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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Nintendo Power: What ISPs Are Saying About the Switch 2's Features

Nintendo, one of the biggest and most successful gaming companies on the planet, expects to sell 20 million units of its new console, the iterative Switch 2 handheld-home console hybrid, by March 2026. Judging from all the pictures on social media of long lines outside of retail stores, we'd say the Japanese studio is well on its way. The Switch 2 launched in the U.S. at midnight Thursday with several new online features that should keep Nintendo's servers and ISPs busy as more customers get their hands on the console in the next weeks and months.

Switch 2 users will need steady and continued bandwidth from their ISPs to keep the good times rolling on the console. Are operators worried about meeting the data usage demands that come with a more online-focused Nintendo console (to go with all the juice **Xbox**, **PlayStation** and PC gamers already suck up on a monthly basis)? Not really. **Comcast**, **Spectrum**, **Mediacom** and **Optimum** say they're ready.

"Our network is designed to meet our customers' ever-growing connectivity demands," says **Danny Bowman**, EVP of Product, **Charter**. "As new applications and devices are launched that require higher bandwidth, our network has the capacity and scalability to deliver the high-performance and low-lag experience gamers expect."

Ultimately, a console's success or failure comes down to the quality of the games you can play on it, but a new machine's social features are also very important. Gaming, especially Nintendo's

family-oriented platforms, is so often about community, and the Switch 2 was designed to build on the Switch's innovative approach. While you can still play the Switch 2 in local split-screen with all of your friends (something that's become more difficult on other platforms), the Switch 2 takes party sessions to the next level with its marquee online feature: GameChat, which allows up to 12 people to video chat while playing games together. This video chat feature is so deeply rooted in the core of what this next generation of the Switch experience is that Nintendo added a special chat button to the console's controller and even developed a webcam peripheral sold separately.

Players can video chat at up to 1080p resolution, although your mileage will vary in terms of frame rates while playing games at the same time—a fact that Nintendo didn't hide when it first unveiled a demo of GameChat in action. The technology is leagues behind what you can do on other platforms, but let's face it, you ain't buying a Nintendo console for the power. You want "Mario Kart World," the Switch 2's big launch title, so you can play with your friends, either in person or through online multiplayer. GameChat also allows users to stream their gameplay to their friends so they can watch you win a race or beat a difficult level, and there's even a cute little component that lets players cast their faces onto the digital worlds of compatible games (currently, only the Switch 2 version of "Super Mario Party! Jamboree") for a personalized touch.

Another online feature Nintendo is pushing with this generation is GameShare via GameChat, which allows you to tem-

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porarily share access to a game with your friends so you can play together, even if the other players don't own the title. And there's definitely also an emphasis on digital game downloads vs physical cartridges this time around. Not only will all Switch 2 games be available to buy and download through the Nintendo eShop, but some physical cartridges will only act as game keys now, no longer containing the game itself but instead unlocking the digital version for you to download online. Nintendo will also charge a premium for some physical—while digital versions will cost \$60-80, select cartridges will be \$90—which will undoubtedly push even more players to opt for digital downloads.

When we asked Mediacom CTO *JR Walden* whether the ISP expected the Switch 2 launch to lead to increased data usage, he said they didn't anticipate that. "Gamers with new Nintendo systems were likely still gamers before that. We expect some transition of gaming traffic from other hosts to Nintendo hosts but overall traffic will likely remain consistent."

Meanwhile, Comcast pointed to its open standard, low-latency tech as an example of how **Xfinity** is meeting online gamers' needs, including ultra-low lag connectivity. The operator said in a January press release announcing the launch of the new tech that latency is "dramatically reduced to faster than the blink of an eye" when using the **NVIDIA GeForce Now** cloud gaming service or the **Steam** platform. Comcast also said that the low-lag experience can expand to additional "content and application providers who choose to leverage the new open standard technology for their own products." Of course, there's no word on whether Nintendo will take advantage of Comcast's tech to improve those questionable GameChat frame rates for Xfinity customers, and the tech itself is only available in select U.S. cities for now, with more deployments to come this year.

The need for bandwidth on the Switch 2 could actually be good news for ISPs, according to **CableLabs**, who tell us that digital game downloads tend to be one of the strongest reasons customers decide to sign up for faster broadband tiers. So, maybe the Switch 2 isn't just here to make gamers happy, but ISPs, too.

BEAD 2.0 IS HERE

NTIA [released](#) its official revisions to the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program and there are some aspects ISPs will like. At the top of the list is the removal of provisions that they've argued amount to backdoor rate regulation. As Commerce Secretary *Howard Lutnick* promised this week, NTIA is also taking a tech-neutral approach and removing the preference for fiber. States and territories have 90 days to comply with the notice, including conducting an additional "Benefit of the Bargain Round" of subgrantee selection that "permits all

applicants to compete on a level playing field." While there are concerns that this will result in everything being re-bid (despite the time and money that's already been poured into the process), there's also the possibility some broadband providers who sat out participating will jump in now that some of the regulatory red tape has been removed. "We welcome changes to the BEAD program that will make the program more efficient and eliminate onerous requirements, which add unnecessary costs that impede broadband deployment efforts. These updates are welcome improvements that will make it easier for providers to build faster, especially in hard-to-reach communities, without being bogged down by red tape," **NCTA** said in a statement. **ACA Connects** is currently reviewing NTIA's updated BEAD guidance, noting it appreciates the decision to adopt many of its members' recommendations to lift costly federal mandates and requirements. NTIA won't allow states and territories to impose any sort of specific rate on low-cost broadband service, instead allowing them to permit providers to propose their existing, market driven low-cost plans to meet the statutory low-cost requirement. It will also eliminate the requirement that states and territories have a middle-class affordability plan. The notice limits the labor and employment requirement of the statute to a certification of compliance with existing law and nixes obligations to conduct climate analyses. Those unhappy with the tech neutral change worry it will result in inferior technology for rural America. "Secretary Lutnick wants to invest in the 'cheapest' broadband infrastructure, not the best broadband infrastructure. It's a self-inflicted wound to American competitiveness. China and Europe are going all in on fiber to position themselves for AI. Under Secretary Lutnick, America is getting cheap, unreliable networks. That's the definition of penny-wise, pound-foolish," said a statement from the leadership of the **Benton Institute for Broadband & Society**. While Lutnick has said all of the money will be out the door this year, **House Commerce** Ranking Member *Frank Pallone* is among those who believe we're looking at a delay: "Republicans are throwing out years of hard work and forcing states to start from scratch—imposing worse internet service on families and businesses. This is the height of Republican hypocrisy and will cause more confusion and delays."

COMCAST, CHSN CONFIRM DEAL; RSN HALTS SOME OTA

Chicago Sports Network and **Comcast** made their long-awaited carriage deal official Friday. The RSN will live in Xfinity's Ultimate TV plan, coming just in time for tonight's Royals vs White Sox game at 7:40pm. It ends a saga that was put in the spotlight once CHSN launched in October without a deal with Comcast—the largest cable operator in the Chicago area—at the time. In the meantime,

CHSN had promoted its DTC app that runs at \$19.99/month for one team or \$29.99/month to access content from each of the Blackhawks, Bulls and White Sox. The RSN also leaned on OTA distribution, but that'll get shaken up as well upon the Comcast news. Effective Monday, CHSN is sunsetting its OTA carriage in certain markets, including Chicago, Champaign-Springfield, Peoria, Rockford and Quincy, Illinois; South Bend and Ft. Wayne, Indiana; and Davenport, Iowa. It'll remain available OTA in Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Sioux City, Iowa; and the Paducah-Cape Girardeau-Harrisburg market across Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois.

games as well as behind-the-scenes content. It's initially available through the **Apple** and **Google Play** stores and the web, but will add OTT carriage including **Apple TV**, Roku and **Amazon Fire TV** later this year.

PFL GOES DTC

The **Professional Fighters League** introduced a direct-to-consumer app that allows U.S. fans to watch all PFL International League events and fights live. The free-to-use app includes PFL fights, fighter information, advanced analytics, fan rewards and

PEOPLE

Puja Vohra is making the switch from **Paramount Global** to **Fox Corp.**, taking on the newly created role of CMO and EVP, Advertising Sales. Vohra was most recently EVP, Marketing for **Paramount+** and has also spent time as EVP, Brand Marketing & Strategy for **Showtime**. She'll report to **Jeff Collins**, President, Ad Sales, Marketing and Brand Partnerships. – **WOW!** tapped **Audrey Glenn** as its Senior Director, Legal and Regulatory Affairs. She joins from Carousel Consulting where she advised global clients on telecommunications law, data privacy and contractual strategy. Other stints include roles at **Cable & Wireless USA** and the **FCC** as a senior attorney.



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Social Media Hits



Quotable

"There are so many in-game bets being done, and that's one of the things that streaming services have problems with, because of the latency factor of 70-80 seconds. Not going to take a bet if it's 80 seconds after what happened. I made some money on my kids on that, by the way, when they were watching downstairs on streaming, I was watching upstairs on linear."



- **TVB President/CEO Steve Lanzano at Gabelli Funds' 17th Annual Media & Sports Symposium**



Up Ahead

JUNE 4-12: [Tribeca Film Festival](#), NYC

JUNE 9-12: [CableLabs Interop Labs DOCSIS 4.0 and DAA Technology](#), Louisville, CO

JUNE 11-13: [StreamTV Show](#), Denver

JUNE 23-25: [Broadband Communities Summit](#), Houston

JULY 17: [Fiber Broadband Association Regional Fiber Connect](#), Anchorage, Alaska

JUNE 27-29: [NTCA Summer Symposium](#), Hilton Head Island, S.C.