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## Puzzle Pieces: Data Centers, Labor Key Parts of Infrastructure Planning

The infrastructure bill and the \$65 billion it makes available to expand broadband access and affordability are hopefully a huge step toward closing America's digital gaps. But ensuring that a large pipe is funneling access into a community may not be enough. *Jon Lin*, EVP/General Manager of Data Center Services at **Equinix**, is encouraging everyone to think about all of the pieces that create a digital infrastructure. While fiber and broadband are certainly parts of that puzzle, data centers, servers and towers also need to be considered.

"All of that together needs to be continued to be invested in," he said at an event hosted by the **Information Technology Industry Council** Tuesday. "I think there's continued work that needs to happen there on the policy side toward making it easier to go ahead and have access to data centers closer to the communities. Having the big pipe isn't enough. You need the servers actually close to these communities so that the performance characteristics of the application is equal to all of these populations." That continued investment will also be important to fuel ongoing modernization efforts to ensure aging infrastructure is able to be updated.

**Corning** Marketing Development Manager, Carrier Networks and Emerging Accounts *Jason Zelle* sees the infrastructure bill not just as an opportunity for the industry, but for the larger economy. From his perspective, the building of data centers closer to hard-to-serve rural communities could reinvigorate

those economies and reverse an emerging trend among younger generations of moving to urban areas for access to better job or educational opportunities.

"You have high-paying tech jobs that can be relocated into areas that have low cost of living, and we think data centers are a critical part of that. You can locate data centers as anchor institutions in different parts of the country," he said. "Tribal communities have been getting a lot of attention, we can see revitalization in those communities as well. Not just all the things we mentioned, but also things like entrepreneurship where they can now take their businesses outside of their local communities because they have access to high speed internet."

Of course, the placement of those data centers and other infrastructure will be determined by what areas are deemed unserved. Much of that relies on the creation of new broadband availability maps at the **FCC**. During a fireside chat earlier in the event, FCC Commissioner *Geoffrey Starks* said the agency is trying to move as quickly as possible to complete the maps. He offered an update on where the agency stands with the maps creations and said the industry

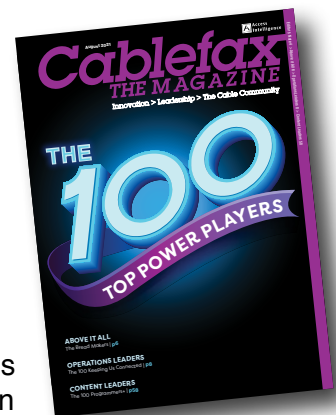
"At the Commission, the Broadband Data Task Force is building the necessary systems processes. We have hired a data architect, awarded a contract to build the data platform for the broadband data collection," he said. "What I understand is that we're in the process of procuring that broadband serviceable location fabric that will be the essential foundation for improved broadband data gathering at the agency."



## Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax:The Magazine.

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He added that part of Congress's directive on the infrastructure bill is to improve price transparency. The Commission will soon begin collecting and publishing price information from the ISPs participating in the Affordable Connectivity Program, and a vote is set for this month at the FCC on a broadband "nutrition label" that would make clear pricing and other service details to customers at the time of sale.

But even if the FCC creates more accurate maps and policies are established that can ensure that funding is going to the right places, there are some factors that are more unpredictable that could ultimately doom Congress's effort to connect America. Zellely warned that one of the biggest aspects that could lead to an overall failure will be the industry's labor crisis.

"Labor right now is in a crunch, and the timeline for some of this funding and guidance is really going to constrain this. The supply chain, which some folks would list as our number one concern right now, will fix itself. The free market will fix that," he said. "But labor is going to continue to be a challenge and what we forget is it is the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. So as states are thinking about their policies, think about the labor that's going to be required and how they can enable that labor through training programs or other sources."

#### DAVIDSON CONFIRMED TO HEAD NTIA

The Senate voted 60-31 Tuesday to confirm *Alan Davidson* as the **NTIA** Administrator, with Republicans responsible for the nay votes. On the Senate floor, Sen *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) praised Davidson as someone with a wealth of private and public sector experience. He will play a lead role in overseeing billions of dollars in funding for broadband infrastructure programs, including the \$42 billion

designated for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. In congratulating Davidson, **NCTA** noted that NTIA also will play an important role in advancing spectrum policy and on the development of a national policy on privacy and data. Davidson will have to coordinate closely with agencies such as the **FCC**, with agency chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* saying she looks forward to working together "on spectrum policy that reflects our national priorities and offering support as NTIA prepares to distribute the largest broadband infrastructure investment in our nation's history."

#### S&P SEES CABLE GROWTH SLOWING

A new outlook report from **S&P Global** anticipates cable's internet sub growth to moderate in 2022 from unsustainable highs over the past two years, especially as telco competition from FTTH intensifies. Telco fiber builds seem best situated to prevent cable from converting DSL subs, S&P said. "While modest share losses to telcos are possible, we believe it will be challenging for new fiber builds to take meaningful share because cable operators can offer internet speeds comparable to fiber (with an affordable technology path to keep pace), and scaled cable providers can also bundle broadband with TV and mobile services. Therefore, we expect successful fiber overbuilds to roughly split the market with cable when fully deployed, which will likely take several years," the analysts concluded. "Even if telcos execute well with their fiber deployments over the next five years, we project less than 50% of U.S. households would still not have a service capable of delivering internet speeds comparable to cable (from about 70% today)." S&P doesn't see any major consolidation in cable, describing **Cox** and **Altice USA** as unlikely sellers, though it acknowledges consolidation

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may continue among smaller players. “As profitability continues to expand, albeit at a slower rate, we expect FOCF to increase about 6%-8% in 2022 and 4%-6% in 2023, leaving most cable providers with significant financial flexibility,” the report concluded.

### CHRISTMAN NAMED CABLE CENTER CHIEF

Longtime **Cable Center** exec *Diane Christman* was tapped as the nonprofit's new President and CEO, succeeding *Jana Henthorn*. Christman joined the Center in 2006 as VP, Marketing and Development. She most recently served as SVP, Development and Chief Program Officer, a role that had her co-architect the Center's Vision 2025 strategic planning initiative with Henthorn. Global expansion is part of that plan, with Christman telling **CFX** that she realized several years ago that there was a place for the organization internationally. “There's a need for it. There's not another organization who does what we do in Europe,” even though there's a lot of focus on intrapreneurship there, she said. “One of the things we did really well ... was we had a great partnership with **CTAM Europe**, and our senior fellow would present regularly. There was a lot of leadership sharing and content sharing, and that's what I'm envisioning.” The Center is looking to expand its well-received Intrapreneurship Academy to companies globally. Christman also is tasked with broadening the nonprofit beyond cable. “Three years ago, that seemed more like a mountain. Right now, it seems more like a hill,” she said. “The industry is evolving and we have a responsibility to reflect the industry.” Before joining the Center, Christman spent several years working for the Denver Public Library. “I've had almost 17 years to under the cable industry and forge those relationships, but I also bring a nonprofit perspective,” Christman said. One of her first items of business will be to release the Center's first Innovation and Intrapreneurship Report, which will emphasize some of the nonprofits thought leadership takeaways. She's also looking forward to an in-person 2022 Cable Center Hall of Fame celebration, currently set for Sept. 15 at the Ziegfeld Theater in NYC.

### RATINGS

Georgia's 33-18 victory over the Alabama in Monday's “College Football Playoff National Championship” scored 22.6 million viewers across **ESPN** networks. That's up 19% from last year's showdown between Alabama and Ohio State and marks it as the top event on cable since the 2020 battle between LSU and Clemson. Across all ESPN3/ESPN apps, streaming minutes were up 33% over 2020. Saturday's “Monday Night Football” doubleheader (yes, that's confusing) delivered big numbers for ESPN. The Dallas-Philadelphia game and Kansas City-Denver match-up were two of the five most-watched MNF games in ESPN history (274 games since 2006). The Cowboys and Eagles generated an audience of 20.3 million viewers on ESPN, **ABC**, **ESPN Deportes**, while the Chiefs-Broncos delivered 19.1 million viewers across the same networks, resulting in a Doubleheader Saturday average of 19.7 million viewers. It's not surprising then that ESPN was the most-watched cable network in prime last week, averaging 3.52 million viewers. **Fox News** was able to edge out the sports giant in total day, 1.41 million viewers vs 1.08 million. – “Dexter: New Blood”

averaged 8 million weekly viewers across all platforms during its 10-ep run, making it **Showtime's** most-watched series ever. Sunday's finale scored 3 million viewers, going down as the most-watched Showtime finale in more than eight years. It surpassed the Season 3 finale of “Homeland” in 2013. Dexter first premiered on Showtime in 2006 and ran through 2013.

### INSP DONS A COWBOY HAT

**INSP** is leaning into its Western focus, rolling out a reimagined logo Tuesday that features a rugged cowboy hat sitting on top of the letters INSP. It follows 2019's launch of the tagline, “Heroes Live Here,” a nod to the net's Western content and everyday heroes. Yes, there was talk about a full-on name change, but ultimately INSP decided it made sense to stay the course. “Our name is definitely not as representative as I think our new logo is of our content, but I think we've built up such a loyal fanbase that has really come to embrace the name INSP. Plus, we have great relationships with all of our MVPD partners and folks like that, so that when we really thought about it, we felt it would be too disruptive to try and do both the logo and the name,” Marketing EVP *Hayes Tauber* told **CFX**. INSP opted to reach out to renowned design firm **Pentagram** as it embarked on the project and principal *Paula Scher* decided to take it on personally. Scher is one of the most acclaimed graphic designers in the world, whose anthology of work includes **Citibank's** logo and essentially every **Shake Shack** visual element. “We had reached out to Pentagram, not specifically to Paula, but she raised her hand. She's a big fan of classic movies and a fan of our content and genre of content,” said Tauber. “She's worked on **Coke** and **Microsoft**. We were really excited that she wanted to flex her creative muscles and try something different that she hadn't done before.”

### SINCLAIR REUPS NBC, FOX AFFILIS

**Sinclair** entered into multi-year renewals for **NBC** and **Fox** affiliations in 20 markets, including Las Vegas and Sioux City, IA. NBC affiliations and Fox affiliations were also renewed by Sinclair partners in 11 markets that Sinclair provides sales and other services to under a joint sales agreement or master services agreement.

### PROGRAMMING

**Tennis Channel** is preparing for its 15th year of Australian Open coverage, which begins Sunday at 5pm ET. Daily coverage will continue each afternoon through Jan. 30. – **HBO Sports** and **NFL Films** partnered on a doc about the life of four-time Super Bowl Champion *Terry Bradshaw*. “Terry Bradshaw: Going Deep” premieres Feb. 1 on **HBO** and **HBO Max**. – **Telemundo** is creating an adaptation of Argentinian series “Historia de un Clan.”

### PEOPLE

*Marc Cohen* was named Chief Revenue Officer for **Evolution Digital**. He previously served as EVP, Marketing Sales. Before joining the company in 2010, Cohen was VP, Sales for **Avail-TVN**. – **Starz** upped two on its international networks team: *Darren Nielson* to EVP, Distribution and Business Development and *Jeff Cooke* to SVP, Programming. – **Fox News Channel** promoted *Jessica Loker* to VP, Politics/Senior Executive Producer of “Fox News Sunday.” She joined the network in 2004.