

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Broadband Bridge: GOP, Dems Hash Out Internet Infrastructure

There appears to be at least some hope of a bipartisan agreement on a broadband infrastructure deal. On Thursday, Republicans released their latest counteroffer to Biden's \$1.7 trillion, eight-year infrastructure proposal—a \$928 billion plan that keeps their broadband spending at \$65 billion.

Given that Biden recently dropped the broadband deployment budget in his own plan to \$65 billion, it's not surprising the GOP isn't raising their proposed amount. The bigger mystery seems to be why did Biden lower the amount when Republicans had indicated they were considering bumping it. **New Street Research** analysts believe that if that \$65 billion figure stands, it will be hard to use federal funds to subsidize overbuilding—good news for cable.

The latest GOP proposal follows a Wednesday afternoon bipartisan meeting between Vice President *Kamala Harris*, who has been tasked with leading the effort to close the digital divide, and members of Congress to discuss the importance of investing in broadband infrastructure.

It may be noteworthy that in responding to the GOP's latest proposal, Harris' press secretary didn't offer any critique on broadband. Indeed, after Wednesday's meeting Sen *Amy Klobuchar* (D-MN) indicated a bipartisan deal looks promising, [telling Forum News Service](#) that “we're actually negotiating and talking about some of the nuts and bolts about why we have this enormous need in our country for broadband.”

Sen *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) was part of that broadband infrastructure meeting. In addition to pushing his bill that would provide \$5 billion in federal funding for low-interest financing of broadband infrastructure projects, he used the opportunity to join a chorus of other Dems in asking Biden to make Acting **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel*'s leadership position permanent to ensure the agency can make progress in bridging the digital divide. Similarly, he said the administration needs to put forward a nominee to serve as administrator of the **NTIA**. Republicans have asked Biden to appoint a fifth Commissioner to the FCC, complaining the agency is short-handed as it oversees important broadband efforts, such as the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund [RDOF].

When it comes to RDOF, the FCC continues to get an earful from the **Ensuring RDOF Integrity Coalition**, which is pushing the Commission to put out for comment its request to allow for third party review of select RDOF applications under a protective order. The request has received support from **NARUC**, **WSTA**, and recently **AARP**. ERIC, a coalition whose members remain a [mystery](#), has said it seeks to limit review to winning RDOF bidders that have won \$200 million or more in funding or who seek to serve 100,000 or more locations. “This means a maximum of 12 winning bidders could be subject to third party review,” ERIC told the FCC.

The Competitive Carriers Association has conducted its own analysis of Phase I RDOF areas that were supposed to be completely unserved and found that the fund is poised to

THE FAXIES

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Awards Celebration:
Friday, June 10 at 4pm ET

Cablefax is PROUD to announce 2021 finalists for **The FAXIES**, the ultimate awards program in the b2b media space. The FAXIES honor 2021's marketing & PR campaigns as well as the executives and teams who brought them to life. During this pandemic year, these achievements are nothing less than extraordinary.

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“inadvertently direct funding to hundreds of thousands of locations that are already served, including wealthy, urban areas that have some of the most robust connectivity in the country.” It’s put together a spreadsheet of more than 126,000 RDOF blocks that are fully or partially covered by **Ookla** data tiles that show an average downlink speed greater than 25 Mbps and an average uplink speed greater than 3 Mbps.

Meanwhile, a flurry of bipartisan broadband bills continue to roll in. On Thursday, Sens *Shelley Moore Capito* (R-WV) and *Jacky Rosen* (D-NV) reintroduced their bill directing the FCC to coordinate with federal agencies to establish a baseline level of service internet providers must provide customers when offering service via a federal broadband support program in order to increase access to uniform and reliable internet service. The legislation is prospective and would not impact projects begun or awards made before the date of enactment of the act. Sens *John Thune* (R-SD), *Maggie Hassan* (D-NH), *Jerry Moran* (R-KS) and *Catherine Cortez Masto* (D-NV) also brought back a bill that would dedicate a portion of proceeds from congressionally mandated spectrum auctions to be used for the buildout of broadband networks.

A YEAR OF FOCUS ON DEI

It’s been just over 12 months since the murder of *George Floyd* sparked conversations around racial injustice in the US, and those across the media ecosystem have been working to make immediate changes to the way they operate and craft long-term diversity, equity and inclusion roadmaps. **AMC Networks** brought in **NCTA’s Michael Powell** one year ago to speak at an employee town hall, and the company has spent the last 12 months evaluating what was working in its DEI policies and what needed to go. “I am incredibly proud to be a part of a leadership team that is now 50% women and 50% men and one that is fully committed to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do, from the writers’ rooms and sets of our shows, to the organizations we work with and support, to the hallways of our offices,” *Aisha Thomas-Petit*, AMC Networks’ first chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, told **CFX**. As for recent efforts, she said the company has adopted an inclusion rider for all **AMC Studios** productions that is designed to increase representation in its programming. She also highlighted the company’s contributions to the launch of *Coded for Inclusion*, a platform from **Staff Me Up** that will allow underrepresented crew members greater visibility as they look for new jobs. As for how the work continues over the next 12 months, *Thomas-Petit* said the company just completed a comprehensive Self ID campaign and culture audit across its productions. “The immediate next step that I’m focused on is taking our findings and developing specific and actionable next

steps to make sure the stories we’re telling not only reflect the full spectrum of the human experience, but also that those stories come from representative staff at every step in the process,” she said. Earlier this week, **Comcast** chair/CEO *Brian Roberts* detailed his company’s efforts to make real change on the DEI front over the last year in a blog post. He focused on a number of efforts designed to amplify diverse voices and provide resources to empower underserved communities, including the company’s WiFi-enabled Lift Zones in community centers across the country. The Comcast RISE program, which launched last fall, is set to award 13,000 small businesses owned by POC with grants, technology upgrades and marketing services by 2022. “Ultimately, across all that we do, our mission remains the same—we connect people to what matters most. We use our platforms and resources to help elevate potential and provide everyone with access to the opportunities they need to succeed,” he said.

Cablefax Executive Round Up

How have your communications with clients changed during the pandemic and will you keep any of these changes?



Liz Bauer

Chief Marketing and Customer Officer

CSG

“The pandemic demonstrated just how valuable trust and dependability are to customer relationships. While every company was scrambling to figure out how to operate in the new normal, CSG was co-creating with our clients to

foster new ways of collaboration. With a global footprint, we did not take a one size fits all approach to our customers. We met them where they were in their journey and pivoted quickly as priorities shifted. CSG will continue to leverage co-creation with our customers and the nimbleness that was required during COVID-19 to help our customers solve their toughest problems.”



Tom Cloonan

Chief Technology Officer, Broadband Networks

CommScope

“To stay sync’d up, I have been having a lot more customer meetings than in the past, and the meetings cover more hours of the day. The meetings are all video-conference. I am not sure what the future holds- we may do a blend of

the old and the new.”



Ted Grauch

CEO

Blonder Tongue Laboratories

“The pandemic has trained all of us to fully rely on Zoom and other communications tools. WFH has been a major shift in doing business. We believe a heavier use of tech platforms and tools can do nothing but improve our overall

customer communications and relationships. They are here to stay and embrace.”

KILAR HERE TO STAY (UNTIL 2022)

WarnerMedia CEO *Jason Kilar* is sticking around at least through 2022. He announced the news during a company town hall Thursday celebrating the first anniversary of the launch of **HBO Max**. He told employees that he'll think about his future in 2022, but he and his team have unfinished business. Kilar's position at the company seemed to be at jeopardy upon news of the WarnerMedia-**Discovery** merger, particularly when neither Discovery CEO *David Zaslav* nor **AT&T** CEO *John Stankey* would offer a clear answer on the subject when asked during press conferences in the following days. The *NYT* also reported that Kilar was hiring lawyers in the days after the deal to negotiate his exit and had been kept in the dark about the merger until just before its announcement.

FOX NEWS GROWING ON DIGITAL

Fox News is more than just a linear network. Its digital products have been gaining traction, and **Fox Corp** is taking notice. "If you look at the digital properties of Fox News, holistically, they attract 100 million unique users per month. So it's not a small business at all for us. Outside of the channel, it's 100 million unique users," COO *John Nallen* said at an investor conference this week. He said streaming service **Fox Nation** is seeing particularly high subscription rates following the addition of live events and exclusive content like CPAC coverage and its *Tucker Carlson* originals. "In fact, on the heels of those two pieces of content we saw subscriptions go up 40% in the last two months on Fox Nation," Nallen explained. That growth was also a major part of the decision to make Fox News Primetime content available the next day on Fox Nation. "Whether it's Hannity, Ingram, Tucker, you're going to now be able to see on Fox Nation in the morning," he said. "And again, these are all subscription drivers to attract the average fans from Fox News."

CARRIAGE

Pac-12 Networks launched **Pac-12 Insider** on **Allen Media Group's** free streaming service **Local Now**. Pac-12 Insider provides free access to select live events, football highlights and re-airs from the past season, basketball encores and more from other sports across the Pac-12. – **Fox News Media's** international streaming service, **Fox News International**, is expanding into Asia. The platform will be available in a total of 37 countries worldwide with additional distribution throughout Japan, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Maldives. – **HBO Max** will be available in 39 territories in Latin America and the Caribbean starting June 29.

TENNIS CHANNEL LAUNCHES NEW SITE AND APP

Tennis Channel unveiled an updated website and new app Wednesday. They offer live match links in scoreboards, a comprehensive calendar covering multiple tours, rankings and estimated match start times. The platforms will also be the home of fantasy tennis game during the channel's coverage of the French Open, which starts Sunday and runs through June 13. The app is available on iOS and Android platforms.

AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC** is holding an Open RAN Solutions Showcase by webcast on June 29 at 9:30am ET. The event will give both fixed and mobile network operators an opportunity to hear from vendors

who will have 5G network equipment and services available for purchase and installation by Jan 1, if not sooner. "By making information about Open RAN more readily available and by connecting the various stakeholders invested in this technology, we are making sure companies can continue to innovate and we are encouraging network operators to invest in network security," acting FCC chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* said in a statement.

DOING GOOD

The **Spectrum** Community Investment Loan Fund invested \$1 million in the Carolina Small Business Development Fund, a non-profit certified community development financial institution that provides low-interest loans to small businesses in Charter's NC service area. This investment marks the latest made by Charter as part of its more than \$22 million commitment to support small and minority-owned businesses helping to meet basic needs in financially underserved communities in its 41-state reach.

PROGRAMMING

Discovery is launching its 33rd annual "Shark Week" programming event on July 11. Highlights include docuseries premiere "Shark Academy" and shark-themed episodes of "Josh Gates Tonight." The programmer is also partnering with shark experts, nonprofit groups and shark enthusiasts to deliver Shark Week experiences across digital and social media platforms. – **fuboTV** announced its programming slate for the South American Qatar World Cup 2022 qualifying matches. It kicks off with CONMEBOL qualifying matches on June 3. Several additional match windows will be held into early 2022. The service will also stream Qatar World Cup 2022 qualifying matches from other soccer confederations through its channel partners. CONMEBOL qualifying matches will air on **Fubo Sports Network** or through a newly-launched CONMEBOL Qualifiers network. – **Turner Sports** and *Wayne Gretzky* reached a multi-year agreement for **NHL** series "The Great One." Also in NHL-Turner news, veteran commentator *Kenny Albert* and analyst *Eddie Olczyk* will call live games for Turner Sports through the regular season and Stanley Cup Playoffs, which will air on **TNT** and **TBS**. – "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars" is moving from **VH1** to **Paramount+** this season. It kicks off June 24 with two back-to-back episodes and weekly drops every Thursday. The streamer will also premiere drag singing competition series "Queen of the Universe" December 2. – Comedy series "Breeders" has been renewed for a third season on **FX**.

PEOPLE

Paramount+ head of programming *Julie McNamara* is exiting **ViacomCBS**. *Deadline* first reported the news, suggesting the exec felt it was time for a change. – **Crown Media Family Networks** elevated *Michael Grover* to vp, brand marketing. Grover joined the company in 2018 from **Hulu**, where he acted as a content marketing manager.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In observance of Memorial Day, your next issue of **Cablefax Daily** will arrive Tuesday, June 1. As always, we'll keep you apprised of any breaking news at **Cablefax.com**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'In Treatment' Makes Pandemic Era Return

HBO therapy drama "In Treatment" returned for a fourth season Sunday at 9pm, but the premiere probably looked a bit different to longtime fans of the series. The last season finished airing in 2010 and a new doctor is in. *Uzo Aduba* ("Orange is the New Black") embodies the role of Dr Brooke Taylor in the reboot, which is set in present-day Los Angeles and tackles everything from the pandemic to cultural and social issues. Taylor is a little different from the therapist from the show's first run, and Aduba said during a **TCA Winter Tour** panel that her style during the sessions is often to incorporate her own experiences to make her clients feel more comfortable. "Even in this pandemic, as you hear her say in the show, she shows up for her patients," she said. "I think that also extends as far as her opening them up to her own experiences to help invite them to come closer to the things that they're looking to confront." There are some elements that were preserved to honor the original run that longtime fans can look for in Taylor's home. "We wanted to preserve the connective tissue between the first three seasons that everybody watched and loved... that's why it felt right to call it Season 4, because shows reinvent themselves, especially when they take a decade off," executive producer *Josh Allen* said. When asked about the decision to have a person of color occupy the therapist's chair this time around, Allen said it was a conscious decision, just as it was to have the patients come from a variety of backgrounds and ethnic groups. "There's such a stigma attached to it, especially in communities of color, so it felt important to me, personally, to put that on television to show that we all need this," Allen said. "I wanted to, in reimagining the show, make sure that we were expanding the idea of who gets access to therapy and under what circumstances to destigmatize it." – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

"The Titans That Built America," premiere, 9pm, Memorial Day, **History**. For years your reviewer praised History for its history-related series and films. We also chided the network for claiming "history is made every day" as a way to offer ratings-grabbers like "Ice Road Truckers." Today, we come to praise History. This three-part/three-night mini from nine executive producers, including *Leonardo DiCaprio*, might not be History at its finest, but it's close. Certainly, some will quibble with its lightning pace, as it covers the lives of *Henry Ford*, *Pierre DuPont*, *Walter Chrysler*, *JP Morgan* and *Walter Boeing*. For example, Ford's enigmatic personality–paternalism for workers, including Black staff, yet his hatred of Jews–is dispatched in a few sentences. Fortunately, one in the parade of talking heads is *Donnie Deutsch*, who calls Ford "a great man, but not a good man." Joining Deutsch are *Mark Cuban*, *Andrew Ross Sorkin*, *Carly Fiorina* and a slew of historians. Their contributions are useful. The main star, though, is Titans' storytelling. The script and narration weave stories one into the other, beginning with a compelling pitting of DuPont and his risky acquisition of a failing company called General Motors. He planned to compete against the dominance of Ford. Also excellent are the production values. They make the films visually pleasing and intellectually stimulating. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (05/17/21-05/23/21)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.663	2,043
ESPN	0.585	1,803
MSNBC	0.481	1,483
TNT	0.444	1,366
HGTV	0.363	1,118
CNN	0.263	810
TBSC	0.261	805
USA	0.257	790
HIST	0.253	778
DISC	0.250	769
HALL	0.228	702
TLC	0.226	696
INSP	0.223	686
FOOD	0.220	676
ID	0.190	584
LIFE	0.169	520
BRAVO	0.161	495
A&E	0.160	491
HMM	0.153	470
NBCSN	0.151	465
TVLAND	0.148	457
GSN	0.137	423
NATGEO	0.126	389
ADSM	0.126	388
WETV	0.123	377
AMC	0.116	356
APL	0.114	352
SYFY	0.110	337
TRAVEL	0.109	335
NAN	0.104	319
FX	0.102	313
FRFM	0.098	302
NICK	0.095	293
E!	0.092	283

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



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