

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Next Steps: FCC Takes Feedback on Broadband Deployment, Speeds

The **FCC** is conducting its annual assessment of whether broadband is being deployed to everyone in a reasonable and timely fashion, and commenters generally believe the answer to that question is yes. Where they differ is in how they believe the agency should proceed from here and what areas require new or enhanced focus.

The **North Carolina Rural Center** suggested the Commission, given the amount of federal and state funding being put to work on broadband deployment and accessibility, should seriously consider raising the minimum standard for fixed broadband service beyond 100/20 Mbps. It went a step further to propose the establishment of a timeline for transitions to higher standards with a suggested framework having the Commission move to 250/50 Mbps during 2028-29. That would escalate to 500/200 Mbps in 2031-32 and then to 1 Gig/500 Mbps in 2034-35. The phased increase would also see latency standards decrease from 100ms round-trip to 50ms.

"Additionally, with the onset of artificial intelligence applications, upload speeds will become increasingly important," the filing said. "The asymmetrical service goals set above should accommodate these innovations, but the Commission should monitor demand for additional upload speeds closely. If necessary, standards moving toward symmetrical speeds should be considered."

**USTelecom** was among those that are committed to the

100/20 Mbps benchmark the FCC has now, arguing there's no rational case for making yet another update before ISPs begin deployments with BEAD funding. It believes doing so could have unintended consequences including network deployments that meet the 100/20 Mbps benchmark only to be obsolete almost immediately because of the ever-rising bar.

"Moreover, the Commission just adopted its new benchmark in March 2024, there has been insufficient time to assess meaningful changes in the marketplace and in technology that would necessitate a shift," USTelecom said. "Instead, the Commission should maintain the newly adopted 100/20 Mbps benchmark."

It also pushed for the Commission to drop its long-term speed goal of 1 Gbps/500 Mbps. Its belief is that continuing forward with the idea of predicting future speed benchmarks has the potential to undermine confidence in funding programs like BEAD should the long-term goal be perceived as changing the goal post for what is truly served.

**Next Century Cities** and **Public Knowledge** chimed in via a joint filing, pushing the Commission to continue to make strides in improving affordability of broadband for all. They referenced a July report from Recon Analytics that found 13% of ACP recipients had already canceled their home internet service with another 12% planning to do so within the next three months. In total, 53% of previous ACP participants now find it too difficult to pay for their current monthly internet bill and are looking to downgrade their service. Next Century Cit-

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ies and Public Knowledge are pushing the agency to prioritize the reinstatement of some form of low-income and high-cost subsidy program.

"The success of federal programs that prioritize broadband infrastructure, such as the BEAD Program and Capital Projects Fund, depends on such a subsidy to ensure returns on broadband infrastructure investments," the pair said. "It is critical that there is not only a permanent subsidy available to consumers, but that this subsidy allotment is responsive to market dynamics, regional differences, and other factors that could untether prices from the original subsidy level."

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## MLB TAKES OVER GUARDIANS, BREWERS AND TWINS FOR 2025

Just because the **MLB** postseason is taking place doesn't mean plans aren't being made for 2025. The league announced Tuesday that it will produce and distribute local games for the Guardians, Brewers and Twins for the 2025 season. MLB also said the Rangers will no longer partner with **Diamond Sports Group** and are currently considering local media options for next year. All three of the teams making the switch to MLB-produced games were previously under the **Bally Sports** tree. It'll be a similar situation to when MLB stepped in for the Diamondbacks, Rockies and Padres this season. The league will negotiate cable and satellite distribution arrangements while making direct-to-consumer options available for fans as well. More information will come once the 2025 season gets closer. That's not the only Diamond-related news that's emerged this week. A U.S. Bankruptcy Court filing revealed Diamond is close to reaching a naming and branding rights deal for the Bally Sports RSNs "with a third party" assuming it emerges from Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Multiple reports have indicated that the unknown party is **FanDuel**, which will be able to buy up to a single-digit percentage of equity in Diamond (and potentially more based on performance metrics). It's unclear how FanDuel's possible entrance into the RSN space will impact **FanDuel TV**.

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## MORE MILTON PREP

The **FCC** will officially activate its Disaster Information Reporting System and Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative for 52 counties in Florida on Wednesday in preparation for communications impacts from Hurricane Milton. Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* said the Commission has staff conducting pre-landfall baseline surveys and is providing on-the-ground support in the storm's targeted areas in order to assess post-landfall impact to services and infrastructure. "I can't stress

enough, for communities directly in the path of this storm, please take to heart the instructions of local leaders and officials, remain opted in to Wireless Emergency Alerts, and sign up to receive additional emergency alerts and warnings," Rosenworcel said in a statement. **Comcast** is also stepping up to help residents ahead of Milton's arrival, opening more than 261,000 Xfinity WiFi hotspots for everyone's use across its Florida footprint. There's still ongoing cleanup from the damage left behind by Hurricane Helene. **Nexstar** said that its media businesses across the country have helped raise nearly \$1.5 million to-date to support Helene relief efforts and potential damage caused by Milton. Donations will go to organizations assisting victims of the storm, such as the American Red Cross, United Way and the Salvation Army.

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## T-MOBILE ROLLING OUT 5G ON DEMAND COMMERCIAL SERVICE

**T-Mobile** rolled out a portable 5G private network and services solution Tuesday that includes setup, teardown and network management. It's called 5G On Demand, and the PGA and Women's PGA Championships utilized its capabilities to enhance operations and elevate the fan experience as a whole. 5G On Demand will support remote production and hopes to cut costs by reducing overall dependency on fiber networks. The service will be commercially available by the end of the year, and those interested can get a peek at the technology at T-Mobile's booth at Mobile World Congress Las Vegas through Thursday.

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## PARROT FLIES INTO STREAMING

**Parrot Analytics** is adding another tool to its arsenal, launching Streaming Metrics to help provide key metrics and insights into streaming services. Streaming Metrics enables access to historical and forecasted economic performance metrics like subscribers, revenue, ARPU and churn, all combined with catalog insights on a market-by-market basis. Additionally, the new insights can offer region and country-level metric breakdowns. Parrot will roll out Streaming Metrics to streaming services around the world as well as analyst firms to help with market analysis and competitive benchmarking.

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## COMCAST ADVERTISING PARTNERS WITH SYNO INTERNATIONAL

The European-based data solutions and consumer insights company **Syno International** is looking to expand into the U.S., and it's partnering with **Comcast Advertising** to become

its signal authentication partner. Comcast Advertising will integrate Syno's data collection and analytics platform into its Signal Authentication service, which offers an identity signal that can be used across multiple use cases. The integration will also let advertisers measure the performance of their streaming and cross-device video campaigns at scale across nearly 32 million households.

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## DISNEY BUNDLE NOW AVAILABLE TO KROGER SHOPPERS

Boost by Kroger Plus, a paid membership program for grocery store shoppers to unlock additional savings, is including **Disney** streaming options as part of its annual memberships. New and existing \$99/year members can select a complimentary subscription to **Disney+** Basic (With Ads), **Hulu** (With Ads) or **ESPN+** for the duration of their subscription. Those with \$59/year memberships can receive a complimentary six-month subscription to any of the three services.

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## BELL MEDIA, WBD CONTINUE CONTENT PARTNERSHIP

**Bell Media's Crave** streaming service will continue to be the exclusive home of **HBO** and **Max** content for the Canadian market, thanks to a multi-year extension of its partnership with **Warner Bros. Discovery**. The new deal also includes a co-production commitment for original Canadian content, licensing of Bell Media original content for use on WBD platforms outside of Canada and extended access to French-language content for use on Bell Media platforms.

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## FIBER FRENZY

More locations in Enfield, Connecticut, will soon have access to **GoNetspeed's** internet. The company is in the midst of a \$1.9 million project to expand to over 2,800 homes and businesses. Customers are expected to be connected in the coming months.

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## CARRIAGE

**Herring Networks** struck a deal with **Bridge News** to launch the 24/7 FAST platform **OAN Plus** as a diginet on more than 85 broadcast stations in the U.S. The new distribution includes eight of the top-ten DMAs and brings OAN Plus' total OTA reach to over 17 million homes. Also included in the deal is the general entertainment channel **AWE Plus**.

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## RATINGS

**Fox News** kept its usual spot at the top of both the prime-time and total-day ratings charts the week of Sept. 30-Oct. 6. Coverage of last week's VP debate lifted it to 3.13 million

viewers P2+ in prime. **ESPN** followed with 2.58 million viewers, primarily boosted by college football and the **MLB** Wild Card Series averaging 2.82 million viewers across ESPN platforms. Thursday's Mets vs Brewers elimination game was ESPN's most-watched MLB contest since 2021 with 4.02 million viewers, and "College GameDay" is still on pace for its best season ever after scoring 2 million viewers (and reaching 2.5 million in the final hour). **MSNBC** had 1.75 million viewers and **CNN** and **Fox Sports 1** completed the top five with 975,000 and 904,000, respectively. In total day, Fox News reached 1.7 million viewers, which beat the likes of MSNBC (997,000), ESPN (872,000) and CNN (568,000). **TBS**, another beneficiary of the MLB playoffs, had 372,000 viewers in total day.

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## ON THE CIRCUIT

**Revolt** hosted its Revolt World experience last month. Under the theme "We Create the Future," Revolt World attracted more than 35,000 attendees, offering live music, performances and networking opportunities in addition to mentoring, executive chats and a career fair provided by Industry professionals. Additionally, the Revolt World app recorded 68,000 networking interactions, with more than half of the attendees gaining a new business opportunity from the event.

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## DOING GOOD

**GCI** continued its support of the Healthy Alaska Natives Foundation with a \$20,000 donation. The money helped HANF reach its fundraising goals and will be used to fund projects like the construction of patient housing at the Alaska Native Medical Center, livestreaming technology in NICU for family connectivity and support of education programs preparing health aides for rural Alaska.

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## PROGRAMMING

**Fox News** will launch a daily one-hour Spanish-language program focusing on issues important to the Hispanic community on Oct. 15. "Fox Noticias," hosted by *Rachel Campos-Duffy*, co-host of "Fox & Friends Weekend," will air weekdays at 4pm on **Fox Deportes** and will also be available as a podcast on Fox News Audio. – A new original comedy series "It's Florida, Man" is set to debut on **HBO** this month. The six-episode season will explore the bizarre events and occurrences in the Sunshine State through various retellings, interviews and recreations featuring local residents and recurring actors and comedians. It's Florida, Man will premiere Oct. 18 at 11pm with new episodes weekly, also available for streaming on **Max**. – Comedian and ventriloquist *Jeff Dunham* is releasing a new one-hour comedy special on **Prime Video**. "Jeff Dunham's Scrooged-Up Holiday Special" will be available on the streamer starting Nov. 19 and be a spin of the classic holiday story "A Christmas Carol." It'll be Dunham's 13th special.