

Cablefax Daily™

Wednesday — February 20, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 033

C-Band Switch: T-Mobile Drops Alternative Auction Plan at FCC

There's a new C-Band auction plan at the **FCC**, with **T-Mobile** offering up an alternative to the **C-Band Alliance** pitch. Under it, the FCC would hold a reverse auction, with satellite operators abandoning their rights in exchange for auction proceeds—just as we saw with the broadcast incentive auction. Part one would have terrestrial operators bidding to establish the purchase price in the 3.7-4.2 GHz band, then that price would be offered to satellite operators and earth station registrants. The FCC would award the purchase price to whichever group is willing to clear the band for the least amount of money. “The auction and associated clearing process can significantly reduce the time to make spectrum available and launch competitive 5G services compared to the C-Band Alliance proposal,” T-Mobile told the FCC in a filing late Friday. The C-Band Alliance has argued that a government auction would actually slow the process, however, and wants satellite ops to be able to sell their midband spectrum now to wireless providers. Cable representatives said on Monday they're reviewing the T-Mobile plan. **ACA** has recommended the FCC attempt to clear no more than 50MHz of spectrum from the band for 5G uses, citing concerns over possible disruption to current spectrum users. The Alliance has suggested clearing up to 200MHz, while T-Mobile's new plan could mean clearing the entire band if a price is agreed upon. **Charter, Comcast-NBCU** and other cablers have asked the FCC to move carefully to protect services in the band. **NCTA** has expressed concern that the C-Band Alliance plan is more about maximizing members' profits (the Alliance was formed by **Intelsat, SES, Eutelsat** and **Telesat**), with **ACA** declaring that a coalition of satellite ops will have price setting as its core mission. **New Street Research** analysts said the most important factor may be how **Verizon** and **AT&T** react to the plan. “They may well continue their support for the CBA proposal but they also might decide that it is in their interest that the T-Mobile proposal prevails, or that at least, that the FCC gives it serious consideration, so as to increase their leverage in the negotiations,” said a New Street report. While this new plan is a big win for AT&T and Verizon, others, including cable, can benefit because they now have a competing plan to negotiate with regulators on, the analysts said. “While we still see the CBA proposal in the lead, the new filing suggests to us that those convinced that the CBA was the certain winner (and the only question for Intelsat stock was how high it would go) may have to rethink the probabilities,” New Street concluded.

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Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher: Michael Grebb, 323.380.6263, mgrebb@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com ● VP Marketing: Amy Jefferies, 301.354.1699, ajefferies@accessintel.com ● Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Diane Schwartz, SVP Media Comms Group, dschwartz@accessintel.com ● Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,699.97/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

Digital Divide: Only FCC commissioners have seen a 2019 draft broadband report, but the chairman's office released a few stats from the paper on circulation. Chairman *Ajit Pai*'s draft of the annual report to Congress finds that the number of Americans lacking access to a fixed broadband connection of at least 25Mbps/3Mbps has dropped by more than 25% from 26.1mln Americans at the end of 2016 to 19.4mln at the end of 2017. The bulk of those adds (5.6mln) came in rural America, *Pai*'s office said. The report concludes that broadband is being deployed in a reasonable and timely way. "I beg to differ," Democratic commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* said in a response posted on Twitter. "Millions of households—in rural and urban communities—have no access to high-speed service. That's a fact." Other stats released by *Pai* Tuesday: access to 100Mbps/10Mbps fixed broadband increased nearly 20% to 290.9mln, access to 250Mbps/50Mbps jumped 455 to 205.2mln, and the private sector deployed fiber to 5.9mln new homes in 2018, the largest number ever recorded. The Commission is expected to vote on the report in the coming weeks.

Null and Void: Comcast is calling foul ball on one of three program carriage complaints filed by **beIN Sports** with the FCC. In a motion filed Friday, Comcast urged the agency to strike the [third program carriage complaint](#) filed by beIN on Feb 5, claiming that it was too similar to a previously-filed and pending [complaint](#). "Allowing beIN's Third Complaint to proceed—one presenting substantially the same arguments and evidence as well as seeking the same remedies as a separate, pending program carriage complaint—would contravene the Commission's Part 76 pleading rules and undermine its goal of ensuring expeditious resolution of program carriage disputes," Comcast said in the filing. It continued by claiming that the third complaint was part of a deliberate claim-splitting strategy where beIN intentionally omitted a refusal to deal claim from its second complaint. Comcast also called into question the complaint being filed less than a week before it was required to file an answer to beIN's second complaint. "The Commission should not condone such deliberate gamesmanship and abuse of process," the filing continued. beIN did not respond to requests for comment by deadline.

CommScope Change-Up: Change is set to come to the **CommScope** leadership team as soon as it closes its \$7.4bln acquisition of **Arris**. Current Arris CEO *Bruce McClelland* will make the shift to Commscope COO while current CommScope COO *Morgan Kurk* will become the CTO of the newly-combined organization. Both will report to CommScope pres/CEO *Eddie Edwards*. The deal is still expected to close in the first half of the year.

Support Team: The country may be abuzz with how 5G will transform mobile networks, but don't expect it to be able to support the world's growing data needs. Come 2022, 5G will support only 3% of total global mobile connections, accounting for nearly 12% of mobile data traffic between 5G devices and machine-to-machine connections. In com-

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parison, its 4G cousin was predicted to be supporting 54% of those connections, according to a new forecast from **Cisco**. It's not surprising that 5G can't bear all the weight. The information highways are only getting more crowded with annual global mobile data set to reach 930 exabytes by 2022, nearly 113 times more mobile traffic than that generated in 2012. It's expected that more than 5.5bn people will be mobile users by 2022, and each user will generate an average of 13.3GB/month. WiFi will certainly help take some of the edge off, with global total hotspots growing from 124mln in 2017 to 549mln in 2022. Cisco estimates that 59% of mobile data traffic will be offloaded to WiFi from Low-Power, Wide-area networks are also expected to see an uptick, growing from supporting 1.5% of mobile device connections to 14% over the same time period.

CenturyLink Upgrade: **MoffettNathanson** upgraded **CenturyLink** to "neutral" from sell, while lowering the target price to \$12 from \$16. The analysts cited management's strong track record of cost cutting and the decision to reduce the annual dividend to \$1 from \$2.16 to reduce leverage.

Studio Space: **Netflix** is still growing, announcing Tuesday it will create a dedicated production hub in Toronto. The OTT giant is leasing four soundstages each from **Cinespace Studios** and **Pinewood Toronto Studios**, as well as office space. Netflix said that the new sites will provide production jobs for up to 1850 Canadians/year.

In the Cloud: **Synacor's** cloud-focused email and collaboration platform Zimbra X is now available to **Oracle Cloud** customers after being tested and verified to run on the Oracle Cloud Infrastructure. The solution is designed for service providers, powering email communications and collaboration tools like messaging, videoconferencing and document creation.

Testing, Testing: **Qualcomm** expanded its 5G test networks to include new end-to-end OTA configurations for both mmWave and sub-6 GHz bands. The networks, located at Qualcomm R&D locations in San Diego and Bridgewater, NJ, assist in the refinement of 5G algorithms and technologies as well as the testing of edge computing capabilities.

Center Ice: More **NHL** is coming to **Snapchat**, thanks to a revamped multi-year deal between the two. The NHL will add a weekly highlights show to its current lineup on the platform, while also producing curated stories for select games. The hockey league is the first pro sports league to use Snap's third-party curation tools. There's sure to be a few Snapchat users with a passion for the sport, with Snap reporting 186mln average daily users for the platform in 4Q18.

South of the Border: **OpenVault** is headed to Ecuador, signing a long-term deal with operator **Grupo TVCable** to roll out its cloud-based solutions to more than 35 cable modem termination systems throughout the country. The agreement gives Grupo TVCable access to an operations & analytics module with insights into usage patterns as well as a policy manager designed to improve management of network congestion in real-time while reducing strain on the network infrastructure.

Fire and Blood: As part of its "For The Throne" global marketing campaign, **HBO** is asking fans to bleed for the throne in partnership with the **American Red Cross** for the largest blood donation promotional effort by an entertainment company in Red Cross history. The partnership includes an immersive experience at SXSW from March 7-9, in addition to blood drives in 43 states and nine colleges and universities across the US from March 7-12. The final season of "Game of Thrones" premieres April 14.

Programming: **HGTV's** *Jonathan and Drew Scott* of "Property Brothers" fame are launching a new series "Property Brothers: Forever Home." The twins will overhaul an existing home to suit the families' needs in order to make it their permanent place. It premieres May 29 at 9pm. -- **TV One** and **CLEO TV** announced their new programming slate and unveiled the **NAACP** nominations at TCAs Winter Press Tour. "Uncensored" will premiere March 4 at 10pm on TV One, presenting first-person accounts of notable personalities such as *Tasha Smith*. The net also is developing an original film "The Bobby DeBarge Story," premiering June 2019. CLEO TV introduced three new unscripted series, cooking show "New Soul Kitchen," lifestyle series "Living by Design with Jake and Jazz" and short-form series "Lens of Culture." -- *Hans Zimmer* and **Bleeding Fingers Music** will compose the theme and score, respectively, for **BBC America's** "One Planet: Seven Worlds." The seven-part nature docuseries, set to air in 2020, will be narrated by *Sir David Attenborough*. -- **AT&T SportsNet Southwest** released its broadcast schedule for the **Houston Astros** 2019 season, revealing it will televise 155 regular season games as well as 10 spring training games. The season will kick off with a one-hour pregame show from Tampa, Florida, on March 28 before the team's showdown with the **Tampa Bay Rays**.

People: **Fox News** named *John Finley* as evp, development. He will continue developing all new programs, series and docs for Fox News, but will now also run DTC service **Fox Nation**.