

Cablefax Daily™

Tuesday — April 14, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 072

Pole Problems: FCC Asked to Fix Pole Attachment Rules For COVID-19 Era

The FCC is putting more pressure on operators than ever before to keep Americans connected because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and small to mid-size ISPs are asking the agency to take action to aid in their efforts. ACA Connects asked the Commission in a filing to rule that customer drop pole attachments—adjuncts to existing, approved attachments—can be performed without providing advance notice to investor-owned utilities. In order to connect new customers quickly, broadband providers typically try to install a customer drop on an attach-and-notify basis rather than follow the longer timeline and process for pole attachments. ACA Connects said some utilities have used their leverage in negotiations with ACA Connects members to insert provisions in pole attachment agreements that would require the member to either notify the utility in advance or file a new application when making customer drops. “These unreasonable policies present ACA Connects members with a dilemma: either follow the utility’s policy (and risk losing the new customer) or else face the legal consequences of violating the policy, which may include a penalty fee for making an unauthorized attachment,” ACA Connects said. The association said that under the ruling it’s proposing, investor-owned utilities would retain their existing right to inspect any attachments to their poles, including drop attachments, and to ask that the attacher correct any violations. “This approach balances the benefits of getting more Americans online as fast as possible, especially during this epidemic, while respecting pole owners’ rights to manage the safety and integrity of their poles,” ACA Connects said. “Moreover, the rule would eliminate the risk of legal consequences for many smaller providers who prioritize meeting the public need for broadband services in a timely manner.” The action would also mean one less worry for the ISPs that are trying to manage increased traffic on their networks due to the increase in telework and distance learning. Charter evp/ CTO *Stephanie Mitchko-Beale* said in a [Q&A](#) on the company’s site that since late February, peak demand on Charter’s network has increased nearly 20% in terms of downstream traffic and 32% on upstream traffic. She’s also seeing a shift of mobile phone traffic coming off cellular networks and moving onto Charter’s in-home WiFi networks. “What that means is our wired and WiFi network is being heavily used by laptops, mobile phones and tablets from people working from home and learning online in addition to connected TVs, devices and gaming consoles,” Mitchko-Beale said.

SCOTUS Releasing Oral Argument Audio: The Supreme Court announced Monday it will hear oral arguments

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The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?: With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become a thing? **Universal Pictures** is the first out of the gate, announcing “Trolls World Tour” will be available April 10 for a rental. Other in-release movie titles are set to be available as soon as this Friday. The movies will be available on **Comcast, Sky** and a “broad range of on-demand partners.” Titles to be made available include “The Man” and “Emma” with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 for the US.

Tuesday — March 17, 2020 What the Industry Reads First Volume 31 / No. 050

For Now: Providers Set Aside Disputes During Coronavirus Outbreak

As they face the common enemy that is the coronavirus pandemic, **Cox Media Group** and **DISH** have set aside their retrans dispute for now so that **DISH** can resume its carriage of 10 CMG stations in New York, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Louisiana, California, Mississippi and Idaho. No word on how long the truce will last.

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Friday — March 13, 2020 What the Industry Reads First Volume 31 / No. 050

New Normal: Companies Roll Out Contingency Plans in Face of Covid-19

With a growing number of students and employees working from home, it’s mission critical for the nation’s broadband providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Operators big and small are up-ending their day-to-day operations to ensure service to their customers.

Wednesday — March 18, 2020 What the Industry Reads First

Covering Covid-19: Content Companies Step Up Efforts

Programmers are shuffling schedules to respond to the coronavirus crisis. **The Weather Channel** is airing live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content. **Netflix** is offering free access to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and more. Programming is scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

From the Commission: Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken the **Partners Keep Americans Connected Pledge**, agreeing to take specific steps to keep Americans connected during the coronavirus pandemic. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications**, **Midwest**

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The Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE), along with its Global Brand, The International Society Of Broadband Experts (ISBE), CableLabs® and NCTA is Seeking Proposals for Papers and Presentations for Technical Sessions.

Sessions will be conducted during SCTE•ISBE Cable-Tec Expo 2020, which will take place Tuesday through Friday, October 13th through 16th, in Denver, CO. The SCTE•ISBE Cable-Tec Expo 2020 Program Committee, co-chaired by Ed Marchetti of Comcast and Tom Monaghan of Charter, will review all technical abstracts.

Submitted papers will be either technical papers, that describe new and emerging technologies, or operational practices, that provide field guidance. Abstracts addressing a nearer term solution (within the next three years) will be given priority.

Abstracts Must be Submitted to SCTE•ISBE by Friday, May 8, 2020.

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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by teleconference on May 4-6 and May 11-13 in a limited number of postponed cases. The Justices and counsel will all participate remotely, and SCOTUS will provide a live audio feed of those arguments to the media. **C-SPAN** has committed to airing each of the oral arguments live. The audio will be accessible via one of the C-SPAN television networks, online via C-SPAN.org and on the C-SPAN Radio app. Photo and name IDs of the justices and counsel will accompany the audio feed on television while name IDs will be provided on the radio version.

NBCU Announces Full Peacock Launch Sponsors: Just a few days before **Peacock's** Xfinity launch on Wednesday, **NBCUniversal** unveiled its full slate of launch sponsors. **Capital One, L'Oreal USA, Molson Coors Beverage Company, Subaru of America** and **Verizon** join previously announced sponsors **Apartments.com, State Farm, Target** and **Unilever**. Peacock will have five minutes of ad loads per hour or less, and be free for Comcast customers, before becoming more widely available July 15 with price points from free to \$10/month.

Doing Good: Comcast Business is launching a webinar series aimed at helping businesses of all shapes and sizes navigate the challenges they're facing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The free, five-part series will feature Comcast Business leaders as well as subject matter experts and industry partners discussing strategies on how to adapt their operations and technology strategies to remain productive and nimble. The first of the webinars, "Leaning in to Support Small Business," will begin Tuesday at 1pm ET. -- **AT&T** is offering three months of free wireless service for frontline nurses and physicians nationwide on its FirstNet network. Nurses and physicians already on FirstNet Mobile's Responder plan will automatically receive the 3-month service credit on a smartphone or tablet line of service. New customers can also get a \$200 activation credit when activating a smartphone on a new FirstNet Mobile Responder plan. -- **Altice USA** is extending its free student broadband and WiFi offerings until June 30, the end of the current school year. Back in March, Altice began offering its Altice Advantage 30Mbps broadband solution for free for 60 days to households with K-12 and/or college students who do not currently have home internet access. Altice is also partnering with school districts in the NY Tri-state area to offer its Student WiFi product free for 60 days. The program provides students who have school-issued devices the ability to use **Optimum** WiFi hotspots to access their school's network and resources from home. -- The **EW Scripps Company's** senior leadership team and board are taking voluntary salary and fee reductions, effective immediately. Scripps pres/CEO *Adam Symson* will take a 15% salary cut and the seven other executive officers will take a 10% pay cut. The 11 board members will each take a 15% reduction in their annual cash compensation and board chmn *Rich Boehne* will forego the remainder of his 2020 chmn fees. The company will donate an amount equal to those cuts to a fund to support its employees affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

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-- **A+E Networks** launched pro-social PSA campaign #WeAreHereWithYou. The campaign is talent-led and features original network brand spots across linear, digital and social channels with the message "Stay Safe. Stay Healthy. Stay Home." The PSA supports non-profit orgs with a focus on first responders and raising awareness and funds for those on the front lines. Orgs include **Team Rubicon**, the **USO of Metropolitan New York**, the **Gary Sinise Foundation** and the First Responders Children's Foundation COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund.

ESPN Asks Commentators to Take Pay Cuts: ESPN is asking its 100 highest-paid commentators to take a voluntary, 15% paycut over the next three months in order to deter further furloughs. "We are asking about 100 of our commentators to join with our executives and take a temporary salary reduction. These are challenging times and we are all in this together," said a spokesperson from ESPN. The move follows salary cuts across **Disney** earlier this month, which came to 30% for evps, 25% for svps and 20% for vps.

Sports Update: The 2020 NFL Draft will air across **ABC**, **ESPN** and the **NFL Network** April 23-25. ESPN and NFL Network will combine for a singular presentation across both nets, and ABC will present all days for the second year in a row. The draft will serve as a three-day virtual fundraiser benefiting six charities fighting the spread of COVID-19 and providing relief to millions in need. The draft was originally scheduled to take place in Las Vegas, and will now originate from ESPN's Bristol, CT, studios with a number of analysts and reporters contributing remotely. -- **Major League Soccer** and **Fox Sports** teamed up for an eMLS Tournament Special, kicking off April 19 on **FS1** and **Fox Deportes** at 7pm. The five-episode series will team MLS players and eMLS players in an EA Sports FIFA 20 competition to support COVID-19 relief efforts. After each episode, MLS WORKS (the league's social responsibility platform) and Fox Sports will make a donation on behalf of the winning club to **Feeding America**, with MLS also supporting **Food Banks Canada**. -- **ESPN** will air the **WNBA** draft live on Friday at 7pm, after a week of multi-platform league coverage. The draft, now virtual, was originally scheduled to take place in NYC, and will now be aired in-part from the Bristol, CT, studios.

Quibi Surpasses Early Expectations: Quibi was downloaded 1.7mln times in its first week, according to CEO *Meg Whitman*. During an appearance on **CNBC's** "Squawk on the Street," Whitman said that even though it was targeted at millennials on the go, Quibi has not been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Instead, those stuck at home are using small breaks in their day to catch a quick show. "Before COVID-19, we thought the in-between moments would be out and about, commuting, etc. It turns out people have in-between moments at home—in between Zoom calls, in between wrangling the kids... so we don't actually think it hurt us," she said. In response to customer complaints about their inability to cast Quibi programming onto their televisions, Whitman said that capability is the top priority of the streamer's engineering team. "It was never a part of the launch. If we would have known about COVID, maybe it would've been," Whitman said.

XFL Files for Bankruptcy: *Vince McMahon's* **XFL** league formally filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, three days after suspending operations. The league listed both its estimated assets and liabilities in the range of \$10mln to \$50mln. The league attributed its decision due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

NAB Show Reveals New Plan: The **NAB Show**, originally scheduled for April in Las Vegas, will now take place as a digital experience May 13-14. NAB Now Express will be free and is designed to engage the community by offering 24-hour access to curated content. The show will have three educational channels, on-demand content and a solutions marketplace. Registration opens April 20. -- In related news, the **StreamTV Show** has been postponed to Oct 5-7 at a new venue, the Marriott TechHotel in Denver. The event was originally scheduled June 1-3.

Ratings: **Lifetime's** "The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel" debuted as the net's highest-rated movie since 2016, bringing in 2.7mln total viewers Saturday night. The net said it is the best ad-supported cable original movie since 2018 in key demos. The film saw 1.1mln A25-54 and 905K A18-49.

Programming: **Discovery** is expanding its content offering across its portfolio of 13 streaming apps and sites. The "Family Favorites" initiative is designed to educate and entertain families at home. Family-friendly full series and specials are available commercial free across Discovery's GO apps without needing an MVPD sign-on. The programming is also available through on-demand platforms from Discovery's cable and satellite partners. -- **INSP** greenlit 12 episodes of new Western docudrama series "Wild West Chronicles." -- "Olympic Games Week" kicks off Monday night at 7pm on **NBCSN**, starting with "Best of Team USA" featuring *Simone Biles* and the US "Final Five" from the 2016 Rio Olympics.

People: **Warner Bros** named *Johanna Fuentes* as evp, worldwide corporate communications and public affairs. Fuentes replaces *Dee Dee Myers*, who departed in February. Fuentes previously spent a decade at **Showtime**, serving as evp, communications. -- *Lynn Beall*, evp and COO, media operations for **TEGNA** joined the **NAB** television board. The new two-year term begins in June.