

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Perfect Pair: SCTE-ISBE, CableLabs Revving Up Plans for Cable-Tec Expo

It has been six months since **SCTE-ISBE** became a subsidiary of **CableLabs**, and the fruits of their combination will be on full display at this year's **Cable-Tec Expo** in October.

"CableLabs has been a great partner at Expo, and we're looking at expanding Expo on an international basis. I think what CableLabs brings to the table is the continuity of thinking into practice," SCTE-ISBE president/CEO *Mark Dzuban* said during a fireside chat at **ANGA COM** Wednesday. "It really helps the folks in the field, who are saying 'Wow, look what's coming, let's prepare, let's constantly be aware of what's going on and let's make sure we have the most current development skills to make sure we can design, deploy and operate these more sophisticated networks."

And while CableLabs will always have its own member-only events and has even dreamt up some larger opportunities for collaboration, it is ready to bring more to this year's Expo than ever before.

"We want to make [Cable-Tec] Expo the show for the cable industry. CableLabs had its previous summer conference, and we still have an international conference...we will still have smaller, regional events to serve our members. We're taking the best from all of these conferences and rolling them into [Cable-Tec] Expo," CableLabs CEO *Phil McKinney* said. "We want [Cable-Tec] Expo to be the place you come to collaborate."

And while SCTE and CableLabs have both been excited about

the cable industry's journey towards 10G, McKinney said that wasn't the only reason why the two organizations decided to come together. It was more so about the ever-increasing pace of technological innovation and the need for various stages of the ideation pipeline to be more connected.

"We've seen over the last two decades this rapid acceleration of all kinds of innovations and all kinds of technology... it's making it challenging in order to get from the innovation stage to the making it real stage, and how do you shorten that time up," he said. "We saw that in [DOCSIS] 3.1... in generations DOCSIS 3.0 and prior, it was averaging about 6-6.5 years between each generation. With 3.0 to 3.1, once we actually started the 3.1 project... until it was ready for deployment, we did that in two-and-a-half years."

McKinney laid out a number of other priorities for CableLabs in the near future, and many of them are likely to be covered in Expo sessions. One of his greatest areas of focus is fixed mobile convergence, and CableLabs even formed a Mobile Convergence Committee in April that is working to develop guidelines for partners tied to the development of converged services and products.

"As you look across the CableLabs members... half of those MSOs also operate mobile networks. We see this combining of entities as just step one," he said. "Now the question is how do you get leverage given the respective assets that you've now acquired and how do you deliver a consistent experience. How do you deliver a consistent set of infrastructure that al-

## THE FAXIES

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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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lows you to compete at scale? The mobile convergence work is around the convergence of mobile and fixed networks coming together to create a consistent platform for the delivery of services and experience so the customer doesn't care what access means they are using."

Efforts are also being directed to fiber optics and expanding the limits that exist with today's fiber technologies. That means boosting speeds, future-proofing architectures and crafting better fiber deployment strategies. Artificial intelligence's role in maintaining the network is also getting a close look from CableLabs' engineers.

"AI being applied to predicting the network, what's the next thing you need to maintain your network by looking at large data sets coming off the network to be able to predict what are the things you need to be thinking about, where there potentially should be some upgrades or maintenance being done," McKinney said. "Knowing about it before you actually need to do it so you can get ahead of it."

### BLAZERS HEAD TO ROOT SPORTS

The Portland Trail Blazers inked a new media rights deal with **ROOT Sports**, a RSN jv between **AT&T Sports Networks** and the Seattle Mariners. The deal means the **NBA** team's games will move from **NBC Sports Northwest** starting next season and join MLB's Mariners as well as the Seattle Seahawks, Seattle Kraken, Seattle Seawolves and others at ROOT. Without the Blazers, the **Comcast**-owned RSN is set to shutter on Sept 30, impacting the RSN's staff (there is no impact on other NBC Sports RSNs and team partnerships). "We are disappointed that NBC Sports Northwest will no longer be a media partner

and the official network of the Trail Blazers after 14 seasons. We are proud of how well we've served the team's passionate fanbase, Northwest sports fans, our partners and our community. We are incredibly thankful to our dedicated and talented staff, who have made that possible through the years," a NBC Sports Northwest spokesperson said. ROOT has a distribution advantage over the NBC Sports RSN in that it has deals with **DISH** and **DirectTV**, which is why the Blazers move was long expected, though NBC Sports fought to keep the team. ROOT Sports networks aren't currently carried by vMVPDs such as **Hulu** or **YouTube TV**, but **AT&T TV** offers it, naturally.

### MID-BAND SPECTRUM AUCTION

The **FCC** on Wednesday revealed the application and bidding procedures for the 3.45-3.55 GHz band auction scheduled to get underway Oct 5. It will offer up to 4,060 new flexible-use licenses in the 3.45 to 3.55 GHz band divided into ten 10-megahertz blocks licensed by geographic areas known as Partial Economic Areas (PEAs). In the first phase of the auction, the clock phase, bidders will bid on generic blocks in each geographic area. In the second phase, the assignment phase, they will bid on frequency-specific license assignments. The Public Notice sets a reserve price of approximately \$14.7 billion.

### CHARTER'S PLAN FUZZY ON 3.45-3.55 AUCTION

**Charter** is readying a CBRS buildout in an unnamed market later this year, but that endeavor to offload MVNO traffic doesn't mean the operator needs more spectrum to be successful, according to its CFO. The **FCC** is gearing up to auction off spectrum in the 3.45-3.55 GHz band later this year, with those licenses expected to be licensed by Partial Economic Areas.



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**Magazine Publish Date: July 28**

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | [www.cablefax.com](http://www.cablefax.com) | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, [amaclean@accessintel.com](mailto:amaclean@accessintel.com) | Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, [rcaploe@accessintel.com](mailto:rcaploe@accessintel.com) | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, [swinegardner@accessintel.com](mailto:swinegardner@accessintel.com) | Assoc Editor: Theresa Maher, 301.354.1704, [tmaher@accessintel.com](mailto:tmaher@accessintel.com) | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, [ekamhi@accessintel.com](mailto:ekamhi@accessintel.com) | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, [kschaeffer@accessintel.com](mailto:kschaeffer@accessintel.com) | Production Manager: Joann Fato, [jfato@accessintel.com](mailto:jfato@accessintel.com) | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, [ksmith@accessintel.com](mailto:ksmith@accessintel.com) | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, [clientservices@accessintel.com](mailto:clientservices@accessintel.com) | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

That's different than the CBRS, which was based on counties. "I'm not saying whether we would or would not participate in that [3.45-3.55 auction], but I think it's a little more challenging there and we're going to be financially disciplined." CFO *Chris Winfrey* said at an investor conference Wednesday. He said that CBRS requires fairly short paybacks in relation to the capital investment cycle. "Without getting into too many details, it is a short, multi-year payback when we can rollout CBRS based on the numbers of customers and traffic that exists at that point and time," he said. "Interestingly, the more success we have in penetrating a market with mobile lines, and the more success we have with penetrating more mobile lines inside of a footprint, and the more incentive we can create for customers to actually use more of it and have more data—the more financially attractive it becomes for us to go build additional CBRS either into a new market or to continue to densify that market through the use of our licensed and unlicensed spectrum." **Comcast**, which has a wireless MVNO with **Verizon** just like Charter, recently added multi-line, discounted unlimited data plans. Winfrey said that just as Comcast is watching Charter on CBRS, Charter is watching Comcast on multi-lines. "I think you can expect that we will do something to make the multi-line environment more attractive similar to Comcast," he said. In other Spectrum Mobile news, Charter announced Wednesday that it's teamed with **Motorola** to offer the budget friendly Moto E and Moto G Play Phones. Prices start at \$119.99 or \$5/month for 24 months for Moto E, and \$167.99 or \$7/month for 24 months for Moto G Play, with 0% interest on device payment plans.

#### WARNERMEDIA, COMSCORE TEAM ON ADDRESSABLE

**WarnerMedia** is the first national programmer to formally participate in **Comscore's** National Addressable TV programmer trials. WarnerMedia started launching national addressable campaigns across MVPDs with detailed aggregated measurement tools from Comscore in late 2020. The program allows programmers to measure their national linear inventory across MVPDs and CTV providers to better inform their inventory allocation strategies and measurement parameters. The National Addressable solution is open to all national programmers and CTV/MVPD providers.

#### BIG SKY ON HORIZON FOR ESPN

**ESPN** and the Big Sky Conference announced a new multi-year, multi-platform media rights agreement. More than 600 live events for men's and women's sports will stream on the **ESPN app** and **ESPN+**. The championship games for the Big Sky Men's and Women's basketball tournaments are slated for ESPN networks while **ESPNU** will televise two football games and one regular season men's basketball game each year. The deal kicks off with Big Sky Conference's annual Football Kickoff on July 26, which will stream live on ESPN+.

#### SENATE UPS MERGER FILING FEES

The Senate passed legislation that would increase merger filing fees for large mergers reviewed by the **DOJ's** Antitrust Division and the **FTC**. Those fees would then be allocated towards increasing the budgets of both enforcement bodies. The bill, which changes premerger filing fees for the first

time since 2001, was brought forth by Sens *Amy Klobuchar* (D-MN) and *Chuck Grassley* (R-IA).

#### STARRY COMING TO DETROIT

**Starry** announced plans to bring its low-cost Starry Connect program to Detroit. This announcement is an extension of Starry's partnership with **Microsoft's** Airband Initiative, a program aimed at accelerating the adoption of broadband in under-connected communities. Last fall, Starry and Microsoft first accelerated the availability of Starry's low-cost broadband access program in public housing communities in L.A.

#### DOING GOOD

**Comcast** committed to invest \$10 million to build equity in credit unions led by and/or serving people of color. The money will be invested through Inklusiv's Racial Equality and Resilience Investment Fund. The fund, launched in 2020, leverages investments to increase lending to minority-owned businesses and individuals. Comcast's commitment enables financial institutions to deploy at least \$200 million in total capital in traditionally underserved and underbanked communities. The Racial Equity and Resilience Investment Fund builds on the Inklusiv Resilience Grant Fund, which raised more than \$1 million in grant funds for 59 minority-designated credit unions serving more than 200,000 members. – **Discovery** announced its "Turn Up! Fight Hunger" program, in partnership with No Kid Hungry, reached its one billion meal goal. The program launched in 2019 with a five-year goal to provide one billion meals to kids living with hunger in the US.

#### RATINGS

**ESPN's** "Sunday Night Baseball" viewership is up 31% from the 2020 full season average. The program is also averaging 1.621 million viewers on the season, up 7% from the same ten-week mark in 2019.

#### HONORS

The **Alliance for Women in Media Foundation** announced the winners of the 46th Annual Gracie Awards Wednesday. The awards celebrate the most talented women in television, radio and digital media. This year, the awards also recognized entertainment and news programming that addressed social issues and timely topics. Winners include **FX Networks** limited series "Mrs. America," **Lifetime** TV movie "The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel" and writer *Lena Waithe* for her work on "The Chi" from **Showtime Networks**. The full list of winners can be found [here](#).

#### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

**NAMIC** is accepting nominations for Class XXI of its [Executive Leadership Development Program](#). The program, which is open to executives of color with a minimum of two years at the director level or above, is designed to give high-performing middle and upper-middle level executives the tools needed to advance their careers. Applications are due August 31.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Don't forget to RSVP for **Cablefax's** virtual celebration of [The FAXIES](#) tomorrow at 4pm ET at [TheFaxies.com](#). We will celebrate all the finalists and announce the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. Come ready to celebrate and chat with colleagues and friends!



## Think about that for a minute...

### What Could Go Wrong?

Commentary by Steve Effros

No, it's not Curly, Mo and Larry. The answer is Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack! The question is: who are the "Warner Brothers?" Oops, I guess I should have written "Warner Bros." because that's part of the newly established name of that august Hollywood icon "WB," or "WarnerMedia" or TimeWarner. But "Warner Bros. Discovery?" Who thought that one up? Sorry, I know I'm not an expert marketer, but it just seems to me that hanging on to "Warner Bros." (which has long been part of the "WB" logo on many of the movies we have all watched) doesn't capture any new excitement, any new direction, or, frankly, from my luddite point of view, much of anything at all!

What could go wrong? You might ask. An established, old-line name, alluding to brothers whose names almost none of us remember, linked together with one of the popular "new" brands in media. It should all play out very nicely. Except within days of the new name announcement of the new company spun off from AT&T merging with Discovery one of the top satirists on their own network, John Oliver, was already hilariously lampooning the name and logo. Great.

Now, of course, the tradition (after all, WB started in 1923) and long history of the brand could very well carry it through. But in my experience the most successful rebranding has been done by folks who appreciated that with a "new start" a new name might also be helpful. A vehicle to reintroduce the quality that is indisputably there. The best example of that I have seen was Xfinity. Anyway, I was just struck by the announcement of the not-so-new branding. I do hope they are successful, with a clear library of great movies and some of the best current documentary and popular fare out there. AT&T has long been very protective of its traditions, and maybe it will work this time.

Speaking of AT&T traditions, I read a quote the other day that also triggered my "what could possibly go wrong" response. It was made by the AT&T CEO of Communications at an investor's conference. He was talking about the grand plans of AT&T, now that it has decided to once again focus on infrastructure rather than "media." There's going to be a laser focus on fiber optics.

Of course this is not a surprise, most new construction is fiber. It's the only thing that can compete with the modern HFC systems already built in most areas. But he said something that just reminded me of "the old days." His comment reportedly was: "We know, without question, where we have fiber, we win. Period. We win with fiber on all accounts. We win with a great customer adoption. It's the highest, most satisfying product that AT&T has in its arsenal of products."

Now, again, I'm not disagreeing with him that fiber is a good technology. We all use it. But an interesting recent study suggests that the future (for the next 10 years!) need for "speed" at home will peak at about 300Mbps. That's well within the technical grasp of all the infrastructure currently becoming ubiquitous. Traditional telephone folks seem to think that simply announcing their plans to build out fiber over the next four or five years, an announcement they have made in the past, will put them at the forefront of the growing competition for customers.

It sort of reminds me of the old quote from Bell Atlantic CEO Ray Smith back in 1995: "I would say that by 2000, we'll have 50 percent of the cable TV business – no doubt about it – Meanwhile, the cable companies won't have even three percent of telephony revenues in their best market."

What could possibly go wrong?



Steve

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*(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)*

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