

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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## Digital Divide: Microsoft Criticizes FCC on Broadband Map Progress

Microsoft's [annual update](#) on its Airband Initiative showcased the company's progress in its quest to close the digital divide, but it also highlighted the broadband availability data holes that the FCC has due to its dysfunctional maps. The company said the Airband Initiative, which launched in 2017, is on track to reach its goal of providing access to broadband to 3mln people in unserved rural areas of the US by July 4, 2022. *Shelley McKinley*, Microsoft's head of technology and corporate responsibility, said that while the company feels good about the progress it has made, it never expected the problem of rural broadband access to be even bigger than its initial estimates. The FCC's 2019 broadband report stated that more than 21mln people in America, 17mln of whom live in rural communities, still did not have access to broadband. A February report by research firm **BroadbandNow** estimated that number to be more than 42mln. Microsoft's data is showing that some 157.3mln people in the US do not use the internet at broadband speeds. The FCC's much lower estimate can be attributed to the Commission's broadband maps, which have long been criticized for being inaccurate. Under its current procedures, if a single subscriber in a census block is identified as having broadband, the Commission concludes that broadband is available throughout the block. The maps have come under fire recently thanks to FCC chmn *Ajit Pai's* Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, which directs up to \$20.4bln over ten years to finance the building of up to gigabit speed broadband networks in unserved rural areas. The first phase of the RDOF, which will begin later this year, will make available up to \$16bln in census blocks where existing data shows there is no service whatsoever. Census blocks with even one person receiving service will not receive funding. "Because the government makes many funding decisions based on federal data, communities that lack broadband—but, according to FCC data, have access to broadband—have less access to resources needed to actually secure broadband connectivity," McKinley said in the post. The House announced some progress on the broadband front Tuesday with the passage of two bipartisan broadband mapping bills by unanimous consent. The Broadband DATA Act requires that the FCC issue new rules requiring ISPs to gather and disseminate granular broadband availability data while the MAPS Act specifies that it is unlawful for someone to willfully, knowingly or recklessly submit inaccurate broadband service data. FCC commish *Jessica Rosenworcel*, a longtime critic of the Commission's broadband mapping policies, praised the House for telling the FCC to fix its broken broadband maps

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- SCTE•ISBE's President and CEO, Mark Dzuban



**Space is selling quickly! Contact Olivia Murray at [omurray@accessintel.com](mailto:omurray@accessintel.com) or 301.354.2010**

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and said getting the maps right needs to be a priority. "It's what the FCC needs to do before sending billions out the door to help close the digital divide," Rosenworcel tweeted.

**YouTube TV Leaves Fox RSNs Out of Some Zip Codes:** Some fans that were rejoicing at the news of a renewed deal between **YouTube TV** and **Sinclair** for carriage of the **Fox** RSNs are now scratching their heads. **Twitter** lit up Friday with some customers reporting that they no longer had access to certain Fox RSNs that were renewed as part of the deal. The Team YouTube Twitter account confirmed in responses to some customers that some Fox RSNs that were retained became inaccessible to some users in certain zip codes as of March 5, but the company has not publicly released any additional details on which regions are affected. In a tweet on the YouTube TV Twitter account, the vMVPD said that customers that will continue to have access to their local Fox RSNs should have received an email Thursday. If access to any of the local RSNs has been removed, subscribers should have received an in-app notification confirming the change. But some customers are reporting that they never received notifications, and YouTube TV is directing those subscribers to check the channels still available in their location on its website. "Our goal is to be as transparent as possible with you, so we sincerely apologize for any confusion our ongoing negotiations may have caused," it said in another tweet. YouTube TV also confirmed that it has no plans to lower subscription prices at this time. Neither Sinclair nor YouTube returned requests for comment.

**Coronavirus Concerns Kill SXSW:** For the first time in 34 years, **SXSW** will not take place in March. The City of Austin decided to cancel the festival Friday. Organizers said they are exploring options to reschedule the events and are working to provide a virtual SXSW online experience as soon as possible for 2020 participants, starting with SXSW EDU. Several companies, including **Starz**, **Lionsgate**, **Netflix**, **Apple** and **WarnerMedia**, had already announced they wouldn't attend the festival, which was to begin March 13.

**MSG Making Moves:** The **Madison Square Garden Co** spinoff is continuing along. *Andrew Lustgarten* is expected to be named pres/CEO for the pure-play sports company. The biz will be called Madison Square Garden Sports. The other business, MSG Entertainment, will focus on venues. *Jim Dolan* is expected to serve as exec chmn of the sports biz and as exec chmn/CEO of the entertainment company. Lustgarten is expected to be named pres of the entertainment biz.

**Charter Enters 5G:** **Charter** is officially in the 5G world, announcing Friday that customers on Spectrum Mobile's unlimited plan can access **Verizon's** 5G network in select cities at no additional cost. Spectrum Mobile's "By the Gig" plan will remain 4G-only. The company also announced that Spectrum Mobile customers can trade in their existing phone and

## ANNOUNCING Cablefax's TOP OPS Nominations

**For the Executive(s) of the Year:** Tout your best execs! We're looking for MSO and independent operator executives who drive success in all areas of the business, including finance, legal, marketing, operations, business development, sales and beyond. These are the top performers exceeding company goals, advancing new initiatives and innovations, and pushing through unique marketplace challenges. Tell our editors who we should be recognizing in 2020!

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**Help Cablefax choose the  
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**The Independent Operator of the Year  
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buy a 5G-enabled Galaxy S20 series phone, and will receive a \$200 credit.

**Comcast Tornado Relief:** Comcast opened free Xfinity WiFi hotspots (for non-customers as well) in Greater Nashville to help residents and emergency personnel stay connected in the wake of the tornadoes that ripped through the state. The company has now opened 8.5K free hotspots through impacted areas, and deployed its Xfinity WiFi van to provide free wireless internet. The van has six WiFi access points and can provide internet to thousands of users over a 500-square-foot area. Comcast has deployed more than 100 additional crews to join locally-based teams to repair lines in the storm-impacted region. Comcast's Xfinity retail stores are also accepting food donations for the Second Harvest Food Bank, and for local employees can sign up with **Hands On Nashville** to help with cleanup efforts. For those outside the Nashville area, donations can be made through the **Community Foundation of Tennessee**.

**People:** BYUtv named *Dave Phillips Jr* as its head of sports programming, overseeing all studio and live event sports content and production. Before he joined BYUtv in 2013, he produced pre-game, halftime and post-game shows for the NBA's Utah Jazz and Major League Soccer's Real Salt Lake. -- **AccuWeather** named *Michelle Harmon-Madsen* its new CMO, beginning immediately. She previously served as pres, **ShopperX Lab**.

## Cablefax Dashboard

### Tweet Tweet

 Rocky Mountain Cable Association @RMCA\_Tweets

And the winner of #2020CableApprentice is... Peak Consulting! Congratulations!! All 3 teams were outstanding today & we are so proud & impressed by their presentations. Great job to all of the innovators who participated in this competition! We can't wait to do it again in 2021!



### Up Ahead

- March 9-11:** [Minnesota Telecom Alliance Annual Convention & Trade Show](#); Minneapolis, MN
- March 10:** [FSF 12th Annual Telecom Policy Conference](#); DC
- March 27:** [Cablefax Top Ops Nomination Deadline](#)
- April 2-5:** [Adaptive Spirit](#); Vail, CO
- April 18-22:** [NAB Show](#); Las Vegas
- May 1:** [WICT Rocky Mountain Walk of Fame](#); Aurora, CO

### Research

 Kim Sasser Hayden @kimsasserhayden

Germantown/Salemtown - our @ComcastSouth @Xfinity WiFi van is set up at the corner of 7th & Garfield (next to the Nashville rescue mission) if anyone needs to get online & get connected. We will be here until 6p tonight! #NashvilleStrong @freddieoconnell



### Quotable

"The one area of linear TV that could benefit from increased at home time is sports viewership, to the extent that games are not cancelled and consumers may be unwilling or unable to attend games in person. We expect major sports to continue on, even if they are forced to play in empty arenas/stadiums to protect media rights revenue. Live sports already command a meaningful premium in the ad market with the premium set to surge even higher in 2020. Given that sports is the key support holding up the legacy multichannel bundle and the entire TV ad market, event cancellations are the biggest threat right now from the Coronavirus. So far no major events have been cancelled, with March Madness the most prominent event coming soon and the Olympics still planned for this summer in Japan." – **Lightshed Research's note on the impact of coronavirus**

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