

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Impacts Abound: Infrastructure Bill Could Boost Workforce Diversity

FCC chairs of years past gathered virtually at a symposium hosted by **MMTC** Monday, and all of them agree that the infrastructure bill being worked through on Capitol Hill is the perfect opportunity for the telecom industry to expand workforce diversity and development.

“This is a once in a generation opportunity to deploy digital infrastructure, thanks in part to the federal commitment that is likely to come in the context of an infrastructure plan,” said *Ajit Pai*, who served as FCC chair under *Trump*. “There are going to be thousands upon thousands of people employed to help build these next generation networks, and it’s a great gateway for minorities, for anybody, to be able to get a foothold in the communications business.”

When asked about her thoughts on the infrastructure bill’s potential to make an impact, *Mignon Clyburn*, former acting chair under *Obama*, said it remains unclear just how large of a problem the lack of diversity in the workforce currently is today. An effort she championed during her time at the head of the Commission was the commencement of studies that would examine where the industry was and what the prospects were going forward.

“You can’t meet what you don’t measure,” she said. “I really don’t think we have all of the grounding needed to launch forward with some of these ideas that would be legally sustainable, so we cannot forget that we have some homework to do in order to show up and prop up some of the solutions

that are bubbling.”

Of course, the \$65 billion set aside for broadband will hopefully go a long way toward closing the digital divide, but one former Commission head isn’t sure that there will come a day where the gap is a thing of the past. That’s not for lack of trying. It’s tied to the nature of the deployment and evolution of U.S. networks.

“I think that because our networks are so dynamic and they’re always evolving, we’ll always be addressing this issue to some extent... technology changes and some people get access to the newest and the fastest before others,” *Clinton* appointee *Bill Kennard* said. “The challenge that we have now is that there’s some people in the country, because of either where they live or how much money they have, [that] are cut off from the technology that they need to be full participants in the society.”

As for other ways to increase diversity in media ownership, ex-chair *Dick Wiley* (*Nixon, Ford, Carter*) said he’s hoping to see tax certificate policies from his time at the Commission revived. “In the 1970s, we recognized that the big problem for minorities trying to own broadcast stations and a lot of communications properties was a lack of capital. So [commissioner] Ben Hooks organized the program to try to bring bankers, advertisers, other sources of capital to the attention of prospective buyers, and we had some people actually become owners thereafter,” Wiley said. “The tax certificate was a very useful means to try to get capital. Obviously it was abused and abolished, but I think it can be brought back with appropriate safeguards.”

## 2021 CYNOPSIS RESOURCE CENTER

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ESSER BIDDING COX ADIEU IN DECEMBER

Cox Communications president/CEO Pat Esser is retiring on Dec 31 after 15 years in the company's top seat. He will be succeeded by Cox evp/chief sales and marketing officer Mark Greatrex, who will be named president. Esser joined Cox in 1979 as the company's director of programming and was part of the original management team that pioneered Cox Media, the company's ad sales division. He has been known throughout his tenure as a champion for digital equity, working to close the digital divide through efforts like the company's Connect2Compete broadband offering for low-income households. Outside of his day job at Cox, he serves as chair of the C-SPAN board and on the boards of CableLabs and NCTA. He also serves as an adviser to NAMIC and on the national Board of Governors of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. "I've always been fascinated by the cable business and have been fortunate to find a special family-owned company that lives its values," Esser said in a statement. "I'm grateful for the tremendous opportunities I've been given at Cox and the numerous mentors and committed peers that have helped me along this unbelievable ride of a lifetime." Greatrex has been a part of the Cox family since 2011, heading the company's residential sales and marketing divisions. He's also been at the center of Cox's efforts to become more sustainable and has continued pushing the company towards its goal of improving the lives of 34 million people by 2034. Prior to joining Cox, he held leadership roles at the likes of Unilever, America Online and the Coca-Cola Company.

DISH, AT&T MAKE NICE WITH NETWORK DEAL

DISH and AT&T are teaming up, agreeing to a long-term network services agreement that will make the latter the primary

network services partner for DISH MVNO customers. Under the deal, DISH will offer current and future wireless customers access to AT&T's wireless network in addition to the new DISH 5G network. That includes Boost Mobile, Ting Mobile and Republic Wireless customers. AT&T is also providing transport and roaming services as part of the partnership.

IS A DISH-DIRECTV COMBO COMING?

News of the AT&T-DISH deal had many speculating that it could mean a DirecTV-DISH merger is on the horizon. Talk of the possibility started in February after AT&T's decision to team up with TPG Capital to spin off DirecTV into a new company. "There were two big challenges: first, was the fact that AT&T and DISH hated each other (or rather AT&T hates DISH). We thought inserting TPG as an intermediary would help get around it, but it would still be a challenge. It is clearly not, given the deal AT&T and DISH have signed here," New Street Research said in a note. "The second challenge is regulatory. This remains. Though we see it as a hurdle; not a barrier." MoffettNathanson said calling this deal a precursor to a DirecTV-DISH merger would be reading too much into it. Rather, it called the arrangement a huge win for DISH, whose MVNO deal with T-Mobile has a 2027 end date. The analysts see it as a major loss for T-Mobile, Verizon and even AT&T. "Under the T-Mobile agreement, DISH had until 2025 to satisfy the FCC, but only two more years afterwards to satisfy the much more exacting demands of customers. That was always the real challenge. And it was why we never believed DISH would succeed as a facilities based provider (the fact that they were going to be O-RAN based was largely irrelevant

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

to this challenge,)" MoffettNathanson said in a note. "AT&T has let DISH off the hook."

### CNN+ SET FOR Q1 2022

It was back in February when the *NYT* reported a **CNN** subscription streamer was in the works, and we now have a clearer picture of what that could look like straight from the horse's mouth. **CNN+** is set to debut in 1Q22. Subscribers can look forward to original, live, on-demand and interactive programming on a standalone DTC service. No word on the price yet. The content offerings will be separate from **CNN**, **CNN International**, **HLN** and **CNN en Español** linear TV programming. At launch, **CNN+** will feature 8-12 hours of live, daily news programming with existing and new **CNN** talent as well as a community component for viewers to connect directly with talent in real-time. The streamer will also feature non-fiction, long-form programming including past seasons of **CNN** favorites like "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown," "Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy," "This is Life with Lisa Ling" and "United Shades of America" with *W. Kamau Bell*. The streamer will also include its own library of original series and films, to be announced later this year. **CNN+** will live on the existing **CNN** app.

### AVOD CATCHING UP TO SVOD IN USAGE

While SVODs maintain 74% of the TV content viewer pie, AVODs are catching up. Nearly half (46%) of viewers in the U.S. report usage of an AVOD at least monthly and 28% using FAST with ad-supported linear channels. That's according to **Horowitz Research's** "State of Viewing and Streaming 2021" report. Viewers report using **Pluto TV**, **Tubi**, **The Roku Channel** app and **IMDb TV** most often among the AVODs. Research from the study also suggests viewers are more tolerant of ad interruptions on streamers than on linear TV. Six in 10 (58%) of streaming viewers say ads are a fair "price" when they get to watch TV content for free. Overall, 35% of viewers' self-reported time is spent on traditional services providing linear content, while 37% is spent on streamed content. The rest is on cable or satellite-delivered VOD, DVR'd content or DVDs. However, when the sample size is narrowed from 18+ to 18-34-year-olds, the picture looks different. This demo spends 50% of its time on streamers and 18% of its time on traditional, linear content.

### UNIVISION LEADERSHIP REVAMP

In the wake of **Univision's** \$4.8 billion pending acquisition of **Televisa**, the content company is restructuring its corporate leadership team. *Carlos Ferreira*, current **Televisa** CFO, will become CFO for **Univision** on Oct 1 and merge into CFO for the combined company following the transaction's close. Until then, he'll advise the senior leadership team as it strategizes the integration. *Jose Tomas* joins **Univision** as chief administrative officer immediately. He previously led human resources for **General Motors**, **Anthem Inc** and **Burger King Corporation**. *Jessica Rodriguez* is elevated to chief brand and impact officer for **Univision** and for the combined company when the transaction closes. She's served as CMO and president, entertainment for three years. *Juan Carlos Rodriguez* was promoted to president, sports enterprises, effective immediately, and will hold the same role at the combined company when the

transaction is complete. He previously served **Televisa** and **Univision Networks** as president, sports content. *Flavia Vigio* joins **Univision** as evp, communications. She comes from **WarnerMedia**, where she most recently served as head of general entertainment consumer marketing and public relations, Latin America. *Pilar Ramos* joins as general counsel and corporate secretary, effective immediately. Once the merger is complete, he will become general counsel for **Televisa-Univision**. He comes from **Mastercard**, where he worked for 18 years and served most recently as general counsel, North America.

### ALTICE USA UNVEILS STREAMING 4K

**Altice USA** introduced **Optimum Stream** and **Suddenlink Stream**, a streaming 4K device available to the company's broadband-only customers for free with 1 Gig internet. The technology will be powered by **Android TV OS** and give users access to thousands of apps and streaming services on **Google Play** as well as more than 50 free live streaming channels including **News 12**, **i24News**, **Cheddar News**, **Kabillion**, **Wired**, **Reelz**, **Bon Appétit** and **Stadium**. The technology is self-installed and compatible with **Google Assistant**. The device will be available to all other **Optimum** and **Suddenlink** broadband-only customers for \$5 per month.

### NBCU CRAFTS TOKYO 2020 APP FOR NCTC, FIOS

**NBCUniversal** announced it is creating an app for **NCTC** members and **Verizon Fios TV** users to experience the networks' **Tokyo Olympic** coverage. The app centralizes **NBCU's** new and previously-developed Olympic content. The **Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games App** will include more than 1,000 Olympic Games VODs, personalization by sport, up-to-date standings and improved navigation features. **NBCUniversal** plans to scale the offering to more events and providers in the future.

### PROGRAMMING

**ESPN** and **The Walt Disney Company** reached a partnership with *Peyton Manning* and his company, **Omaha Productions**. *Peyton* and *Eli Manning* will headline "Monday Night Football" MegaCasts for 30 games across three seasons starting with the 2021 season. Each MegaCast will be aired on **ESPN2**, with potential for distribution on other Disney properties such as **ESPN+**, complementing the traditional "Monday Night Football" telecast, which will continue on **ESPN** and/or **ABC** weekly. The deal expands on the relationship that began with a 2019 partnership between *Manning*, **Omaha Productions**, **ESPN** and **The Walt Disney Company**. - News shows "Dan Abrams Live" and "Morning in America" begin airing on **NewsNation** Sept 27 at 8pm ET and 7am ET, respectively.

### PEOPLE

**FuboTV** named *Alison Sternberg* svp, investor relations. She comes to **fuboTV** from **SmileDirectClub**, where she served as vp, investor relations. - **Crown Media Family Networks** appointed *Steve Handler* as svp, pricing & planning. He joins from business technology consulting agency **Infinitive**. - *Anthony Busse* joined **Firstlight Media** as head of sales, Americas. He spent more than a decade at **Verizon**, most recently as director of sales, media and entertainment strategic accounts, North America.