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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## One Down: Congress Turns to Build Back Better Act

Cheers from broadband circles were heard far and wide over the weekend after the House of Representatives voted 228-206 to pass the more than \$1 trillion infrastructure package that included \$65 billion for broadband deployment.

“The provisions in the final act appropriately focus on getting broadband infrastructure first to areas where it does not currently exist, while at the same time continuing to promote faster speeds and disincentivizing duplicative projects,” **Comcast** said in its statement on the bill’s passing. “Allowing local communities flexibility and valuing both private and publicly funded projects will be key to closing the digital divide.”

But there’s still one thing left for Congress to debate that everyone should be keeping an eye on: the Build Back Better reconciliation package. It is scheduled to be taken up by the House the week of November 15, and includes major funding for broadband affordability and adoption efforts.

According to a draft of the bill [released](#) on October 28, the legislation would allocate \$475 million for a Connected Device Grant Program, which would provide connected devices for free or at a low cost to eligible households. It would also grant an additional \$300 million for the **FCC**’s Emergency Connectivity Fund, an effort to support connectivity at schools and libraries by funding connected device purchases and connectivity services for students and patrons. Some \$295 million would be granted to the **NTIA** for grants to cover public-

private partnerships for pilot projects that would increase access to affordable covered broadband service in urban communities through long-term solutions.

The FCC would receive \$100 million to conduct outreach and provide education to the public tied to broadband and communications affordability programs run by the Commission. An additional \$5 million would be appropriated to the NTIA to establish an advisory committee of 12 members, experts on broadband affordability from diverse backgrounds, to advise the agency, the FCC and Congress on ways to make connectivity more affordable for urban and suburban broadband subscribers, including communities of color and low-income households.

**Public Knowledge** encouraged the House to act quickly on the package, and to keep all provisions that would fund digital equity outreach and secure more devices for low-income households. “While this legislation takes important steps to prevent providers from discriminating based on a region’s income or demographic characteristics, the effectiveness of this provision will depend upon the Federal Communications Commission’s interpretation,” Public Knowledge President & CEO *Chris Lewis* said in a statement. “We urge the FCC to make sure that all consumers have equal access to broadband and we look forward to the speedy confirmation of the new FCC nominations in order to have a full five-member FCC ready to tackle this important implementation.”

Some entities aren’t wasting any time waiting for a decision



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on the reconciliation package now that the infrastructure bill has passed. The **Fiber Broadband Association** is shifting its focus to the NTIA and state and local governments. It's developing a playbook that will outline best practices from the top state broadband programs to help NTIA and states without those resources accelerate the availability and deployment of broadband infrastructure funding.

"FBA will be working closely with both NTIA and the FCC in 2022, and we anticipate a high level of activity as the [Notice of Funding Opportunity] is under development, with no shortage of pushback from industry groups that view fiber as a threat," FBA President & CEO Gary Bolton said in an email to members.


**C-BAND DELAYS TO CONTINUE?**

It was just last week when **Verizon** and **AT&T** agreed to delay the deployment of C-band spectrum into their networks to Jan 5 to assuage fears that it could disrupt aviation operations in the U.S. But already, there is concern that this will be the first in a number of delays that will indefinitely push back the deployment until the **Federal Aviation Administration** allows it. There's currently no clear path to a resolution, or a reason why the FAA would stand down and allow the wireless operators to begin transmitting their C-band spectrum when it still has fears that such actions could interfere with the automated equipment that helps land planes, for instance. But there are some additional efforts folks like Verizon and AT&T could agree to that could make it harder for the FAA to continue blocking the deployment. For instance, additional testing could be done to ensure aviation technology functions properly

while C-band spectrum is being utilized for 5G services. That could be paired with a phased roll-out to allow areas where wireless transmitters and airports are far apart to begin seeing the benefits of C-band spectrum. And of course, there is always the possibility that the White House or Congress step in and give wireless operators the green light to move ahead despite the FAA's wishes. "This is tricky but possible. The FAA Administrator is a holdover from the Trump Administration so his willingness to take directions from the White House is likely less than if he were a Biden appointee," **New Street Research** said in a note. "Still, a statement from either the White House (which has both a bit more time and wind at its back with the infrastructure win) or the Secretary of Transportation stating that the experts have reviewed the evidence and agree with the **FCC** position, would provide incentives for the FAA to wrap it up."

**IMAX ARRIVES ON DISNEY+**


In celebration of **Disney+** Day, the streamer is making a selection of top Marvel titles available to watch in **IMAX's** Expanded Aspect Ratio at home. The feature offers viewers up to 26% more picture for select sequences. The feature will launch on Nov 12. The 13 titles with the aspect ratio available at launch include "Shang-Chi and The Legend of the Ten Rings," which is also scheduled to arrive on the service on Nov 12, as well as old Marvel favorites like "Black Panther," "Iron Man" and "Avengers: Infinity War." In the future, the partnership will expand to offer Disney+ subscribers additional enhanced audio and video options. Additionally, Disney+ is offering new and eligible returning subscribers a month of the service for \$1.99.



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**HALLMARK ARRIVING ON YOUTUBE TV**

**Crown Media Family Networks** and **YouTube TV** struck a deal that will see **Hallmark Channel, Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** and **Hallmark Drama** launch on the streaming service. It's an expansion of the pair's current deal which sees YouTube TV offer **Hallmark Movies Now** as an optional add-on offering.

**RESTORING INTERNET FREEDOM IN CUBA**

Sens *Marco Rubio* (R-FL), *Rick Scott* (R-FL) and *Bill Hagerty* (R-TN) introduced legislation Friday that would require the U.S. to establish and maintain the capability to transmit Internet access into foreign territories where those services would promote freedom from oppressive regimes. The Protecting Against Tyrants by Restoring Internet Access and Yielding Vital Interconnectivity in Designated Areas Act would also strengthen support for circumvention technologies that allow users to evade government-backed Internet censorship.

**FCC OFFERING MORE THAN \$3 BILLION IN ECF**

The **FCC** is committing an additional \$421 million in the latest round of Emergency Connectivity Fund announcements, bringing the total program commitments to over \$3.05 billion. With these additional commitments, the Commission has met its goal of responding to 70% of all applications within 100 days of the closing of the first filing window. The program has now committed support to 6,954 schools, 613 libraries and 80 consortia, and they'll receive more than 6.8 million connected devices and more than 3.5 million broadband connections. Entities receiving funding are located in all 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

**DEMS WANT MORE POLITICAL AD TRANSPARENCY**

Reps *Anna Eshoo* (D-CA), *Peter Welch* (D-VT) and *John Yarmuth* (D-KY) want to modernize the **FCC's** reporting requirements tied to political advertising aired by broadcasters. The Commission currently requires TV and radio broadcast stations to publicly report broadcast time sold or given away for political ads, but they do not have to do so using any sort of standardized format. The Fair and Clean Campaign Transparency Act would ask broadcasters to submit that information in a machine-readable format to allow analysis on the information for the public's benefit. "The American Public owns the airwaves used by broadcasters, and Americans have every right to know how these airwaves are used, especially when it comes to the opaque world of political advertising," Eshoo said in a statement. Sen *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) sponsored companion legislation in the Senate.

**DISH OFFERING NOTES TO FUND SPECTRUM BUYS**

**DISH** subsidiary DISH DBS Corporation plans to offer approximately \$4 billion aggregate principal amount of its senior secured notes. The net proceeds of the offering are intended to be used to make a loan to DISH Network

to finance the potential purchase of wireless spectrum licenses and for general corporate purposes, including the buildout of its wireless infrastructure.

**SALUTING OUR VETERANS**

**NBCU** tapped **T-Mobile** as the first official launch partner for its "Because I'm a Veteran" One Platform campaign. It will highlight the importance of hiring veterans and supporting their transition back into civilian life. Airing across NBCU properties through Nov 12, the PSAs will feature NBCU employees who are veterans as they describe how they transferred their skills from the service to their current positions. In May 2022, T-Mobile will feature its own employees in the "Because I'm a Veteran" campaign. Additionally, NBCU and T-Mobile will donate \$75,000 to **Hiring Our Heroes**, an organization that connects the military community with American businesses. – **Spectrum** is providing its video customers with an On Demand collection of films highlighting the major conflicts and wars of the last century. From Nov 9-15, films like "Dunkirk," "American Sniper," and "Red Tails" will be available in the For the Troops category of the Spectrum On Demand portal.

**DOING GOOD**

**Comcast Washington** and the **Boys and Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound** are teaming up for National STEM/STEAM Day. Comcast is donating 40 laptops, free internet service and \$15,000 to five Boys and Girls Clubs in the South Puget Sound as part of Project Up, a \$1 billion company wide commitment to reach 50 million people over the next 10 years with tools, resources and skills that help them succeed in the increasingly-digital world.

**PROGRAMMING**

**Science Channel** is uncovering the secrets of one of England's most well-known monuments in "Stonehenge: Land of the Dead." The documentary premieres Nov 28 at 8pm. – **AMC+** acquired three-part psychological thriller "Anne Boleyn." The series will make its U.S. premiere on the streamer on Dec 9 with the two remaining episodes arriving on the following Thursdays.

**PEOPLE**

**Verizon** named *Manon Brouillette* EVP & CEO of Verizon Consumer group, effective Jan 1. She will succeed *Ronan Dunne*, who will transition to the role of Strategic Advisor. "Ronan made an incredible mark on our company," Verizon Chairman/CEO *Hans Vestberg* said in a statement. "He led teams to new heights in customer centricity and value, spearheading strategic acquisitions as well as entirely new ways of working for and with the customer, all while providing value and inking innovative partner relationships that have transformed the industry." Before joining the wireless operator as COO & Deputy CEO in July, Brouillette was President & CEO of Canadian telecom company **Videotron**. She also previously served as a board member for **Altice USA**.