

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Dynamic Duo: Verizon Pairing Fios, FWA for National Footprint

Verizon has talked up fixed wireless access as its ticket to becoming a nationwide broadband provider, but that doesn't mean it wants to pay less attention to its already-established 100% fiber Fios business. The provider covers 16 million homes and businesses today with its Fios footprint and it plans to bring that number up to 18 million by 2025.

"Absolutely we will continue to expand the Fios footprint. It's an interesting conversation that has evolved over the years in terms of the value of doing that. We've always felt that it's important," CFO *Matt Ellis* said during the company's investor day Thursday. "We're going to do more than 500,000 premises a year over that time period and in addition to doing that, you get cost savings as well as you take copper out."

Verizon expects to grow its Fios broadband business to 8 million subs by the end of 2025. At that point, the company is projecting it will have a total of 4-5 million total fixed wireless subs as well. With the continued expansion of its 5G network, Verizon plans on covering 50 million households and 14 million businesses by the end of 2025. Verizon is hoping the deployment of its C-band spectrum will spark huge growth, and it is anticipating more than 150,000 net additions tied to FWA will come in 1Q22 alone.

"The very important thing about FWA is... we know as a fact about 30% of those customers have no relationship with Verizon before," Verizon Consumer Group EVP/CEO *Manon Brouillette* said. "It's a huge hook for us not only to grow broadband, but to

grow mobile as well so we no longer rely only on the switcher pool."

Verizon has set itself apart from its mobile competitors by partnering with content companies like **Disney** to give subscribers free access to streaming services for periods of time. It is building on those efforts now with +play, a hub that gives users the ability to easily access their favorite services and find exclusive deals. New partners taking part in +play include **Netflix, Peloton, A+E Networks, Vix+** and **Duolingo**.

"With this choice, we plan to significantly increase the number of subscriptions customers would purchase to Verizon by 2025," Brouillette said. "This will generate a new revenue stream and will further increase the loyalty of our customer base." Trials of the service will become available to a select group of customers with selected brands by the end of the month and a consumer launch is planned for later this year.

In other news, Verizon struck a strategic partnership with **Meta** (formerly Facebook) to dive into the foundational requirements for the metaverse and its applications. Bringing those features to life will require components like spatial audio, high resolution graphics and low latency streaming. "Our efforts will enable both companies to measure the impact of edge computing on key application performance metrics and evaluate where our network capabilities can enable more powerful metaverse-optimized applications," Chief Strategy Officer *Rima Qureshi* said.

SOHN CLOSER TO BREAKING FCC DEADLOCK

A point of clarification from Ranking Member *Roger Wicker* (R-MS) after Thursday's **Senate Commerce** vote on the nomination

THE FAXIES

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN PR & MARKETING

Honoring those people, shows, and networks who excel in digital content, marketing, advertising, social media and online content.

Categories include Audience Engagement & Experience, PR & Marketing, Executives and Teams of the Year.

www.TheFAXIES.com

Submit your entries by **March 11**

Your hard work is done – and now it's time for you and your team to get recognized!





The Second

Most-Watched

2021 Original Scripted Cable Series
is Back!



WHEN CALLS
the HEART


Hallmark
CHANNEL

Where Love Happens

Series Premiere March 6
Sundays 8/7c

Contact your Hallmark Channel representative to partner with the leader in love all year long.

Source: Nielsen L+3, 12/28/2020 - 12/26/2021. Ad-supported cable nets—Excludes repeats, news, sports, reality, specials, programs with < 3 telecasts & under 15 min dur. Ranked on HLD, P2+, W18+ (000s). May combine multiple seasons of a series if more than one season aired in the calendar year.

of *Gigi Sohn* put a fine point on how divided the committee is over the **FCC** nominee. When Commerce Chair *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) said the committee had “passed [her] out of the committee to the floor,” Wicker corrected her (politely), explaining that the 14-14 tie vote doesn’t automatically send Sohn to the floor, but gives Senate leaders an opportunity to call her up via a discharge vote. “If the majority chooses to, they can discharge the committee of the nomination, but the motion failed on a tie vote,” Wicker said. The 14 Republican no votes included Sen. *Ted Cruz* (R-TX), who said Sohn testified falsely before the committee about the **Locast** settlement and has shown a willingness to use government power against political enemies. “The FCC is a particularly dangerous place for a partisan who is willing to muzzle those with whom she disagrees,” Cruz said. Republican Whip *John Thune* (R-SD) submitted a letter from former Democratic Sen. *Heidi Heitkamp* objecting to Sohn’s nomination. “Sohn, the Biden Administration’s nominee for FCC Commissioner, has made numerous public statements that call into question whether she will work to bring broadband to all rural Americans expeditiously,” Heitkamp [wrote in an op/ed](#) this week that criticized Sohn for being a longtime advocate of overbuilding. Cantwell said the committee held a [second hearing](#) to address members’ concerns about Sohn. “I don’t think Ms. Sohn is going to actively participate in partisanship or even censorship. As somebody who was a longtime counsel at the FCC, she certainly knows what the rules are at the FCC,” she said. Now, Sohn supporters—from public interest groups to the **Consumer Technology Association**—are calling on Majority Leader *Chuck Schumer* (D-NY) to move expeditiously to get her nomination to the floor for a vote. But we already have Sen. *Thom Tillis* (R-NC) saying he plans to put a hold on her nomination, according to a staffer.

MORE FROM SENATE COMMERCE

Gigi Sohn wasn’t the only nominee receiving a 14-14 vote at Thursday’s **Senate Commerce** markup. The GOP also banded together to vote against *Alvaro Bedoya*’s nomination to the **FTC**, with Sen. *Roy Blunt* (R-MO) saying he will put a hold on the Senate floor on Bedoya’s nomination until the FTC is more responsive to him on M&A concerns. – One thing that did bring members of both parties together Thursday was the return of Sen. *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) for the first time since he suffered a stroke in late January. He received a standing ovation when he joined the hearing. “Everyone who sent me notes and videos and all the prayers, it worked. It’s good to back. I missed y’all,” a teary-eyed Lujan said.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE FALLOUT CONTINUES

RT America is ceasing productions and laying off most of its staff, **CNN** [reported](#) Thursday. Citing “unforeseen busi-

ness interruption events,” the production company behind the Russian state-funded network told staffers that it anticipates the layoff will be permanent, according to a memo obtained by CNN. It doesn’t appear RT is going away, but ceasing productions in the U.S., where it has bureaus in D.C., NYC, Miami and L.A. RT [tweeted](#) Thursday that “after a multitude of platforms have moved to knock out our broadcast and limit social media” it’s taking its 24/7 livestream to **Rumble**, a Canadian video-sharing platform popular among conservative Americans. Other developments include **WWE** terminating its partnership with Russian broadcaster Match and shutting down WWE Network in the country, effective immediately.

Cablefax Executive Round Up

In the spirit of International Women’s Day, we asked what the media industry can do to be more inclusive and equitable for women.



Maria E. Brennan
CAE, President & CEO
The WICT Network

“Rely on the research. Companies that embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as a business imperative understand the data that demonstrates how strong DEI practices will make them better, faster, stronger companies. Allocating resources toward your inclusion efforts pays dividends including increased innovation, higher staff morale and greater profitability. And make sure you’re benchmarking your efforts. Grounding your diversity and inclusion efforts in data establishes a baseline and informs goals that will help you make significant inroads on the path to equality.”



Sandra Howe
Chair
The WICT Network

“Inclusiveness and equality starts at the top! Companies that build diverse boards of directors will create diverse executive teams. These executives must then pass a culture of inclusion, becoming mentors and active sponsors of diverse rising stars. Drive your leaders to mentor women on business and financial acumen—and methodically sponsor candidates for stretch or new assignments. The ONE thing that the media industry can do to be more inclusive and equitable: *From the top down, give women a chance. Mentor. Sponsor. Partner.*”



Michelle Ray
Executive Director
Walter Kaitz Foundation

“It is incumbent upon companies, both large and small, to take stock of their existing hiring and retention strategies and practices that can lead to improved outcomes. While that’s the easy part, the next steps are what creates real change. It requires intentional adjustments to policies and tactical changes to workforce practices. Full stop! Often, we get caught up in aspirational discourse leaving our efforts in the ‘all talk and no action’ category.”

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

SENATORS QUESTION FUTURE SPECTRUM AUCTIONS

Senators *Roger Wicker* (R-MS) and *John Thune* (R-SD) want **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* to lay out the future of the agency's spectrum auction opportunities and policy reforms. In a letter Thursday, the two asked a number of questions, including what spectrum frequencies are good candidates for auction that the FCC doesn't have the authority to conduct this year and what other statutory tools would help the agency make additional spectrum available.

BREEZELINE EXPANDING VIRGINIA NETWORK

Breezeline (formerly **Atlantic Broadband**) started construction on a \$7.2 million, 150-mile build to extend its broadband network to more than 1,400 homes and businesses in Virginia. Activations in Mathews, Caroline, Lancaster and Middlesex counties will begin as early as May. The project is being funded through a \$4.2 million Virginia Telecommunications Initiative grant. Breezeline is contributing \$1.5 million toward the project with the last \$1.5 million being supported by the individual counties. The project is scheduled for completion by Jan 30, 2023.

COMCAST TRAFFIC RISES AGAIN IN 2021

After the historic rise in internet network traffic during the first year of the pandemic, it might seem as if the numbers had nowhere to go but down. However, **Comcast's** 2021 Network Report found traffic grew again, with peak downstream traffic up about 11% over 2020 levels and upstream up approximately 5%. While the increases are nowhere near the 38% downstream spike and 56% upstream increase Comcast saw in 2020, the uptick still surprised Comcast Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi*. "You would have thought that 2021 would have normalized a little bit," he told **CFX**. Instead, this seems to be the new normal. "Video consumption has not abated," Nafshi said, noting that the number of popular streaming series has only grown larger during the pandemic. And it's not just video. "Speaking as a gamer, we had major releases over the summer and in the holiday season. Those games are only getting bigger and they're becoming more interactive," he said. Streaming, web browsing, and gaming all saw the largest increases in network consumption with a 10-20 percent increase for all three categories. Entertainment activities accounted for 71% of downstream traffic, the same as 2020. And despite all the attention on upstream, network asymmetry continued in 2021, with total downstream traffic volumes 12.4x higher than upstream for the first 6 months of the year, and 14.5x higher for the last six months. "Video consumption and consumption in general in home is very much downstream. That shifted a little bit during the pandemic, but video conferencing was still only about 5% of the total bits consumed on the network," Nafshi said.

GSMA CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL MWC BARCELONA

GSMA's MWC Barcelona drew more than 60,000 attendees over the last four days from nearly 200 countries, a massive success after two years of severe disruption for the show. GSMA canceled the show in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and held a much smaller convention last year. It continued to offer virtual content from the show with approximately 500,000 unique virtual and daily viewers watching the show on the MWC 2022 site and

partner platforms. MWC Shanghai is set for June 29-July 1 and the first MWC Las Vegas will take over the city from Sept. 28-30.

PLUME HELPING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Technology firm **Plume** is installing building-wide WiFi in temporary refugee housing facilities so that Ukrainians can get online and connect with loved ones. "One of the great things about our WiFi is that we can build great coverage and share broadband connectivity with hundreds of people given one Internet connection. Right now we're hooking up to fixed broadband connections for backhaul but we could easily do the same thing for example using **Starlink** terminals as backhaul. We're reaching out to Starlink satellite services to try to get them involved—it's an important project," Plume CEO *Fahri Diner*, who is in the Polish city of Wroclaw, [told](#) industry group **Wi-Fi Now**. Plume is a Wi-Fi Now partner.

CABLE ONE EYES RURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Cable One is positioning itself as a main player for broadband in rural areas, eyeing organic growth opportunities as well as additional M&A. It has completed 15 acquisitions and strategic investments since 2015 for a total consideration of around \$5 billion. When it comes to new markets, Cable One is looking at areas with similar characteristics to those it already has a presence in. "We've got opportunities to edge out and get to new markets from where we're at. And we target that at, you know, \$30 to \$40 million a year as what we see going forward," *Chris Boone*, SVP of Business Services and Emerging Markets, said at the company's investor day Thursday. Boone noted that figure could change given the nature of the industry, but it gives flexibility to be picky. Cable One has balanced investments in its network with the integration its acquisitions, spending nearly \$950 million over the last three years to bolster HSD. Gigabit data is now available in 99% of homes passed, and it had 6.4% YOY organic resident HSD customer growth in 2021 with 79% of new customers subscribing to plans of 200 Mbps or higher. It will look to add a multi-gig symmetrical service in late 2022 or 2023 and continue building towards the release of DOCSIS 4.0 within the next year. When it comes to fiber competitors, the company maintains it's ready to defend its footprint. An estimated 28% of its 24-state footprint includes a competitor with 100 Mbps or higher residential download speeds. "I've been in the industry for 30 years... there's been competition and even though there's been competition specifically in Cable One land, we've continued to grow both in units and ARPU," CEO *Julie Laulis* said. "I would be very interested to hear the unique selling proposition of the people that plan on coming into our marketplaces because we've got the network to support our customers, we've got the people living locally there that are neighbors to them to support their work."

XFINITY REWARDS UNVEILED

Customers started receiving messaging about [Xfinity Rewards](#) during its soft launch in the fall, but **Comcast** made it official this week with the grand unveiling of its first customer rewards program. Customers are placed in Silver, Gold, Platinum or Diamond tiers based on how long they've been a customer. Rewards include access to free and discounted content, discounts to Universal Parks & Resorts, Xfinity Mobile benefits and early access to Comcast technologies, like SuperSonic WiFi.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

'Winning Time' Brings Out the Sparkle in Sports

Los Angeles Lakers fans in the 1980s were served up a show every time they tuned in for a game, and that dose of pizzazz resulted in the rise of a sports empire. That decade is immortalized in **HBO's** "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty," an adaptation of *Jeff Pearlman's* book "Showtime: Magic, Kareem, Riley, and the Los Angeles Lakers." The flair separates the series from other sports documentaries that have taken the world by storm, focusing more on the personalities of the team members and the creation of a team that made fans want to buy courtside seats. "We were trying to have fun above all, but it's a show about showmanship. This is a moment where sports became entertainment," Showrunner *Max Borenstein* said during a panel at the virtual **TCA** winter press tour. "The Lakers, Jerry Buss, that was his vision, and so finding the most showman-like way of taking the audience into that journey, that was the reason for all that." The actors still put in work to embody the physicality of the athletes, even if they didn't quite measure up in terms of height. They practiced basketball and watched footage of old games online to mimic the movements of the beloved players to ground the show in some sense of realism. The whimsy came in moments where those actors broke the fourth wall, talking directly to the camera to give the viewer a seat in the locker room. "It was almost like you kind of had to decide some qualities for your scene partner, the camera," *John C. Reilly*, who plays Lakers majority owner at the time *Jerry Buss*, said. "That sense that the characters in the story could at any time turn right to you and start talking to you I think creates this kind of chaotic wonderful energy in the show too." The series premieres Sunday at 9pm and will be available to stream on **HBO Max**. – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

"Murder in Provence," streaming, **BritBox**. It's unacceptable for a murder mystery to lack an interesting venue. In this enjoyable take on the novels of *M.L. Longworth*, a collaboration between BritBox N America and BritBox UK, the background is the gorgeous Côte d'Azur region. Equally as enjoyable is the interplay of the main characters, investigating judge Antoine Verlaque (*Roger Allam*) and his amour, Marine Bonnet (*Nancy Carroll*). Their banter is so natural viewers will wonder how much of it is scripted. On the other hand, once you see how charming a life they lead in Aix-en-Provence, you'll wonder why they'd want to do anything but eat and drink. Well, even charmed lives need some variety. – "The Dropout," streaming, **Hulu**. The story of *Elizabeth Holmes*, who rose to fame and a \$9 billion net worth as CEO/founder of Theranos, then lost it fairly quickly, is well-worn ground. Indeed, this 4-part series is based on content from a podcast. Despite several problems—including several stereotypical characters—it succeeds because of *Amanda Seyfried's* portrayal of the young Holmes. Physically Seyfried, 36, pulls off a college-age teen easily. And smartly, creator *Liz Meriweather* paints the young Holmes as extremely likeable and intelligent, though socially awkward. Where the series has trouble is capturing what was it about Holmes that helped her swindle investors of billions. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (02/21/22-02/27/22)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	1.019	3,173
CNN	0.480	1,496
MSNBC	0.456	1,421
ESPN	0.390	1,216
HGTV	0.353	1,099
HIST	0.277	864
FOOD	0.274	854
HALL	0.273	851
TLC	0.260	810
DISC	0.256	799
INSP	0.243	756
TBSC	0.216	672
TNT	0.183	570
LIFE	0.180	559
USA	0.176	547
A&E	0.174	543
TVLAND	0.173	539
ID	0.167	521
HMM	0.153	475
WETV	0.147	458
FX	0.142	443
AMC	0.125	389
GSN	0.124	386
NAN	0.120	374
BET	0.120	373
NATGEO	0.116	360
NICK	0.110	343
BRAVO	0.104	322
SYFY	0.102	317
TRAVEL	0.096	299
OXYGEN	0.095	296
APL	0.093	290
FXX	0.093	290
PRMNT	0.091	282

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

CONGRATULATE the **CABLEFAX 100** and **REACH** the Top Leaders in Cable, Broadband & Digital

Magazine Publish Date: April 27

Ad Space Close: April 4
Ads Due: April 8

Advertising Contact: Ellen Kamhi,
Director of Business Development
917-626-5574 | ekamhi@accessintel.com

WWW.CABLEFAX100.COM