

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Go Green: WOW! Sees Plenty of Greenfield Opportunity

With **WOW!** completing its sale of five service areas last month, the operator believes it's well-positioned as a low-leverage company that can grow through greenfield expansion. During the company's investor day Thursday, CEO *Teresa Elder* projected WOW! would add 200,000 homes passed and can envision a plan of up to 400,000 homes or more over the next five years. That would be a 21% increase in homes passed.

"Greenfield, as we define it, is building new markets not adjacent to our existing network. To enter new areas so we can drive rapid penetration after buildout and have strong returns. We've been looking at greenfield opportunities for quite a while and we see a large addressable market in the continental U.S.," Elder said. WOW! will use fiber-to-the-home in all those greenfield markets, with Elder noting that many of those potential markets have less competition than the areas WOW! currently serves. "The cost per home past is a bit higher, but we will see penetration rates grow faster as we launch in markets with less competitive intensity," she said. "To me, the biggest risk is not doing enough, fast enough." WOW! won't see new subs from greenfield growth until 2023, but it plans to begin buildouts next year.

Following the sale of select systems to **Atlantic Broadband** and **Astound Broadband** for \$1.8 billion, WOW! is now at a leverage of 2.6x and serves 14 markets in Michigan and the Southeast. Its penetration of homes passed stands at 28%

and execs believe it will get to 30%+ with greenfield markets. No specifics on the expense for these greenfield buildouts, but management acknowledged there would be some significant marketing spend as the company introduced the WOW! brand to new markets. "We want to go in and create some really meaningful sponsorships and partnerships with the community, understand what's important to them, and craft our marketing strategy around it. Really being local because one size does not fit all for every community and having that focus will be important early on for us to be successful," said *Amy Bell*, SVP of Brand Strategy and Marketing.

While greenfield markets will have the latest technology, WOW! feels pretty good about the life left in its legacy systems, especially given plans to upgrade DOCSIS capability to support 10G. WOW! has rolled out IPTV product WOW! tv+ to all of its markets, but it's not requiring customers to switch from legacy video. **GCI** is taking a different approach. It was originally planning to shut down its traditional video offering on Dec. 31 but has delayed the deadline until the end of 1Q22. "We don't force our existing base of customers to convert to tv+, although many of them do because of all the many features that come with tv+ ... We're pleased with the uptick and pace of moving forward," Elder said, though she added the company's real focus is on "broadband first."

Speaking of broadband, WOW! launched usage-based billing in June to Chicago, one of the markets it sold off. Rather than call it a data cap, WOW!'s viewing it as tiered levels of

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service with varying data limits. Elder said usage-based billing is coming to “a few other” WOW! markets, adding that “very few customers actually ever breakthrough the data allotments they are given.”

**Comcast, Charter and Altice USA** have entered the mobile space. **Cox** appears to be close to launching, and WOW! is considering joining the party. “We’ve not thought that up to this point that it’s been an impediment to what we offer our customers. That being said, we are very aware how important for some customers the bundle is,” said Chief Customer Experience Officer *Don Schena*. “So we are taking a very close look at it, whether it is an MVNO with one of the providers today or some other way of getting into providing that product... It is something that we’re right in the middle of looking at closely right now.”

#### ANALYST: FIXED WIRELESS ISN'T FOR THE MASSES

The possibility that fixed wireless providers could prove formidable competition for incumbent cable providers has been a topic of conversation for years, but **MoffettNathanson** Founding Partner *Craig Moffett* still isn't convinced they'll move the needle. At a Thursday webinar hosted by **ACA Connects**, the analyst said it's challenging to figure out how a wireless provider can make the business case for entering the broadband market in any significant way. “We did some back-of-the-envelope math a while back that said if **T-Mobile** were to hit its target of 7-9 million fixed wireless broadband homes, that would grow their revenue by something like 10% relative to their mobile-only base case and it would load their network with about 26 times more traffic than the carrier has today,” Moffett said. “It’s really hard to justify... and I think that’s always going to be the struggle for the fixed wireless providers.” He added that it is possible to take on that traffic load successfully, particularly in rural areas where the wireless network could have an excess amount of capacity relative to the customer base, but it’s not a solution that can work across the board. Moffett also has his doubts about services like **Starlink, SpaceX’s** satellite broadband business. Based on his projections, even if it gets close to deploying 10,000 satellites, Starlink will still only be able to serve less than a million households in the U.S. “Even *Elon Musk* said recently, and a lot of people thought he was joking, but to be able to get that constellation fully up and built and running, you’re going to have to launch two rockets a week full of satellites throughout 2022,” Moffett said. “So you have to wonder whether that constellation is going to be able to get to real size and, if you don’t, they start to fall out of the sky. Literally, they’re falling out of the sky faster than you can replace them.” **Shentel** EVP/COO *Ed McKay* has plenty of insight into the fixed wireless opportunity given that the provider was a **Sprint** affiliate for 25 years, operating

its wireless network in the mid-Atlantic region. His read on the situation is much the same as Moffett’s, that rural areas may benefit from a fixed wireless option, but it won’t be able to perform in urban or perhaps even suburban areas. “I just don’t know that there’s the capacity there in the more dense areas to serve large numbers of customers as their primary broadband connection,” he said during a separate panel. “Our average cable broadband customer uses 20 times more data than our average wireless customer.”

### Cablefax Executive Round Up

#### Do you have an example of male allyship that made a difference to you?



**Sujata Gosalia**  
EVP & Chief Strategy Officer  
**Cox Communications**

“So many of my mentors, sponsors and allies have been men—their support and counsel have been invaluable to me. I would like to especially thank Pat Esser, who has been an outstanding ally for me during my time at

Cox. He epitomizes the actions that male allies can take—being a vocal champion for women, giving credit to women for the outcomes they drive, listening to women to understand their experiences, and mentoring women to help them advance. I, like so many other women across our industry, have benefitted from his advocacy.”



**Michelle Rice**  
President  
**TV One & CLEO TV**

“Yes, absolutely. Alfred Liggins, Urban One CEO and my boss, is the one that allowed me the opportunity to be President of TV One. He saw my accomplishments from the start, when I began working in sales at the network at

its inception. He knew I could lead the network to strengthen partnerships, develop strategic alliances and expand distribution for both TV One and CLEO TV—all of which has uniquely positioned our networks to navigate the changing broadcast environment and catapult them to even greater success.”



**Italia Commisso Weinand**  
EVP, Programming & HR  
**Mediacom**

“There are of course a number of executives that pushed me forward. I do look to a very critical point specifically at my time at Comcast and when at a significant early step in my career in the cable industry, an executive at

Comcast named David D’Ottavio gave me the trust and recognition when he tapped me on the shoulder to take on added responsibilities in a very complex situation. The circumstances raised my profile in the cable industry. It was that recognition of my abilities early in my career that gave me the confidence that I could do the job and grander things.”

**CARR: COVID-19 TELEHEALTH PROGRESS AT RISK**

FCC commissioner *Brendan Carr* has been a champion of the **FCC**'s efforts to support telehealth services, and he's worried the progress made in the space during the pandemic could easily be rolled back. "We had licensing rules, reimbursement rules that created incentive structures for healthcare systems to prefer seeing people in person... and there were waivers issued by HHS and other legislative actions taken to fix that during the pandemic. But all of that regulatory relief is set to expire when the pandemic declaration expires, and so it's easy to say we cannot go back to the pre-pandemic version of telehealth, but we very much can... if we don't lock in those regulatory changes," Carr said, adding there is some legislation in Congress right now aiming to do just that. One issue that's sure to be a topic of conversation at the FCC in the coming months will be reclassifying broadband under Title II. Carr has his own thoughts on what sort of regulations should be contemplated for internet service, but he's encouraged by the fact that neither FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* nor nominee *Gigi Sohn* believe the Commission should engage in rate regulation. "If we can take rate regulation off of the table, and I think a lot of Title II neutrality is simply a stalking horse for that, then I don't think there's a lot of complications in terms of finding some sort of common sense bright line rules that I think everybody would agree on at this point," he said.

**FUSE STANDS UP FOR SOHN**

**Fuse Media** is the latest programmer to publicly support the **FCC** nomination of *Gigi Sohn*. In a letter to Senators *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA), *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM), *Roger Wicker* (R-MS) and *John Thune* (R-SD), Fuse Media CEO *Miguel Roggero* called Sohn a much-needed advocate "for communities that continue to be underrepresented in media" despite the growth of multicultural populations.

**LAWMAKERS MOVE TO PROTECT PEG CHANNELS**

Reps *Anna Eshoo* (D-CA) and *Peter DeFazio* (D-OR) along with Senators *Ed Markey* (D-MA) and *Tammy Baldwin* (D-WI) reintroduced the Protecting Community Television Act Thursday. The bill would clarify that franchise fees that cable companies provide local governments only include monetary assessments, not in-kind contributions. Local governments are currently allowed to require cable companies to provide in-kind contributions that benefit PEG channels, schools and other community buildings. The FCC voted in 2019 to allow cable companies to assign a value to those contributions and deduct that amount from the franchise fees paid to the local governments. The lawmakers behind this legislation propose that the Commission's rule actually made local governments choose between supporting PEG channels and other institutions, putting that content at risk.

**HOTWIRE LAUNCHES 25G PON**

South Florida-based provider **Hotwire Communications** said it's the first U.S. company to deploy 25G PON equipment developed by **Nokia**. 25G PON enhances convergence on a Passive Optical Network, delivering disruptive 10 Gbps services or higher, premium enterprise services, 5G transport and

wholesale. Hotwire said the solution will enable it to increase fiber broadband capacity and deliver fully symmetrical upload and download speeds of 10 Gbps or higher to customers. It's been using 10 Gigabit, XGS PON in its network since 2018.

**PARAMOUNT+ SERVES UP CHANNELS**

**Paramount+** launched "Live Channels," which curates the most popular shows and movies on the service on linear channels. The list of channels covers genres such as Kids & Family, Reality TV, Crime & Justice and TV Classics. There are even channels dedicated to popular shows such as "Paw Patrol" and "Star Trek."

**FROM EBB TO AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY**

The **FCC** Wireline Competition Bureau issued an order waiving some of the rules around the \$3.2 billion Emergency Broadband Benefit Program as a result of provisions in the Infrastructure Act. The act provided \$14.2 billion for the longer-term "Affordable Connectivity Program," which will extend and supplant the EBB program. EBB funds will not be fully expended on Dec. 31, therefore that will be the effective start date of the Affordable Connectivity Program. The Infrastructure Act requires participating providers to offer the Affordable Connectivity Program discount on any internet service offering. As of Dec. 31, the FCC is waiving requirements that internet offerings be offered in the same manner and terms as offerings available on Dec. 1, 2020, since the Infrastructure Act removed that restriction. The Infrastructure Act provides for a 60-day transition period for households that were enrolled in the EBB Program before December 31, 2021. Those households can continue to receive the \$50/month EBB benefit vs the ACP's \$30/month benefit for the first 60 days of the new program.

**METRONET UPS USER EXPERIENCE WITH CORE**

**MetroNet** has picked **Atlas Digital Group's** CORE digital commerce platform as its official ecommerce platform. CORE is a turnkey digital commerce solution designed to optimize the purchase process. The service also offers performance dashboards to offer additional insights into the user experience and performance once the sales process has been streamlined.

**PEOPLE**

*Eleanor "Nell" DeVane* was named Chief Counsel for **ESPN**, effective next month. She has more than 20 years of experience in ESPN's legal department and has served as a deputy chief counsel since 2012. She succeeds *Diane Morse*, who is retiring at year-end after 25 years in the department. – *Lauren Townsend* will join **Fox Corp** as SVP, Communications on Jan. 3. She's currently a consultant to **Hulu** and has previously held leadership roles at **Starz** and **Sony Pictures**. – **TDS** CFO/EVP *Peter Sereda* plans to retire in May. He'll be replaced by *Vicki Villacrez*, who currently serves as SVP, Finance and CFO of TDS Telecom. *Michelle Brukwicki*, TDS's VP, Financial Analysis and Strategic Planning, will step into Villacrez's shoes following Sereda's retirement.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

**Cablefax Daily** will not publish on Friday, Dec. 10. We'll be back Monday and will keep you up-to-date at Cablefax.com.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Meet 'The Housewives of the North Pole'


We all knew the popular girl in high school and her faithful sidekick. They were stuck like glue, seemingly inseparable until the inevitable moment when life drove a wedge between them. But what if those friends weren't split apart, grew up and became the queens of Christmas in their small town? Those two are at the heart of **Peacock's** "The Housewives of the North Pole," an original Christmas movie that focuses on Trish (Kyle Richards) and Diana (Betsy Brandt), two friends that have competed for (and won) the Best Holiday House decorating competition in North Pole, Vermont, for years. Just ahead of the big day, the pair's relationship blows up in devastating fashion, creating a rift that's felt throughout the town. "To be honest, I've known people like Trish and Diana my whole life," Director *Ron Oliver* told **CFX**. "That's what I thought was interesting about the script. While we've seen these kinds of characters in many teen-oriented movies over the years—the 'star' and the 'best friend'—I hadn't seen this type of relationship examined in an adult scenario, and certainly never in a Christmas movie." Richards and Brandt are largely known for their previous work in "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" and "Breaking Bad," respectively. But Oliver believes their unlikely marriage is the perfect mix for a holiday film, and he thinks their fans will agree. "Kyle's comic timing is in a class of its own, and Betsy's warmth and empathy brings real heart to the more slapstick elements of the movie, but the absolute magic of the film is in the chemistry these two artists share together on screen," Oliver said. "They're both such gifted actors, and this is such a departure for them in terms of characterization and, certainly, tone that I think their fans will really enjoy seeing them in this new 'Christmas light.'" The film hit the streamer Thursday. – Sara Winegardner

### REVIEWS

"Landscapers," **HBO** and streaming on **HBO Max**. Several people are credited with the aphorism, "The devil is in the details." In the case of "Landscapers," a 4-part HBO Original, you see that in the first seconds. A title in the first minutes of each episode says 'This is a true story.' Seconds later, the word 'true' leaves the screen. That's because *Ed Sinclair* takes liberties with the story of Susan and Christopher Edwards, a seemingly ordinary couple from Britain who did something extraordinary. When the series opens, Susan, a librarian and Christopher (the wonderful *David Thewlis*), an accountant, are living in France. Other than having money trouble—Christopher's limited French is preventing him finding work—the couple seem happy. Susan (the equally wonderful *Olivia Colman*) enjoys France, speaks a bit of French and has found a store that feeds her addiction: classic Hollywood films and memorabilia. Eventually, though, the money crunch leads Christopher to call his stepmother for help. She asks why he and Susan still are in France. With some trepidation he admits something—Susan and he killed her parents. 15 years ago. They're buried under the front lawn. So, it's not a Hollywood musical, sorry, Susan. Yet the combination of Colman and Thewlis, with a large shout-out to Sinclair, who's Colman's husband in real life, makes for compelling viewing. – Seth Arenstein

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(11/29/21-12/05/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.803</b>	<b>2,500</b>
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.777</b>	<b>2,421</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.452</b>	<b>1,409</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.371</b>	<b>1,154</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.294</b>	<b>917</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.294</b>	<b>915</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.281</b>	<b>875</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.249</b>	<b>775</b>
<b>PARA</b>	<b>0.242</b>	<b>753</b>
<b>HSTRY</b>	<b>0.239</b>	<b>745</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.229</b>	<b>712</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.228</b>	<b>709</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.225</b>	<b>702</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.214</b>	<b>666</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.212</b>	<b>661</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.203</b>	<b>633</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.180</b>	<b>561</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.177</b>	<b>552</b>
<b>NFL</b>	<b>0.175</b>	<b>544</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.171</b>	<b>532</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.155</b>	<b>483</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.149</b>	<b>463</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.149</b>	<b>463</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.142</b>	<b>444</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.135</b>	<b>421</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.134</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.120</b>	<b>375</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.113</b>	<b>353</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.106</b>	<b>330</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.102</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>APL</b>	<b>0.098</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>OXYGEN</b>	<b>0.095</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>TUDN</b>	<b>0.094</b>	<b>293</b>
<b>NICK</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>285</b>

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



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