

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Still Good: Cable Urges FCC to Keep 25/3 Benchmark

NCTA, ACA Connects and others are urging the FCC not to raise its 25/3 speed benchmark as the agency begins to craft its annual Section 706 report on the state of deployment of advanced telecommunications capabilities to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion. According to NCTA, the 25/3 connection allows users to unquestionably originate and receive high-quality voice, data, graphics and video.

“In particular, even as the COVID crisis has caused an exponential increase in the use of video conferencing applications for work, school, and telehealth, it remains the case that a 25/3 connection generally is sufficient to enable such applications,” NCTA said in its comments. “In the context of this report, raising the speed threshold will do nothing to provide a more accurate assessment of deployment progress but could undermine the commission’s efforts to get all Americans online as fast as possible.”

The association also argued that the Commission should, as it has in the past, report deployment statistics for higher speeds as well and consider policy changes that better promote deployment of those increased speeds.

On the other side of the speed debate were **Public Knowledge**, **Common Cause** and **Next Century Cities**, who jointly filed comments arguing that the Commission should update the benchmark to a symmetrical speed of 100/100Mbps. “A low standard undermines larger policy goals for widespread, high-speed connectivity and stifles our competitiveness in the global broadband marketplace,” the trio said.

Many commenters suggested that the FCC should reach a determination that the increase in broadband availability year-over-year surpasses the agency’s standard of reasonable and timely, and highlighted the work of providers in keeping Americans connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This success story is the result of broadband providers’ sustained investments in their networks—driven to a significant extent by a light-touch regulatory regime and the Commission’s efforts to remove barriers to deployment—to meet their customers’ rapidly growing appetites for high-performance, high-capacity broadband service,” ACA Connects said in its comments.

While many suggested that the pandemic demonstrates more than ever the need for greater investment in broad-

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Opening General Session CEO Panel

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2020 | 11:00AM - 1:00PM EST

The hour-long roundtable will take place during the general session, Monday October 12, 2020, 11:00am - 1:00pm ET. It will feature discussions on the industry's response to COVID-19 and the evolution to a next-gen 10G platform, as well as the potential for life-changing applications that 10G will enable.

The panel will feature perspectives from:



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Mike Fries
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band networks, it also brings about new challenges that could make it more challenging than ever to reach hard-to-serve areas.

In regards to the FCC's question on the impact of the pandemic on broadband deployment in 2020 and beyond, **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** warned the agency that supply chain concerns are beginning to emerge. Some of its members who are working on new deployments have been told to expect delays in future delivery of fiber and other essential communications equipment due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic.

'Schitt's Creek' Wins Big: What a night for **Pop TV** and Canadian broadcaster **CBC's** "Schitt's Creek." The series swept all seven comedy categories at the main Emmy ceremony Sunday, becoming the first show to win all four main acting awards in a year, and became the most awarded comedy in a single year. With two other wins, Schitt's broke the record previously set by **Amazon's** "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" with eight wins in 2019. Pop TV took home 10 awards in total, the most for any basic cable network. Schitt's Creek has been around since 2015, but the Canadian comedy gained more widespread attention once it landed on **Netflix**. *Eugene Levy*, co-creator of the show, thanked Netflix while accepting the award for outstanding comedy series, called the streamer "the spark that seemed to start everything." The series only received its Emmy nod last year after its debut on the streamer. The "Netflix bump" is a well-documented phenomenon, previously benefitting shows like "Breaking Bad" and "Shameless." Following its domination at the Emmy's, **Comedy Central** will air all six seasons of Schitt's Creek, kicking off October 2. Outside of Pop TV, it was all **HBO** Sunday night. The network picked up 11 primetime wins, boosted largely by "Succession" and "Watchmen." Overall, it earned 30 wins out of 107 nominations. Netflix, **Apple** and **Hulu** combined for just four Primetime Emmys. Amazon won four Emmys, compared to its 15 last year. The streamer didn't get any Primetime wins, and its four came from *Maisel*. **Disney+** earned eight total wins, seven for "The Mandalorian." Almost no broadcast network won more than one Emmy this year, besides **NBC's** "Saturday Night Live" with six. In total, Netflix took home 21 Emmys, **VH1** six, **Nat Geo** five and **Adult Swim** four. Other cablers taking home overall awards include **CNN** with three, **FX Networks** with two, and **A&E, AMC, BBC America, Discovery Channel, EPIX, ESPN, History, Showtime** and **USA** all with one.

Quibi Exploring Sale: After less than six months and nearly \$2bn in funding, **Quibi** is exploring a potential sale. In a report from the *WSJ*, the company is apparently exploring strategic options as it struggles to break through the streaming landscape. The *Jeffery Katzenberg*-owned short-form video platform first launched in April, with the intent to bring high-quality programming to mobile phones. The Journal also reported that Quibi is also looking into raising additional cash or merging with a special purpose acquisition company. The streamer costs \$4.99/month with ads

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or \$7.99/month without. It did win two Emmys in the past week and a nod from *Jimmy Kimmel* in his opening monologue. “Congrats are in order for a young Emmy upstart named Quibi that has 10 nominations, including Outstanding Short-Form Drama Series and Dumbest Thing to Ever Cost \$1 Billion,” he quipped.

Election Watch: Election Day is only six weeks away, and political analyst *Charlie Cook* believes it will be difficult for *President Trump* to do what it will take to emerge victorious over Democratic nominee *Joe Biden*. Cook estimates that Trump is 7-10 points behind Biden at this point in time, and he is currently falling behind in six battleground states. “No elected incumbent president has ever come back from being this far down, this short before the election,” Cook said during a virtual **Media Institute** luncheon Monday. Cook added that a Trump comeback would have to happen by next week in order to make a major difference in the final tally, in major part because of the large volumes of people expected to take advantage of early in-person voting and mail-in ballots. Folks on both sides of the aisle spoke out after the passing of **Supreme Court** Justice *Ruth Bader Ginsburg* Friday, and while Cook believes nothing energizes a party base like a SCOTUS seat, neither party was lethargic enough before now for there to be a measurable difference in activity. “It’s enormously important for the country, for the Supreme Court... but I don’t think it’s going to affect this election one bit,” Cook said.

Peacock Flies to Roku: After weeks of tense negotiations, **Peacock** and **Roku** struck a deal that will bring **NBCU**’s streaming service to the platform. The agreement comes after news Friday morning that NBCU was set to take its apps off Roku over the weekend. The carriage disagreement stemmed over ad inventory. Roku usually secures approximately 30% of inventory from content partners, but Peacock’s ad model is heavily integrated with existing NBCU operations and is limited to five minutes per hour. The TV Everywhere deal between the two expired at the end of August, opening up the companies to a broader negotiation that would include Peacock, which launched nationally in July.

Doing Good: Charter relaunched its remote education offer Monday, offering free Spectrum internet with speeds of up to 200Mbps in most markets and WiFi access for 60 days to households with K-12 students, college students and/or educators. Charter first launched its education offer in March, and it resulted in 448K new households added through June 30. The promo is available for customers who live in a Spectrum market and do not currently have Spectrum internet services

NFL Ratings Down: NFL ratings may be down, but that doesn’t necessarily spell doom and gloom for the league and its broadcast partners. Its Week 1 ratings fell 7.5% YOY, down 3% from 2018 and 4% from 2017. However, analysts from **Evercore** pointed out that the NFL is now competing in a far more crowded sports slate than in standard years, going up against the US Open and NBA and NHL playoffs. They also pointed to political and news cycle factors at play. As well as the lack of in-person fan attendance. “We think it will be important to watch the viewership trends over the coming weeks/months as other sports content rolls off the schedule and viewership hours are competing with the heavy news/election cycle,” they wrote.

Programming: AMC+, AMC Networks’ new subscription bundle, will debut a host of “The Walking Dead” content on Oct 1. Season 10 ep 16 of the original franchise will arrive, as well as “The Walking Dead: World Beyond” and episodic anthology “Soulmates.” New episodes will be available on AMC+ every Thursday, ahead of linear premieres on Sundays at 10pm and Mondays at 10pm. -- **Peacock** announced a new exclusive series “Mr. Mercedes,” based on *Stephen King*’s trilogy. The series premieres Oct 15, and Seasons 1 and 2 will be exclusive to Peacock. -- **ESPN Films** set a four-part “30 for 30” documentary titled “The Life and Trials of Oscar Pistorius.” The series has been in development for several years, and will debut exclusively on **ESPN+**. -- **truTV**’s new original series “Top Secret Videos” will premiere on Oct 29 at 10:30pm. -- **Fuse Media** and Canadian LGTBQ+ network **OUTtv** teamed up with **VICE Studios** for “Clothes Minded.” The makeover series aims to help people in the trans and gender non-conforming community find looks to celebrate their true identities, and will premiere early 2021 on Fuse and OUTtv. -- **Cheddar** is launching “Cheddar Climate: The Fight for Change” on Tuesday at 2pm. The weekly special will tackle the climate crisis and look at how its transforming lives. -- **BBC America** will air the US premiere of “Baby Chimp Rescue,” beginning Dec 5 as part of its Wonderstruck programming event. -- **Fox Nation** acquired the rights to film “Right Makes Might: The Lincoln-Douglas Debate.” The pic will debut on Thursday ahead of the first presidential debate of the 2020 election cycle. -- **MTV** is bringing back “16 and Pregnant” as a newly-reimagined docuseries. The six-episode season will premiere Oct 6 at 9pm.

People: Former **Time Warner** exec *Shira Perlmutter* has been named register of copyrights and director of the **US Copyright Office**. She succeeds acting register of copyrights *Maria Strong*, who has been serving in the position since January 2020. -- **Lindsay Broadband** welcomed *James Foster* as systems support specialist, GPON/XGS-PON solutions. Foster most recently served as network analyst at **Coach Canada/Trentway Wager**.