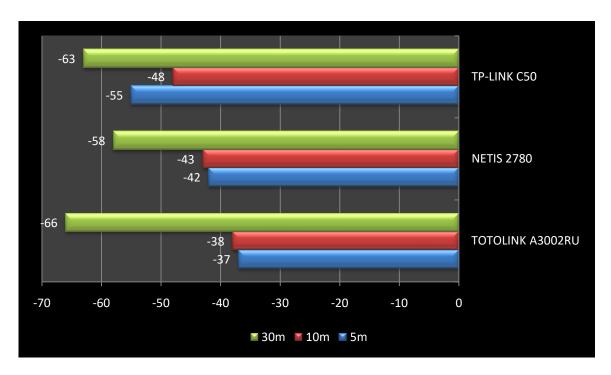


The strength of each router's signal is clearly presented by below provided graphs.

2.4GHz



5GHz



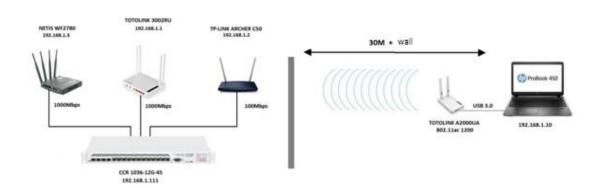
Obviously, the rule of "**the closer to zero, the better** ..." is in force. Therefore, we can immediately notice that when we performed measurements within 5, 10 and 30 meters from the routers, the results were very similar. In contrast, the only router that allows you to use other channels than 40, 44 and 48 at the 5 GHz band is Totolink 3002RU because, as we choose the option "Global" we have a much wider range of channels, namely: 36, 40, 44, 52, 56, 60, 64, 100, 104, 108, 112, 149, 153, 157, 161.

This speaks greatly in favor of **Totolink A3002RU**, because it helps us to set the least busy channel at the 5GHz band, which nowadays is becoming a increasingly common problem.

3. Capability

The most important part of testing is to check the maximum bandwidth (upload/download) that can be obtained on routers, because it is one of the guiding themes in the selection of equipment for home/office.

In order to reliably perform such a test and simulate the most appropriable terms, we built a small wireless network:



This time, besides TOTOLINK A2000UA USB card, AC1200 and HP ProBook laptop, we used MikroTik CCR1036-12G and MikroTik Bandwidth Test v0.1 program.

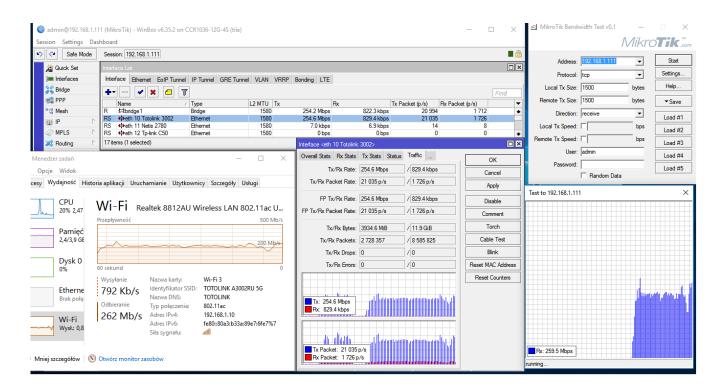
10 sessions, which at the same time generates traffic through TCP and UDP at 5GHz band would be a sufficient source of reliable information.

Ok, let's see how particular devices performed in our network.

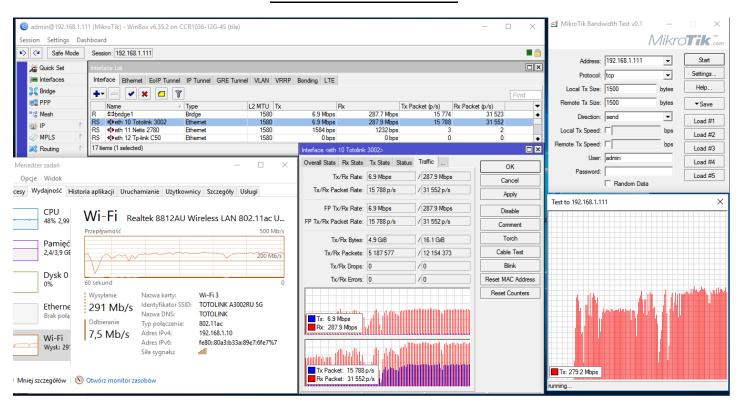


The first tested device is **TOTOLINK A3002RU**.

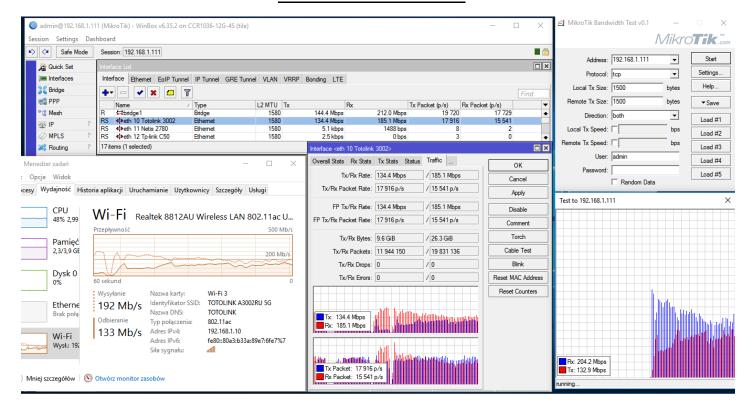
MikroTik BTest TCP receive



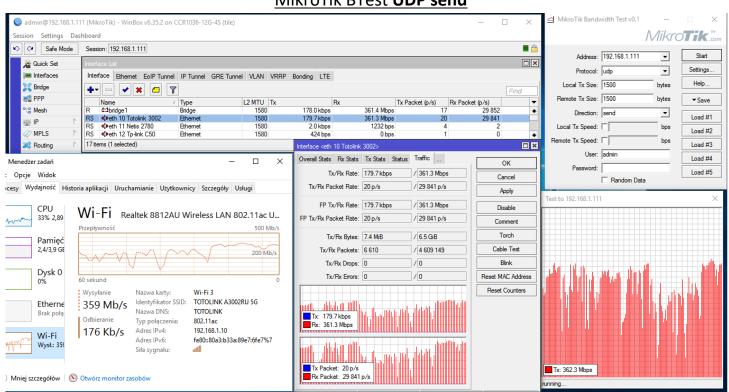
MikroTik BTest TCP send



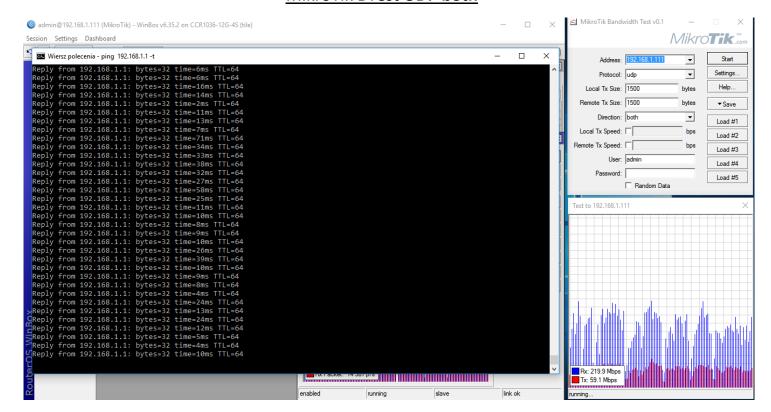
MikroTik BTest TCP both



MikroTik BTest UDP send



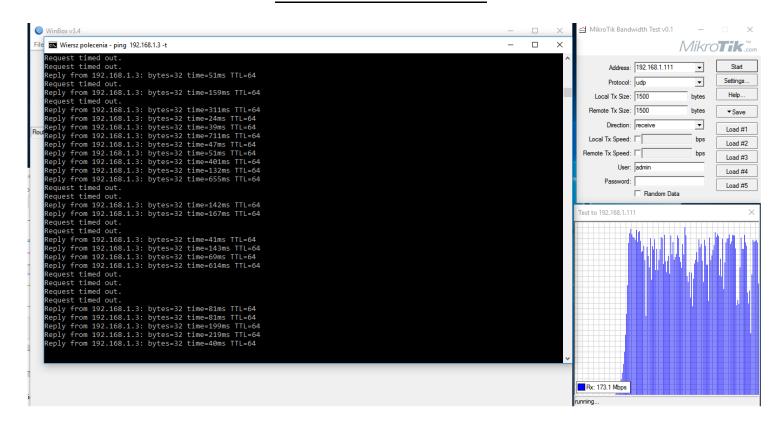
MikroTik BTest UDP both





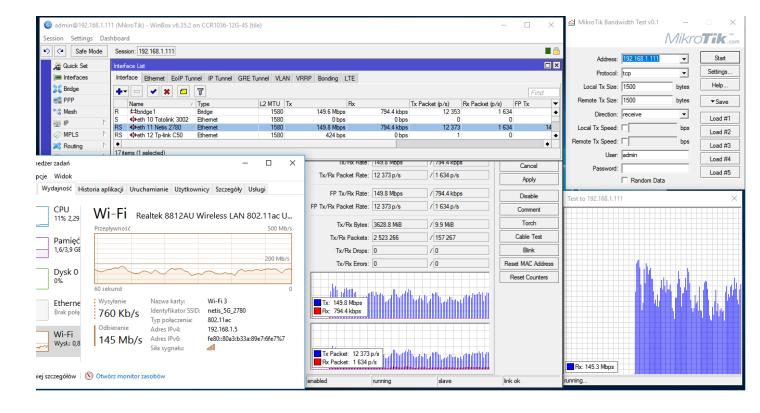
Taking into account the obtained results we performed the same test on the router **Netis 2780**. This time we started with changing UDP protocol and to our amazement, it was very hard to maintain a stable connection between devices (laptop, router, MikroTik). We had to restart the router several times to keep (force) the test's continuity, and as we have managed to stabilize the link, then the ICMP left a lot to be desired to the router.

MikroTik BTest UDP receive

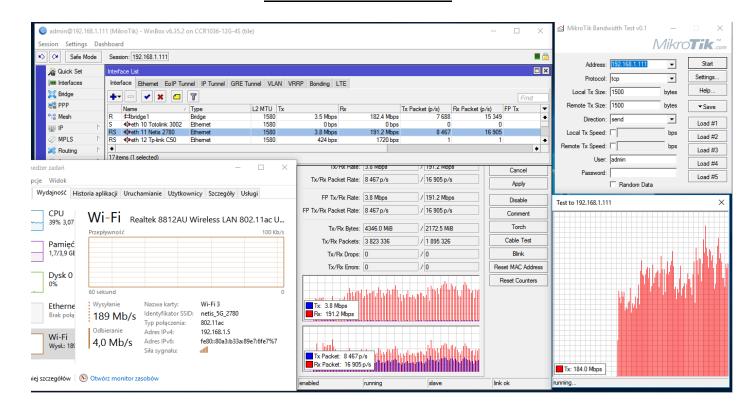


Not discouraged by packets without any responses and very long response waiting time we continued the tests.

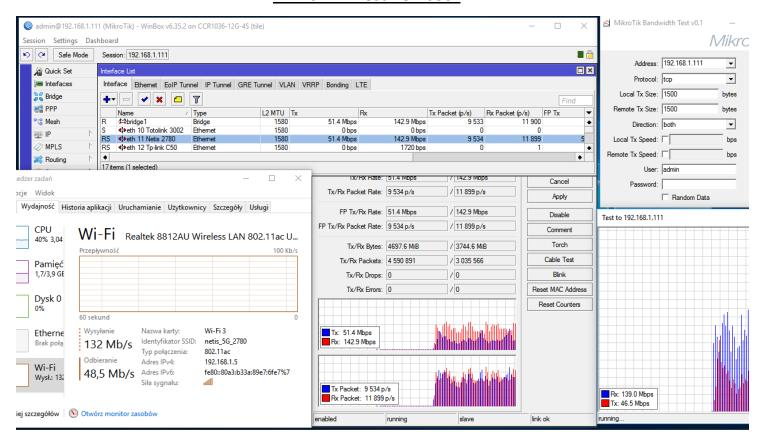
MikroTik BTest TCP receive



MikroTik BTest TCP send



MikroTik BTest TCP both



Unfortunately Netis 2780 came out much worse. Despite the same test distance we failed to get the bandwidth above 200Mb/s, not to mention about continuous ICMP packets losses.

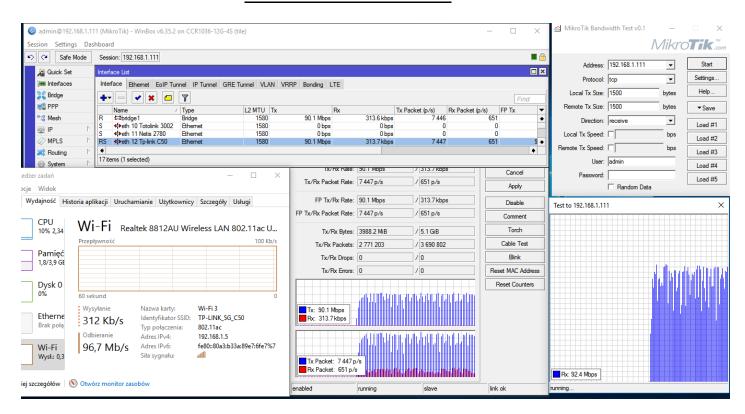


The last of tested routers is **TP-LINK** product called **Archer C50**.

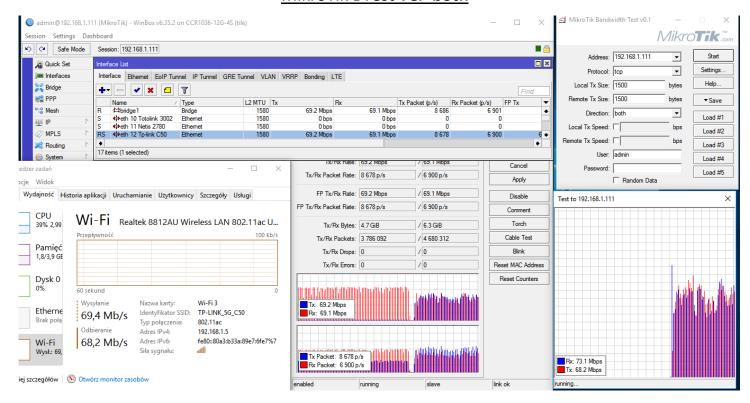
Of course we performed analogous bandwidth tests.

Unfortunately, at the very beginning we noticed that Archer C50 has both FastEthernet 100Mbps LAN and WAN ports. Thus, it is not possible to reach the speed faster than 100Mbps.

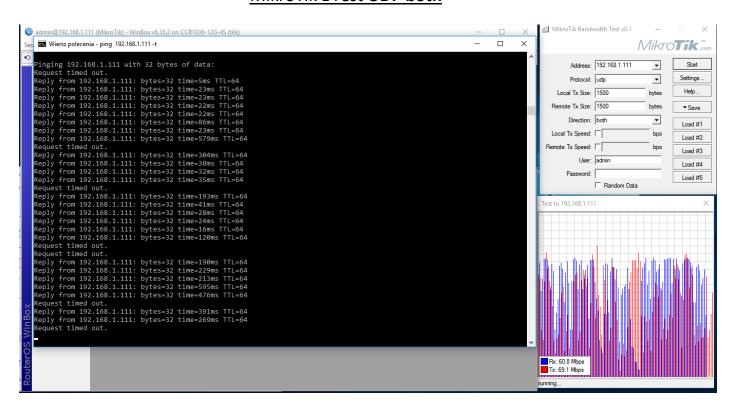
MikroTik BTest TCP receive



MikroTik BTest TCP both



MikroTik BTest UDP both



At this point, further tests are completely useless. Not only the fact, that on the basis of UDP protocol you can push 60Mbps at the maximum in both directions, but also response time for MikroTik in low intensity and packets losses, once again leave a lot to be desired.

Summary:

All of the tested routers have high functionality and similar signal strength. With regard to the performance the best solution is **TOTOLINK A3002RU**. Router obtained result of more than 350Mb/s at the distance of 30 meters and one division wall. In addition, the router showed very high stability and short time responses despite such bandwidths. All the more that **TOTOLINK A3002RU** has <u>36 months of warranty</u> and considering the price it is a great choice. TOTOLINK A3002RU could be recommended to each customer.

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