

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Coming Soon: FCC Promises Maps This Fall, Rip and Replace Fund Inquiry

Huzzah, the **FCC's** revamped broadband data maps will finally be hitting the scene this fall. There's plenty of work to be done to ensure that milestone is hit, but FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* is ensuring the final product meets every demand Congress has requested.

"We have brought in a broadband and data architect, we've acquired systems to make sure we have the capacity to manipulate this data, we beta tested these systems with wireless broadband maps and new propagation models and we also set up a contract for a broadband location fabric," she told the **House Communications Subcommittee** during a Commission oversight hearing Thursday. June will be when carriers will be able to start filing their data with the FCC and when the work begins to convert that data into usable maps.

Members of Congress have also been keeping a close eye on the FCC's Rip and Replace program, an effort that subsidizes carriers' removal and replacement of equipment from vendors that pose a national security threat. The 181 applications submitted to the Commission thus far ask for \$5.6 billion in costs to be reimbursed, multitudes more than the \$1.9 billion Congress appropriated for the project.

An assessment of those applications will be completed by June 15 and should provide solid answers for why the major shortfall exists, but Rosenworcel laid out a number of potential contributing factors to subcommittee members. Those

include that the program established by Congress was based on a voluntary data collection that many of the companies that are seeking funding now did not participate in. Congress also expanded the range of participants to carriers with 10 million subscribers or less as well as educational institutions while the FCC only assumed numbers for companies with less than 2 million subscribers. The final factor that could be contributing to the estimated shortfall ultimately comes down to a level of greed with carriers going above and beyond the law with their asks.

"When we say we have a fund and we suggest that they should apply in order for us to support whatever technologies or equipment they want, it is not uncommon for us to have applicants ask for funding for things that the law does not allow," she said.

The Commission's spectrum calendar for the year continues to be in flux due in large part to challenges with its federal partners. It does plan to kick off the 2.5Ghz auction in July, but its spectrum auction authority is set to expire on Sept. 30 and the **Department of Defense** is standing between the FCC and the lower 3GHz band, a swath of midband spectrum that Commissioner *Brendan Carr* believes would offer a real boost to America's 5G power.

"The challenge now is with one of the infrastructure laws that was passed, DoD has a provision that stops us from moving forward on that until at least 2024. And then after that, they can effectively veto our ability to do that," he said. "So one thing we

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need to do is address that so we can continue to work towards freeing up the lower 3GHz and while we're doing that, I think we need to continue to fill in our spectrum pipeline... that's why I've identified a number of additional bands from 3.5GHz to 6GHz."

Tackling the video marketplace, Rosenworcel addressed the Commission's opportunity to remove obstacles in the marketplace for independent programmers seeking MVPD carriage. She told Rep *Yvette Clarke* (D-NY) that while the FCC opened a proceeding on the subject in 2014, changes in how video is offered by operators today have left it horribly outdated.

"A lot of independent creators have a difficult time getting carried on our major video systems right now," she said. "I think that what we're going to have to do is start a new proceeding so it's up to date and actually reflects the way that people watch right now because that's certainly changed in the last few years as we seek to find content on any screen handy. But we also need to find pathways for independent creators to be able to reach us."

THE FUTURE OF SPORTS

As we wait to hear the outcome of **Charter** and **Sinclair's** talks for the **Bally Sports Networks** (that one-month extension to continue negotiations runs out today), it's interesting to hear execs at a **Parks Associates** video conference Thursday opine on what they think is the biggest challenge facing the sports industry today. "Greed and unstructured choice" is the issue, according to *Geoff Reiss*, **Yahoo Sports'** Head of Fantasy & Gaming. "Everyone's squeezing the fan, with the idea of just getting as much revenue out of that superfan as possible. What it's doing is creating an enormous amount of pressure on that fan to pay up. It also means it's going to be harder and harder for those fans who aren't superfans to be able to access a lot of things that they might be interested in... It also means that leagues are in this interesting moment where they're sometimes choosing between just trying to maximize revenue out of folks vs. growing their sports." While there are new online ways to watch games, that may create new challenges for the ecosystem. "Having more choices... may be counterintuitive for sports content providers, because none of these things individually, and probably not all together, can really do what the historical pay TV model has done in terms of license fees, rates, ad revenue. It's really hard to see how the experimentation that's going on now can really add up to what has been a pretty successful model for sports for a long time," said *Ben Grad*, **fuboTV's** SVP, Head of Content Strategy & Acquisition. That may be true, but it's also true that viewers are consuming content differently. "The golden age of pay TV is just something that we have to kind of look at in nostalgia and romanticize about the day of '90s," quipped

Amagi Corp's SVP of Business Development *Lior Friedman*. "I think the age of a single distribution channel that pays the bills for everyone, I think everyone understood in pretty much every industry, but specifically sports during COVID, that you have to put your chips on as many of these omnichannel distribution lines and figure out a way to the end consumer." With **Amazon** having Thursday Night Football and **Apple** gaining MLB rights, it's clear digital experimentation will continue. **FuboTV's** Grad isn't sure it really eliminates traditional pay TV providers though. "We'll see what the consumer reaction is, but anyone who is interested in watching their home team or most of the games that are available on TV, you're going to have a platform like ours or cable," he said.

CHARTER LAUNCHES SPECTRUM INTERNET 100

Charter now offers a Spectrum Internet 100 tier across its entire service area that's exclusive to households eligible for the **FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program**. The service

Cablefax Executive Round Up

What does the metaverse mean to you?



Sen. Edward J. Markey (D)
U.S. Senator from Massachusetts

"The Metaverse refers to the latest platform where we need to ensure protections are in place for children and teens from harms such as harassment and manipulative, unsafe content."



Tim Parkin
President
Parkin Consulting

"The metaverse will be the rebirth of the internet and digital communication, commerce, and collaboration as we know it. Will it replace the status quo? Not in the blink of an eye, but gradually over time. The way we communicate and experience marketing has continued to change drastically since the invention of the internet and email. And the future will certainly be more engaging, immersive, and noisy. It's an exciting and pivotal moment in time."



Mark Trudeau
CEO
OpenVault

"Metaverse demands on bandwidth will clearly be substantial and exponential versus today's demands. The tremendous changes to subscriber usage behavior we've seen over these past two years will likely pale in comparison to the applications promised by the metaverse. Meeting bandwidth and latency requirements for these fully immersive experiences will be major challenges for network providers. While competing on network health has always been important for network providers, the metaverse will raise the bar and will separate the proactive from the reactive!"

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

costs \$29.99/month and includes a modem, in-home WiFi and self-installation. All Spectrum Internet and legacy plans, including Spectrum Internet Gig, are available for ACP credits (\$30/month or \$75/month on tribal lands).

VIX CELEBRATES LAUNCH DAY

A new streaming service is in the mix as **TelevisaUnivision's ViX** launched Thursday to all users in the U.S., Mexico and most of Spanish-speaking Latin America. The free AVOD tier is available on mobile, connected TV and on the web. The SVOD tier **ViX+** will come later this year and add 10,000 hours of content.

ROBOCALLS GOING UNPUNISHED?

FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* believes problems with how the federal government prosecutes robocallers could be allowing offenders to slip through the cracks without paying their fines. As it stands right now, the Commission issues a fine and passes its enforcement action over to the **Department of Justice** to finish the job. "Under my leadership, we issued a \$225 million fine against a robocaller, the largest in our history, but then we take those fines and we hand them over to our colleagues at the Department of Justice, and I think the best I can say is that we hope and pray that they take them to court," Rosenworcel said. "I'd like to hold them to account and I bet that every one of my colleagues would agree with the expansion of our authority." She also called on Congress to update the definition of "auto dialer" and reaffirm the Commission's authority to act against those bad actors, saying a recent **Supreme Court** ruling effectively reduced the agency's authority to go after all robocallers.

DEMS URGE NETFLIX TO DROP TOBACCO IMAGERY

Senators *Ed Markey* (D-MA), *Chris Van Hollen* (D-MD) and *Richard Blumenthal* (D-CT) sent a letter to **Netflix** urging the streamer to decrease youth exposure to tobacco, nicotine and vaping imagery in its video content. The three senators sent a letter to major streamers in April 2019 asking about their role in promoting tobacco use among young people. Netflix responded saying it was committed to reducing portrayals of tobacco use in content, but a recent **Truth Initiative** report found Netflix has still led the streamers with the highest prevalence of tobacco-related imagery in shows among 15-24-year olds for the last four years.

FUSE PREPARES FOR UPFRONT

Fuse heads into the upfronts with the addition of two new FAST channels. **Latino Vibes** will be dedicated to English-language Latino content and will debut later this year, and **Campstastic** will highlight camp classics and forgotten gems. Fuse is introducing five new shows across its streaming and TV channels in 2022-23, including "We Need to Talk About America," a deep comedic look into American culture, and "Like A Girl" where *Denise Jones* interviews promising young female athletes. Fuse is also bringing back "Sex Sells," "Fuse Films," "Fuse Docs" and "Made From Scratch."

GSN TO FOCUS ON BRAND INTEGRATION

Game Show Network and **Sony Pictures Television** are teaming up for their first joint upfront, focusing on live viewing and brand integration into game shows. Opportunities exist within

Game Show's original programming and short-form ad options for "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune," as well as positions in syndication and the off-network launch of "The Good Doctor" in September. Other shows in the 2022 schedule include "People Puzzler," "America Says," "Master Minds" and "Tug of Words."

RATINGS

Total day viewership for **ESPN** in 1Q22 was up 32% YOY with an average of 812,000 viewers P2+, marking the network's best first three-months of the year since 2017. In A18-49, ESPN improved 23% in total day audience and grew 36% in prime time. While major sporting events like the College Football Playoff and Monday Night Football helped, men's college basketball had a 26% viewership increase compared to last season and women's college hoops also saw a 45% bump. Formula 1 has been a success with the Bahrain Grand Prix and Saudi Arabian Grand Prix reeling in an average of 1.353 and 1.445 million viewers, respectively. Other programs like "NBA Today," "First Take" and "Get Up" enjoyed double-digit ratings increases. – **MotorTrend TV** reeled in 3.3 million unique viewers P2+ during its coverage of the "Mecum Glendale 2022" auction from March 17-19. It had a 78% increase in viewers compared to the **NBC Sports Network** broadcast in 2021, and 39% of viewers were new to MotorTrend TV.

PROGRAMMING

CMT is getting ready for the biggest night in country music with CMT Music Awards Week. Starting April 9 at 9pm, "Hot 20 Countdown" will be live from Nashville with a three-hour special hosted by *Cody Alan*, *Rissi Palmer* and *Carissa Culliner*. Then at 9pm on April 10 "CMT Music Awards Nomination Special" features the list of this year's nominees. To round out the week and lead into the awards, "CMT Music Awards Red Carpet Special" begins at 7pm, welcoming stars as they arrive at the 2022 CMT Music Awards, which begins April 11 at 8pm. – **A&E Network** greenlit "Biography: Ol' Dirty Bastard," a two-hour documentary about hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan. Produced by **Pulse Films** alongside **Four Screens**, the doc will premiere in 2023. – **Lifetime** unveiled four new original movies for its summer "Ripped from the Headlines" slate. "Dirty Little Secret" kicks the schedule off on June 11, with "Suitcase Killer: The Melanie McGuire Story" and "He's Not Worth Dying For" following on June 18 and 25, respectively. "Jailbreak Lovers" finishes things off on July 2.

CARRIAGE

Sling TV made **Shahid VIP's** full entertainment library available through the Sling app, going along with **Anghami Plus** to create a comprehensive Ramadan entertainment package. The Shahid VIP standalone package is \$8.99/month.

PEOPLE

Narayan R. Iyengar was appointed as EVP/COO of **DISH**. He'll be the principal operating officer of the network and take over responsibilities from *John W. Swieringa*, who'll continue to be involved in operations as President and COO. Iyengar recently served on the board of Build-A-Bear Workshop.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

There's a Rat in the Kitchen

Longtime reality TV buffs remember “The Mole,” the **ABC** series from the early 2000s featuring an unknown saboteur masquerading as a contestant. The Mole would try to sneakily ruin challenges so the players wouldn't win money. Now, the same host that brought you the British version of The Mole, *Glenn Hugill*, has devised new culinary series “Rat in The Kitchen” in which one chef contestant is secretly wrecking others' dishes (premieres March 31 at 9pm ET on **TBS**). “The great thing about this show is [there's] a tremendous amount of play along, not only for the contestants, but for the at-home audience,” Executive Producer *Adam Reed* told **CFX**. “The contestants are guessing, the hosts are guessing, the audience is guessing.” Unlike The Mole, which had one double agent throughout the entire season, Rat in the Kitchen features a new “rodent” each episode. If the cooks correctly identify the rat at the close of the episode, they win their bank. If not, then the rat walks away with the money. According to Reed, some of the challenges in filming this format are making sure that the storyline of guessing who the rat is can be repeated for 10 episodes. “What makes a good rat is someone who knows their cooking skills but is completely unexpected... We want someone that is both expected and unexpected because it just helps with the guessing game,” said Reed. “When we did the pilot for the show, we showed the cut to about 50 different people internally and externally and not one out of the 50 guessed the rat.” To finish off the ‘guess who’ format, at the end of the episodes, the show will go back and reveal to the audience what clues they might have missed in plain sight that would have been integral in guessing who sabotaged the meals. “You know you have cooking shows out there that are enjoyable, but I'm not sure there's a lot of fun and funny cooking shows. And I certainly don't think there are any fun and funny cooking shows that are also whodunnits,” said Reed. – *Goa Zhu*

REVIEWS

“Slow Horses,” streaming from April 1, **Apple TV+**. If you feel nobody does spy shows like the British, then you'll like this new, star-studded 6-parter based on *Mick Herron's* novel. The star power comes from *Gary Oldman*, making his debut in this small-screen series about ostensibly washed-up British spies. And then there's the wonderful *Kristin Scott Thomas*, as Oldman's supervisor. Want more star power? *Will Smith* (no, not that one) directs. This Smith directed some eps of **HBO's** “Veep.” In addition, *Mick Jagger* (yes, that one) had a hand in writing the theme song. He also performs it. We're hoping all that's enough to keep viewers interested because, admittedly, “Slow Horses” at times, is, er, slow. Fortunately, the pace quickens considerably as the old timers get back into the saddle. – “Suspicion,” streaming, **Apple TV+**. This 8-part mystery about the abduction of a PR titan's son is a very good watch, particularly the first 3-4 episodes. There are elements of comfort and discomfort. The latter includes *Kunal Nayyar* transformed from his popular “Big Bang Theory” role. And on the comforting side there's *Noah Emmerich* as an FBI agent, reprising, sort of, his role from **FX's** “The Americans.” The most disappointing part is the ending and a miscast, poorly coiffed *Uma Thurman*, as a somewhat desperate yet calculating business executive and mother. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (03/21/22-03/27/22)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.792	2466
TBSC	0.786	2450
MSNBC	0.370	1153
HGTV	0.355	1107
ESPN	0.291	906
CNN	0.281	876
TLC	0.261	813
INSP	0.252	784
DISC	0.240	746
HIST	0.235	732
HALL	0.234	728
FOOD	0.233	726
USA	0.202	630
ID	0.176	549
TNT	0.175	545
TVLAND	0.161	503
A&E	0.156	486
LIFE	0.153	475
HMM	0.149	465
AMC	0.131	409
PRMNT	0.127	395
WETV	0.122	380
FX	0.121	377
NATGEO	0.121	375
GSN	0.115	358
OXYGEN	0.110	341
NICK	0.108	335
APL	0.107	333
BRAVO	0.104	324
NAN	0.099	307
TRAVEL	0.095	297
BET	0.094	291
HBO	0.093	289
ESPN2	0.088	275

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

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