

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Better Together: Cities, POC Worry about Being Left Behind by NTIA, FCC

The **NTIA's** \$42 billion BEAD program promises to close the digital divide by closing the affordability and access gaps in America, but disconnected urban communities and communities of color are worried they'll be left behind.

Digital discrimination has been a hot topic at the **FCC** and the agency is set to consider at its March meeting a Notice of Inquiry seeking comment on rules to ensure operators don't leave communities behind based on the demographic breakdown of a zip code, among other things. It was also a topic considered during a virtual panel hosted Tuesday by Commissioner *Geoffrey Starks* that focused on connecting Black communities through the BEAD program and additional subsidies.

In Chicago, one in five children under 18 lack broadband access, the majority of which are Black and Latinx, and the most disconnected neighborhoods lie on the city's South Side and West Side. "If you don't know Chicago, that is Black and Brown Chicago... When we talk about digital equity, we're talking about bringing up and empowering Black and Brown communities in urban areas," Chicago Mayor *Lori Lightfoot* said. "What I would say to our federal friends who are listening is this is not just a rural issue. It is a very specific urban issue which we are working on addressing."

Some local leaders are also concerned about how funds for broadband support, particularly those attached to NTIA's BEAD

program, are being distributed. The program is structured so that states and territories receive funding for projects that support broadband infrastructure deployment and adoption. *Hardie Davis Jr.*, mayor of the City of Augusta, Georgia, would rather see that money flow directly into local communities. "While we're grateful for the resources the state sends to us... we're better suited to solve some of these more on the ground problems if we can get direct funding," he said.

The community leaders on the panel said a huge reason why that can be true is because they understand other challenges affecting disconnected populations in urban environments. That can include lack of access to healthcare, other types of infrastructure or food insecurity. That's why *Scott Woods*, Director of the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives at NTIA, believes it is so important to conduct strong outreach to community organizations and exhibit transparency through the entire process of releasing these broadband funds. Similar efforts will also be important to ensure low-income individuals are aware of the Affordable Connectivity Program, which offers a \$30/month subsidy to households or up to \$75/month for households on Tribal lands towards their broadband bill.

"We have to be intentional with our outreach, with our on-the-ground work, with our selection of community partners. We have to include service providers, philanthropic organizations and we have to include community organizations like Black churches so we are working with the right people who know what the issues are, know who the players are and give us

Mark Your Calendars!

Cablefax 2022 Award Submission Deadlines

The FAXIES Awards

Deadline: March 11
Final Deadline: March 18

Top Ops Nominations

Deadline: April 1

The Diversity List Nominations

Deadline: June 3
Final Deadline: June 10

Most Powerful Women Nominations

Deadline: August 12
Final Deadline: August 19

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that credibility,” Woods said. “We have to really have a sensitivity and understanding that this fits into a larger context of issues—historical, cultural, systemic—in these communities. We have to approach it that way and be intentional with our work and the partners that we partner with.”

The transition of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to the Affordable Connectivity Program will occur on March 1, and there are different qualifications customers must meet to be able to continue receiving their subsidy. *Emily Chi*, the Director of Telecommunications, Technology and Media for **Asian Americans Advancing Justice** said at an event hosted by **MMTC** Tuesday that there is a concern that without strong outreach on those changes, many communities of color could be left behind.

“Historically, we aren’t the main recipients of government policies,” Chi said. “Our communities tend to be slower on recovery because they’re not receiving as many resources as someone who is well connected and trusts the government might be, or has the community support might be.”

She also asked the FCC and operator community to better coordinate the Affordable Connectivity Program’s connected device subsidy. If consumers subscribe to an operator that offers it, their household can receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer or tablet. “We know that’s a big barrier for a lot of our folks,” she said. “Even if they get an ACP subsidy, if they don’t have a good updated laptop, how are they going to Zoom into school? We’d love to see more being done in that space.”

SECOND LOOK FOR CALIFORNIA NET NEUTRALITY

A former **FCC** commissioner, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, think tank **Tech Freedom** and nonprofit public interest law firm **Washington Legal Foundation** are among those filing amicus briefs Tuesday urging the **Ninth Circuit** to review en banc a panel decision allowing California’s new net neutrality law to go into effect while a legal challenge against it proceeds. **ACA Connects**, **NCTA** and **USTelecom** are [challenging](#) the state law. Earlier this month, the ISP associations asked the court to review a panel decision reaffirming a lower court’s decision to deny a preliminary injunction for California’s net neutrality law. Tech Freedom and WLF agree with the associations that the 9th Circuit decision is irreconcilable with the DC Circuit’s 2019 decision that they say allowed for state pre-emption on a case-by-case basis. “The panel, however, twisted itself into a pretzel trying to explain how its decision follows the D.C. Circuit’s decision. In other words, the panel refused to acknowledge that it was creating a circuit split,” Tech Freedom and WLF wrote. “It therefore caused massive uncertainty for regulated parties. If this Court does not provide certainty, then the Supreme Court will most likely grant certiorari and reverse.” *Harold Furchtgott-Roth*, an FCC commissioner from 1997-2001 and senior fellow and founder of the Center for the

The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



SUE

Kelly

EVP & GM, HOTWIRE COMMUNICATIONS

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Sue joined Hotwire as EVP & GM for the Carolinas, where she will be focused on the provider’s emerging presence in the two states as well as on pursuing new business opportunities and relationship building with key stakeholders. Hotwire has placed an emphasis on increasing fiber deployment in rural communities in North Carolina and South Carolina, which rank among the [top 10](#) fastest-growing states in the U.S.
- She has a deep bench of experience, including as VP, Commercial Sales for SMBs for Charter Spectrum across Texas and the company’s East Region. The role had her overseeing B2B retention systems and integration functions for Bright House, Time Warner Cable and Charter post-merger. Most recently, Sue was SVP, Enterprise Sales for fiber optic network designer FiberLight.
- As the former head coach of the University of South Carolina’s women’s soccer team, Sue is a natural teambuilder. She spent nine years in Division One College Athletics coaching and was a four-time Academic/Athletic All American.

Economics of the Internet at the **Hudson Institute**, filed an amicus brief with Hudson Institute fellow *Kirk Arner* that warned against the California law. “The practical result of state-by-state network neutrality regulations would be utter bedlam for the Internet. Broadband providers would be forced to offer different service offerings in different states—if that would even be possible—or offer the same service in every state bounded by the restrictions of states with the most stringent laws,” they wrote. The Chamber of Commerce agreed, writing that seven states have already adopted their own net neutrality legislation and nine others have introduced legislation regarding these issues. “En banc review is warranted to prevent the significant harms that will result from a patchwork regime of state-level internet regulations. The internet is a fundamentally nationwide network that is uniquely ill-suited to overlapping and inconsistent state regulations,” the Chamber wrote.

FRONTIER’S 2G FOR 2-22-22

Frontier used Tuesday’s two-focused palindrome to announce what it says is the first network-wide 2 Gig fiber offering in the U.S. Frontier promised the multi-gig offering at its investor day in August. It’s available across Frontier’s entire, 25-state footprint vs

phased rollouts. The current symmetrical 2G offering is available for \$149.99/month and the first 1,000 customers to order receive a 43" Amazon Fire TV and Logitech webcam. Frontier's going after the big cable guys, with marketing comparing its offering to speeds, latency and other features in **Charter** and **Comcast** internet plans. Frontier launched a pop-up store on Abbot Kinney Blvd in Venice, CA, Tuesday to show off the power of 2G with gaming, live workouts and more. Customers who sign up at the event and live in a Frontier fiber-supported area will receive two months of 2 Gig for \$2.

COX HQ SET TO REOPEN

Starting Feb. 28, **Cox Communications'** Atlanta HQ and administrative buildings nationwide where orange or below pandemic levels exist are encouraging employees who have been working remotely for the last two years to return to the office as needed and in alignment with their hybrid team agreements. Cox said flexible work agreements differ by team and are designed to meet the needs of the business and the roles performed by the teams.

TEGNA GOING PRIVATE IN \$8.6B DEAL

Private equity firms **Standard General** and **Apollo Global Management** have agreed to buy **TEGNA** in a deal with an enterprise value of approximately \$8.6 billion (including the assumption of debt), with the two paying \$24/share in cash. That's a 39% premium to TEGNA's Sept. 14 closing price, the last full trading day prior to media speculation about a potential sale. Former **Media General** COO *Deb McDermott* will be installed as CEO of the company once the deal closes, while Standard General Founding Partner *Soo Kim* will serve as Chairman of the new board. The deal partners said the company will become the nation's largest minority-owned, woman-led broadcast group. The transaction is expected to close in the second half of the year. Following close, TEGNA stations in Austin (KVUE), Dallas (WFAA and KMPX) and Houston (KHOU and KTBU) are expected to be acquired by **Cox Media Group**. An affiliate of Standard General will hold substantially all of the voting, common equity in the new entity that is acquiring TEGNA, with CMG and funds managed by affiliates of Apollo Global Management to hold securities in the new entity that will be non-voting and non-attributable and with other investors holding non-voting interests.

WOW! OFFERING MOBILE DEALS TO HSD SUBS

WOW! is dipping its toe into the mobile waters, signing a partnership deal with **Reach Mobile**. Through the deal, **WOW!** will be able to offer its HSD customers discounts when they sign up for **WOW!** mobile powered by Reach, a service launching with a variety of plans this spring. When HSD consumers add mobile service, **WOW!** will take up to \$10 off their mobile bill. More details will likely be announced during the provider's 4Q21 earnings call Thursday at 8am ET.

FCC TO TAKE POLE POSITION

The **FCC's** March 16 open meeting agenda includes voting on rule-making to pole attachments that would establish clear standards for when and how utilities and attachers must share in the costs of a pole replacement that is precipitated by a new attachment

request. **NCTA** filed a petition in 2020 asking the FCC to clarify that in areas with no access to broadband, utility pole owners are required to share in the cost of pole replacements. **Charter's** been a lead water boy on this issue, warning recently that delays in access to poles could delay broadband deployment in Rural Digital Opportunity Fund areas and other unserved communities. It praised the rulemaking's inclusion on the March open meeting agenda. "The FCC initiating this proceeding will be a critical step to achieving 100% connectivity in the U.S., because when poles can be accessed in a timely, fair, and cost-effective way, more people get connected faster," Charter said in a statement.

ON THE AD FRONT

The ad inventory for the 20222 NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Tournament, airing across **ESPN Networks** March 16-April 3, is sold out, according to **Disney Advertising**. The tourney has 14 sponsors and 22 advertisers across a variety of categories, with **Capital One**, **Invesco** and **Werner Ladder** all returning to be a part of the action. **Target** will sponsor alternate camera angles throughout the Women's Final Four broadcasts. – **AMC Networks** launched "Avenue," a one-stop resource to help advertising and marketing partners reach diverse and underrepresented audiences through association with AMC Networks' programming, talent, relationships, reach and scale. The new division will be formally unveiled at AMC Nets' virtual upfront later this week. Part of the initiative is long-form series "Can We Talk About This?," in which talent, creators and cultural influencers coming together to dissect meaningful topics through the lens of entertainment. It'll be hosted by *Jordan Carlos*. Avenue will initially focus on five key groups: women, Black, LGBTQ+, Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Hispanic/Latinx audiences.

BCAP EMBRACES COMMUNICATIONS IN NEW NAME

The **Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania** is changing up its name to better reflect the importance high-speed internet plays in the cable industry. The Harrisburg-based association representing cable operators, programmers and equipment suppliers will now be dubbed the Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania, allowing it to keep its BCAP acronym. An identity shift is nothing new for the group, which began in 1957 as the Pennsylvania Community Antenna Television Association.

COMCAST NAMES SPORTSTECH ACCELERATOR CLASS

The **Comcast NBCUniversal** SportsTech Accelerator named 10 startups to join its second class. The hybrid program offers startups an opportunity to work one-on-one with mentors to develop their business ideas with input from advisors from companies like **PGA Tour**, **WWE** and **NBC Sports**. The 12-week curriculum includes segments on fundraising, sales, marketing, mental health, company culture, and go-to-market strategies. This year's class includes companies like **Moneyline**, a sports and entertainment game, and **HeadVantage**, which offers insights into sports moments with biometric and performance data from the athletes involved. Participants will take part in a Demo Day on May 26.