

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Road to RDOF: Lots of Questions Remain as FCC Vets Auction Winners

As the winners proceed with plans for broadband buildouts using **FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund** auction winnings, challenges are trickling in.

On Thursday, a coalition that includes **The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association** and **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association**, asked the FCC to release a Public Notice that lists census block groups provisionally won in the RDOF auction that the Commission knows are in default. The groups want the FCC to release info on additional defaults going forward as they happen. Their reasoning is that it will make it clear these geographic areas are not receiving RDOF funding and should be eligible for any other federal or state broadband funding programs.

Republican and Democratic members of Congress along with several trade groups have called on the FCC to closely scrutinize the long-form applications of RDOF winners to ensure that they can meet their obligations. **The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners** wants the FCC to go even further and put requests questioning a provider's commitments out for public comment. "Targeted public input on specific applications can only increase the probability that the RDOF objectives will be met," NARUC general counsel *James Bradford Ramsay* wrote in a letter this week to the FCC's four commissioners.

The FCC has already received some petitions to deny RDOF support to some winners in the \$9.2 billion auction. A group of broadband and wireless carriers want it to deny wireless internet

service provider **Resound Networks'** \$310 million funding award to provide gigabit service to more than 219,000 locations in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

"The FCC should deny Resound's long-form Applications because Resound does not have the requisite experience needed to build and operate a fixed wireless gigabit network, and the construction and operation of such a network is financially infeasible," said a joint filing to the FCC by **Big Bend Telecom, NTS Communications, Poka Lambro Telecommunications, PVT Networks and Valley Telephone Cooperative**. The carriers all operate in the same geographical area as Resound. Their list of black marks against Resound include it not holding any licenses for spectrum in most of the areas it won RDOF support in and having little-to-no experience with point-to-point technology.

Resound paints a different picture, highlighting its deployment of broadband to 100 rural communities in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. It says it uses fiber and fixed wireless to offer plans ranging from 10Mbps to Gigabit speeds. The WISP told the FCC this week that it has significant capital to deploy alongside RDOF support, including up to \$500 million from its owners and up to \$100 million in a credit facility.

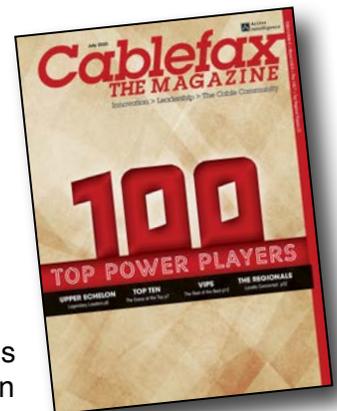
One of Resound's partners in its buildout plans is **Adtran**, which itself reached out to the FCC to assure the agency that its technologies are able to deploy Gigabit access using a wireless mesh topology. "This technology is deployed today, delivering gigabit broadband access service, so statements by others suggesting



## Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax:The Magazine.

**It's free to enter - but you must submit your entries by April 9!**



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that this technology is not viable for such services are simply not true,” the vendor told the Commission. Adtran acknowledged that mmWave is predominantly a line-of-sight technology, but said service providers who rely it will ensure they have LOS. Resound said it spent six months, 10,000 man-hours and more than \$1 million in pre-auction expenses to make certain it focused on areas with flat topology, minimal foliage and exceptional line-of-sight.

**The Minnesota Telecom Alliance** and the **Iowa Communications Alliance** want the FCC to deny **LTD Broadband's** win of support for more than 21,000 census blocks in the two states. The two trade associations, comprised of rural telecom and broadband providers, argue that LTD doesn't offer residential broadband service anywhere near the Gigabit service it pledged to support in the RDOF auction. LTD's website shows tiers ranging from 6Mbps downstream/1Mbps upstream to 35Mbps/7Mbps.

LTD said the speeds it currently makes available have nothing to do with its commitment to offer a Gigabit fiber service. It also pushed back against the associations noting that it defaulted in two states on the Connect America Fund Phase II auction. “LTD won only a single census block group in each of Nebraska and Nevada and determined that it would not be economically prudent to accept support in those two states for such small areas given the costs of compliance. Like other CAF applicants that defaulted, LTD reasonably determined that defaulting prior to receiving support was preferred over accepting support and facing challenges disproportionate to the buildout obligations,” the company said.

#### ONE YEAR LATER: T-MOBILE AND SPRINT

**T-Mobile** was tooting its own horn on the one-year anniversary of its merger with **Sprint** Thursday. The **FCC** alumni it hired as paid consultants, *Robert McDowell* and *Mignon Clyburn*, were among those praising the company for spurring wireless competition and supporting consumers over the last 12 months. But others still have a lot of questions for how the company will continue supporting customers that aren't quite ready for 5G. Of particular concern is the scheduled shutdown of T-Mobile's 3G network, which is currently set for on or around January 1, 2022. **Boost Mobile** customers still live on that network, and there are those that believe those customers will be left out to dry when it is shut down. “We're going to see millions and millions of Boost customers who are basically supposed to be protected not protected,” Boost Mobile founder *Peter Adderton* said on **Fox Business** earlier this month. “They're going to be cut off. If they don't get a new handset or a new SIM, they're gone. And guess who is going to be sitting there waiting in the wings to pick all those customers up? T-Mobile.” T-Mobile CEO *Mike Sievert* countered the claims during his own appearance on the network, saying that Adderton's interview struck him as “a bunch of completely fact-free assertions by a guy looking for a little attention.” He added that of the nine

million customers that Boost currently has, almost 90% of them will have a handset that's compatible with T-Mobile's network by the end of 2021. “By the time we deal with the network transition next year, it will be some single-digit percentage. What's industry practice at that time is that the operator, in this case **DISH**, just takes care of that with incentives and promotions,” Sievert said. “That's certainly what we'll be doing on the Sprint side... What's in the public interest is getting this country onto 5G.” DISH is now responsible for caring for the Boost Mobile customer base, and it's not so sure that things will go as smoothly as Sievert thinks. “The Boost customers are some of the most economically challenged customers out there... it's hard to upgrade to go from a phone that works great and works in their territory and then go to another phone that won't even work on our network because we're 5G. So then we have to upgrade them again,” DISH chmn *Charlie Ergen* said on the company's 4Q20 earnings call in February. “There would be significant fallout from that, in my opinion. The second thing is, I don't think we could get the supply of the phones that we would need.”

#### AT&T TV FOR THE MLB WIN

With **YouTube TV** and **Hulu Live** dropping the **Sinclair**-owned RSNs at the tail end of the 2020 **MLB** season, some customers didn't seem to realize until Opening Day that they didn't have a way to watch their favorite team. “**YES Network** is non-negotiable. It's the reason I subscribed to Hulu Live in the first place,” wrote one Twitter user Thursday. Hulu lost the Fox Sports RSNs, which were rebranded as **Bally Sports** this week, along with YES in late October. “@hulu what happened to @watchmarquee,” another Twitter user wrote, with the Cubs-Sinclair jv also among the channel drops. YouTube TV spent the day answering similar questions on social media. With **Sling** and **fuboTV** also not offering the Bally Sports channels either, **AT&T TV** has earned the title as the only streaming service to offer exclusive, live local coverage of the Bally RSNs. AT&T TV also is the only streamer with rights to some other RSNs, including **Spectrum SportsNet LA** and **MASN**. **DISH** dropped MASN as the clock struck midnight Wednesday, and it and **Sling** together dropped three **NBC** RSNs at the same time.

#### FCC APPROVES 300 FOR EMERGENCY BROADBAND

The **FCC** has approved 319 providers to offer broadband under the \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which provides eligible low-income households with discounts of up to \$50 a month for broadband service (up to \$75 a month if the household is on Tribal lands). This first wave of approved providers offer service in all 50 states, as well as DC and half of US territories. The Commission stressed that it expects additional providers to still sign up for the program. Those already approved include **Cable One**, **Comcast**, **Cricket Wireless**, **Mediacom**, Service Electric and

**Windstream.** The full list of accepted providers can be found [here](#).

### SCOTUS OKS BROADCAST OWNERSHIP RULES

Broadcasters scored a huge victory Thursday with the **US Supreme Court** unanimously reversing a 3rd Circuit decision that the **FCC** went too far with its 2017 order relaxing the limits on how many newspapers, radio stations and TV stations a single entity can own in a given market. SCOTUS said the FCC's conclusion that some of the media ownership limits were no longer in the public interest was reasonable. Current FCC acting chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* had voted against loosening the rules in 2017. The FCC is required to review its media ownership limits every four years, which means she could re-regulate broadcast once Dems have a majority at the agency.

### NAB, SCTE PARTNERING ON OCTOBER SHOWS

**NAB** and **SCTE-ISBE** are linking up, hosting a joint forum on October 12 that will link the **Cable-Tec Expo** with *NAB Show's* Broadcast Engineering and Information Technology Conference. Joint sessions will include live, interconnected presentations and audience questions originating from both conferences as well as live panels and interactive discussions. NAB CTO *Sam Matheny* and SCTE CTO *Chris Bastian* will open the event with a fireside chat on leadership over a link between Las Vegas and Atlanta. The event will run from 1-4:15pm ET, and the program will conclude with networking receptions in both cities.

### CABLELABS APPROVES FIRST 3.1 MODEM FOR LLD

**CableLabs** certified the **Motorola** MG8725 as the first DOCSIS 3.1 compliant cable modem to include Low Latency DOCSIS. Starting in January, CableLabs required that all DOCSIS 3.1 cable modems submitted for certification include support for the Low Latency DOCSIS feature set. The technology can be added to already deployed devices as a software update and can provide consistent low latency on the access network for applications that need it, including online gaming and video conferencing.

### NEWSMAX/COMSCORE DIGITAL MEASUREMENT DEAL

**Newsmax** reached an agreement for **Comscore's** digital audience measurement solutions, offering insights on audience behavior and media consumption across desktop and mobile.

### UPSTREAM TRAFFIC TRENDS SKYROCKET

Thanks to the huge number of folks working and learning from home in 2020, broadband upstream traffic growth during the year was 350% of historic rates. That's according to a special report published by **OpenVault**. Upstream usage grew 63%, from 19GB to 31GB, between December 2019 and December 2020. For comparison, the upstream rate of increase was 18% for each of the two prior years. During the 9am-5pm timeframe, average upstream traffic grew from 5.25GB to 10.42GB per subscriber per month as of December 2020. The top 1% of subscribers account for approximately 30% of upstream usage with the top 5% accounting for more than 50% of consumption.

### NEVER GONNA LET YOU GO

Those initial 30-day free trials of **Paramount+** are nearing the end. But **ViacomCBS** is hoping to keep those who were just in it for the freebie around a while longer. Subscribers who try to can-

cel are reporting receiving a 50% off for two-month promotion.

### TDS, WOW! CONTINUE WITH NETWORK REPAIRS

Service is still down for **TDS** customers in Winterhaven, California, but the company now has a better idea of when all will be restored. TDS is targeting Friday as a tentative service restoration date for West Winterhaven. April 7 and 10 are the dates for East Winterhaven. The outage has been ongoing since March 18 when a fire began at a central office hub. The cause of the fire is still unknown. – **WOW!**, operating as **NuLink** in Newnan, Georgia, has more than 90% of its network back online after taking heavy damage from last week's tornado. The company is continuing to keep free community WiFi hotspots open in four locations across the city.

### PROGRAMMING

**Fox News** extended its multi-year deal with *Bret Baier*. He will remain as anchor and executive editor of "Special Report" on Fox News weekdays at 6pm ET and as the network's chief political anchor. – **Hulu** ordered a docuseries based on *The New York Times Magazine* and *Nikole Hannah-Jones' "The 1619 Project."* – **USA** and **WWE** announced a multi-year extension for "NXT." The two-hour show is moving to Tuesday nights and will air live on USA weekly starting April 13 at 8pm ET. All new eps will be available on demand in the US exclusively on **Peacock** the day after airing on USA.

### PEOPLE

**Effectv** appointed *John Brauer* vp, insights and analytics. The role was formerly held by *Andrea Zapata*, who is now vp, West Coast sales at **Vevo**. Brauer has led Effectv's research team on an interim basis since May. – **Disney Branded Television** and **National Geographic** marketing and publicity teams are being merged into one integrated team under content marketing chief *Jayanta Jenkins*. *Chris Albert*, most recently evp, global communications at National Geographic Content, will lead marketing strategy and communications for both Disney Branded Television and National Geographic Content including National Geographic Documentary Films. *Chris Spencer*, previously evp, creative at National Geographic Content, sees his oversight expand to include Disney Brand Television. Leaders for a dedicated social/digital strategy and production operations team will be announced in the coming weeks.

### DOING GOOD

**WICT** will expand its #BeyondtheHashtag series following a partnership with the **Walter Kaitz Foundation**. The foundation will help WICT build the series into a session at least twice annually, one during the WICT Leadership Conference and one online webinar. **Cox Communications** will be the series' exclusive platinum sponsor. – **MTV Entertainment Group** is launching a multi-year initiative called "Mental Health is Health." MTVE has committed to doubling the amount of mental health storylines across all shows in its portfolio and making sure those storylines are portrayed in an authentic, nuanced way.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Your next issue of **Cablefax Daily** will arrive on Monday, April 5. Cablefax.com will, as always, keep you up-to-date on any breaking industry news.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Refreshing Old Favorites with 'The Laundry Guy'

Time heals all wounds, and ages some of our favorite items until they're worn beyond recognition. **HGTV's** "The Laundry Guy" premiered Wednesday at 10pm and is currently available on **discovery+**. It's prepared to offer all the tips needed to restore beloved fabrics and blankets to their former glory. The series centers on *Patric Richardson*, an entrepreneur who gained national recognition for his "laundry camps" where he taught his approach to cleaning garments. Richardson was pitched to **Discovery** more than two years ago, and a recent development brainstorm meeting is what finally convinced the company to give the series a shot. "There were so many reasons not to do a show like this. It's never been done, it's laundry for Pete's sake, it's unproven, laundry is a chore. But if you concentrate on the people and their beautiful personal stories that live behind the stains and spots and wear and tear on our most loved and most meaningful items, you have a peek into people's emotional backstories," HGTV pres *Jane Latman* said. While laundry may not typically fit in the definition of home improvement programming, the launch of **discovery+** has allowed for a stretching of the lifestyle genre. The concept alone should be enough to pique folks' interest, but it will be Richardson's charm that keeps folks around. He can showcase how to make the perfect mint julep and how to use vodka to remove a stain on a wedding dress all in one 20-minute episode. "He's such an unexpected superhero, and the best thing is he embodies generosity, whimsy and, yes, love," Latman said. "His passion, which stems from his own beautiful relationship with his grandmother, is to help people reconnect with their best memories through his expertise in restoring items to their former glory." Richardson's number one tip: create an aluminum foil ball for your dryer to get rid of all static cling. You can use the same one for 65 cycles. If power tools are more your speed, you can use an orbital buffer to remove the residue on the vinyl sleeves of something like a letterman jacket. – *Sara Winegardner*

### REVIEWS

"Hemingway," premieres, 8pm, Monday, **PBS** (check listings). This 3-part, 6-hour series (Monday-Wednesday) is another in the canon of *Ken Burns* and *Lynn Novick* whom PBS gave years to complete his portrait of arguably America's greatest writer. So, you'd guess the result is loaded with great footage, apposite music and strong writing. It is. Wisely, the series' writer, *Geoffrey Ward*, gives Hemingway's distinct prose screen time: "The great thing is to last and get your work done, and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something that you know; and not before; and not too damned much after." *Peter Coyote's* calm narration complements the film well. Will this program encourage those who lack a background in Hemingway to want to read him? Oh, yes. – "Robin Roberts Presents: Mahalia," premiere, 8pm, Saturday, **Lifetime**. Biopics, like comedy, are hard. Biopics about musicians are even harder. Still, people try and this Lifetime film, about *Mahalia Jackson*, one of this country's greatest gospel artists, is plenty good. First is *Danielle Brooks* as the title character. That Brooks had acting chops was apparent in her work on Broadway ("The Color Purple") and in **Netflix's** "Orange is the New Black," where she stole scenes as Tasha "Taystee" Jackson. The film is particularly timely since it includes Jackson's civil rights work. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(03/22/21-03/28/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>2,794</b>
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.756</b>	<b>2,328</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.513</b>	<b>1,580</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.380</b>	<b>1,170</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.366</b>	<b>1,126</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.319</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.306</b>	<b>943</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.270</b>	<b>833</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.259</b>	<b>797</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.252</b>	<b>778</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.232</b>	<b>715</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.215</b>	<b>664</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.212</b>	<b>654</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.205</b>	<b>631</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.192</b>	<b>592</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.190</b>	<b>585</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.181</b>	<b>559</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.176</b>	<b>541</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.163</b>	<b>502</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.154</b>	<b>474</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.145</b>	<b>446</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.143</b>	<b>440</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.141</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>ADSM</b>	<b>0.141</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.127</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.125</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.125</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.123</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.122</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.116</b>	<b>358</b>
<b>APL</b>	<b>0.114</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>MTV</b>	<b>0.112</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>TRAVEL</b>	<b>0.111</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>OXYGEN</b>	<b>0.096</b>	<b>296</b>

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.



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