

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Big Bucks: Still a Long Road for Infrastructure Bill Broadband Funding

All eyes are on the House when it comes to the bipartisan infrastructure bill and its \$65 billion allocation for broadband. While there are some questions over whether moderate and progressive Dems can agree on the package following its approval in the Senate, that's not all that's up in the air.

"There's a long way to go. There is a great deal to be worked out, not only in getting a bill out of the House and signed by the president—which I think will happen. I just think there's a lot of work still to be done. Once it's passed, there's a significant amount of implementation work," **C Spire** managing director **Ben Moncrief** said during a **Fiber Broadband Association** webinar Thursday. As he put it, \$65 billion doesn't spend itself, meaning providers need to build close relationships with decisionmakers on the state, local and federal level.

Case in point, fellow panelist and **Crown Castle** public policy vp **Staci Pies** just got off a call before the webinar with officials from California—a state pretty advanced in terms of broadband funding programs. "Their one request to the industry on that call was to please advocate... for very close coordination among the **FCC**, **NTIA** and **Department of Agriculture's** RUS so that the administrative burden is minimized for the states, which I think then facilitates better optimization of the funding for the industry," Pies said. "I'm concerned a little bit that if this legislation passes, or even if it doesn't, there's so much money now that's being injected into the ecosystem that there

might be a tendency to say, 'hey, we'll figure this out.'"

And it's a lot of money, particularly when you add in other programs, such as Emergency Broadband Benefit, NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and more. "This is historic. It seems like every 10 years or so we get this tremendous event in communications, and this is one of them," said FBA counsel and **Kelley Dye & Warren** partner **Tom Cohen**. "Right now, every year the FCC and RUS give out about \$10 billion in all their universal service programs. If you look at the infrastructure bill, in effect, that's going to double the amount that's going to out each year."

A lot of the government broadband money is being funneled through NTIA, with panelists questioning whether it has the resources to handle it all. Cohen suggested it may look to have the FCC assist and could hire a business consulting firm. Moncrief recommended everyone brush up on the history of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, a grant program administered by NTIA that invested approximately \$4 billion in broadband projects about 10 years ago. "Familiarize yourself with those processes because I think those notebooks will be coming off the shelves very soon as the folks at NTIA have a fairly overwhelming task of taking these dollars and administering them to the states as well," he said.

One positive sign for administering the programs on a state level is this stat thrown out by **Corning** federal government affairs manager **Jordan Gross**: In 2021, 175 state broadband funding bills were introduced, with 50 of those enacted. "When

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comparing it to the dollar amount in [the infrastructure bill], it's pennies. But I think what's really important is these bills have gone through at the state level and it starts to prepare the offices and the processes so that when the larger dollar amounts start rolling through NTIA, they aren't starting from scratch," he said.

All this funding for broadband construction begs the question of whether there will be supply chain issues for fiber. "It's a revolutionary amount of money, and certainly, the industry is preparing and has already been preparing in order to address any capacity concerns," said Gross. "The simple answer is you should not be concerned because when you're talking about \$40 billion in addition to all of the other funds that are available, industry is prepared to step up and address that."

It didn't sound like webinar attendees fully bought that response, with FBA president/CEO Gary Bolton noting that audience members were submitting questions with detailed lead times for all different kinds of fiber products, with lead times ranging from 40-45 weeks to 78-79 weeks. "I know we've been getting a lot of questions about that so let's take that back to all our fiber suppliers and make sure we provide the industry confidence that they're going to be able to get the fiber they need," Bolton said.

#### FTC SLAMS FACEBOOK WITH NEW ANTITRUST SUIT

The **FTC** isn't done in its antitrust battle with **Facebook**, filing an amended version of its lawsuit against the social media company Thursday. The agency's original lawsuit was dismissed in June by a federal judge who declared that there weren't sufficient claims to support the argument that Facebook has

illegally monopolized the marketplace. It was given until August 19 to file an amended claim. Many of the allegations in the new suit haven't changed from its predecessor, including that Facebook has the ability to exclude competition, control prices or reduce the quality of its offering to users without significant consequence. The FTC has added detailed statistics and more details on how Facebook's activity has harmed specific developers. This is among the first major actions to be taken by FTC chair *Lina Khan*, who has historically been a vocal critic of Big Tech. Facebook requested that she be forced to recuse herself from votes or decisions regarding the agency's antitrust case against the social media giant, which the Commission denied.

#### GREAT AMERICAN COUNTRY FLYING TO NEW TIER

**Great American Country** has scored a major distribution win with **Comcast**. Starting today, the network is moving from the operator's Digital Preferred video tier to the Digital Starter tier across its footprint. The shift will be occurring over the next few months, with the Connecticut market being among the first to see the shift. Great American Country was acquired by investor group **GAC Media** from **Discovery** back in June. At the time, GAC Media also acquired **RIDE TV**.

#### DISNEY, NCTC SIGN NEW DISTRIBUTION DEAL

**Disney** and the **NCTC** have struck a multi-year distribution deal that will see the co-op's more than 700 member operators offer the **ACC Network** to their customers starting September 1. In addition, the operators will continue to be able to offer the **ESPN** networks, Disney branded channels, **Freeform**, the **FX** networks and the **National Geographic** channels. Retransmission consent for the **ABC**-owned television stations is also



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## IN-PERSON & VIRTUAL

**POWERHOUSE  
General Session  
KEYNOTES:**



**Eric S. Yuan**  
Founder & CEO,  
Zoom Video  
Communications, Inc.



**Wendell Weeks**  
Chairman & CEO,  
Corning, Inc.

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included. NCTC member operators will also be able to directly market **Disney+** and **ESPN+** to their consumers, adding direct links to the services' sign-up pages to their websites.

### STONEPEAK CLOSES ASTOUND DEAL

**Stonepeak Infrastructure Partners** closed its \$8.1 billion acquisition of **Astound Broadband** Thursday. Astound Broadband includes **RCN**, **Grande Communications**, **Wave Broadband** and **enTouch Systems**. Since the announcement of the Stonepeak transaction, Astound has purchased three markets from **WOW!** and acquired **Harris Broadband**. Stonepeak plans to partner with the Astound management team to look for additional M&A opportunities and continue the company's organic network expansion.

### HOUSE REPUBLICANS CALL FOR NATIONAL DATA LAW

**House Commerce** Republicans *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA), *Bob Latta* (R-OH) and *Gus Bilirakis* (R-FL) are calling again for a national privacy and data security law in light of a major data breach at **T-Mobile**. The wireless provider offered up its initial findings on the breach Wednesday, and so far, it knows that data tied to more than 40 million people was included in stolen files. T-Mobile published a webpage Wednesday with the latest information and tools for customers to protect themselves. "The T-Mobile data breach is of serious concern. While we have more to learn to determine how this breach happened and its potential wide-ranging consequences, we urge all companies to do everything they can to safeguard and protect Americans' personal information," the Republicans said in a statement. "We need strong national standards that ensure industries can innovate, strengthen cybersecurity and data privacy, and keep up with the evolving ways bad actors steal personal information."

### SPECTRUM NEWS APP HITS MAINE

**Spectrum Networks** is launching its first digital-only local news platform in a non-**Spectrum News** linear TV market. Spectrum local journalism will be available exclusively to its video and internet customers in Maine via the Spectrum News App. Six journalists and producers who live and work in Maine will provide the area with community reporting. Kicking off the launch, Spectrum named *Daniel Dinsmore* executive producer for the platform. Dinsmore joins from *The Maine Monitor*, where he was editor and publisher.

### RATINGS

**Fox News Channel's** "Gutfeld!" beat out all late-night programs on cable and broadcast television in total viewers and A25-54 Tuesday. The episode, airing in the 11pm timeslot, averaged 2.12 million total viewers and 434,000 viewers A25-54. It marks the first time since the show's launch that it has surpassed all broadcast programs across the board in ratings.

### CARRIAGE

**Sling TV** is now offering **QVC** on its service. QVC is the only livestream shopping channel on Sling, and is available to all customers. With this launch, the shopping channel is now on subscription live TV streaming services with a combined total

of more than 13 million subscribers. – **BBC Select** is now available on streaming service **Struum**. Struum subscribers can access BBC Select current affairs and true crime documentaries like "Frat Boys," "Escape From Dubai" and "Secrets of Silicon Valley" as well as celebrity music titles like "Ariana Grande—Live in London," "It Was 40 Years Ago Today" and "Kylie's Secret Night" along with travel and culture documentaries. BBC Select is among the latest of the more than 30 streaming services to arrive on Struum.

### PROGRAMMING

**CNN** will exclusively air "We Love NYC: The Homecoming Concert" Aug 21 at 5pm ET across its platforms. The special will air live worldwide on CNN, **CNN International**, **CNN en Español**, **CNN.com** and **CNNgo**. Coverage begins 4pm ET with anchor *Anderson Cooper* conducting a series of interviews and highlighting New York frontline workers. – Season 9 of **Bravo's** "Below Deck" debuts Oct 25 at 9pm on the net and streams next day on **Peacock**. – "Yellowstone" will return for a fourth season Sept 7 on **Paramount Network** with a two-episode premiere. The debut will serve as a launch pad for series' "Mayor of Kingstown" and Yellowstone prequel series "1883," launching Nov 14 and Dec 19, respectively on **Paramount+**.

### BOARD MOVES

**Cable One** rejected board member and **Markel** co-CEO *Thomas Gayner's* offer to resign from the board after he received less than a majority of votes cast at its annual meeting in May. The company said in an **SEC** filing that the voting results were apparently primarily due to "overboarding" policies at certain institutional investors and third-party corporate governance firms that set limits on the number of public company boards on which a nominee for director may serve. In addition to Cable One, Gayner serves on the boards of **Colfax Corporation**, **Graham Holdings Company**, **The Davis Series Mutual Funds** and Markel Corporation. The board determined that it is in the best interest of the company and stockholders to reject Gayner's resignation subject to him reducing by one the number of boards he serves on by March 31, 2022. It solicited feedback from stockholders in reaching the decision.

### PEOPLE

**Mega Broadband Investments** promoted *Andy Parrott* to president, effective immediately. He will also keep his title as COO. Mega Broadband operates as **Vyve Broadband**. Parrott joined MBI in 2019. – *Matthew Berry* has joined **Akin Group** as partner in the communications and information technology section of its practice. Berry has more than 12 years of experience at the **FCC**, serving as chief of staff under former chair *Ajit Pai* and general counsel. – **MSG Networks** hired *Talaya Wilkins* as vp, content strategy. She joins from **ESPN**, where she most recently served as managing producer on **ESPN+**. – *Megan Barbe* is joining **Crown Media Family Networks** as vp, consumer insights. She comes from **Freeform**, where she served as vp, research and consumer insights.



# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## There's Always Another Chance to Change

Many individuals have been affected by drug addiction, whether they know someone who has struggled or they themselves are trying to get clean. Repeat drug offenders can be sentenced to upwards of 70 years in prison, and two leaders in Sevier County, Tennessee, are trying to give them another chance. In "The Program: Prison Detox," qualified inmates from Sevier County Jail are offered a chance to walk free if they graduate from a three-month rehabilitation program. The first three episodes of the series will debut on **discovery+** on Wednesday, with the other four rolling out weekly. Over the last four years, approximately 150 people have gone through the program, which touts a 72% success rate. "But when you talk about how many people we help, when you start helping one person that's in addiction, you end up helping their family, and it's a generational thing," jail administrator and program co-creator *Chris Wolcott* said during a **TCA** summer tour panel. The program was created from scratch, and many of the experts that eventually joined the cause were only added once administrators realized there was a need. But when the program administrators needed help, the community was always ready to step up and offer a hand. "We actually started this without a playbook, so we really didn't know what experts we needed. We just got started and when we saw a need, we reached out within our community and we found our experts here in our community that have stepped up and helped us," program co-creator and Sheriff *Robert Gentry* said. "We had 53 registered volunteers that came into the jail every week." The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed operations at the jail, but the program was still allowed to continue. Its experts were needed more than ever before as graduates and participants struggled to adapt. "We have seen a lot of people who were doing good in their recovery that when you yank the carpet out from underneath them in 24 hours, they fail," Wolcott said. "But what we see is that they're rebounding back, and we didn't have the loss of participation like we felt like we would." – *Sara Winegardner*

### REVIEWS

"Frontline: In the Shadow of 9/11," streaming at [pbs.org/frontline](https://pbs.org/frontline), **YouTube** and the **PBS** video app. It took us several minutes before we were certain that this 90-minute doc was "In the Shadow of 9/11." First, the date was wrong. At least we thought so. A 9/11 doc should begin around 2001; this one starts in 2005. And in FL, not NY. Eventually, though, we were hooked. The story looks at what happened after 9/11, indeed right after. We're told *President George W. Bush*, after receiving an **FBI** briefing in the moments following the 9/11 bombings, addressed agency leaders, 'The details you have about the attacks are all well and good, but what are you doing to prevent the next one?' Part of the answer is the subject of this doc, which *Dan Reed* directed, filmed and produced. The director of the controversial *Michael Jackson* doc "Leaving Neverland," Reed is a master storyteller. Here he's combined FBI footage and audio surveillance with interviews to weave a story about how federal law enforcement became more proactive after 9/11 regarding intelligence leads that included mentions of *Osama bin Laden* and al Qaeda. Some advice: lean in. This is a fascinating story with many characters and numerous turns. At times, it's closer to the plot of a spy movie than a doc. And it's excellent. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(08/09/21-08/15/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.713</b>	<b>2,196</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.431</b>	<b>1,328</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.371</b>	<b>1,142</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.333</b>	<b>1,027</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.266</b>	<b>818</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.263</b>	<b>811</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.259</b>	<b>799</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.254</b>	<b>782</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.238</b>	<b>734</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.234</b>	<b>721</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.231</b>	<b>713</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.218</b>	<b>673</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.218</b>	<b>671</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.197</b>	<b>607</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.171</b>	<b>527</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.170</b>	<b>523</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.167</b>	<b>514</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.164</b>	<b>504</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.160</b>	<b>493</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.152</b>	<b>469</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.152</b>	<b>468</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.138</b>	<b>424</b>
<b>NFL</b>	<b>0.137</b>	<b>421</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.135</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.129</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.127</b>	<b>391</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.125</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.123</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.123</b>	<b>378</b>
<b>NICK</b>	<b>0.118</b>	<b>364</b>
<b>APL</b>	<b>0.117</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>TRAVEL</b>	<b>0.117</b>	<b>359</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.115</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>ADSM</b>	<b>0.114</b>	<b>351</b>

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



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