

UP AHEAD

- **June 4:** [Synopsis Sports Awards](#), NYC
- **June 4:** Telecom Industry Summit on Protecting Critical Communications Infrastructure, Philly
- **June 4:** WICT DC/Baltimore Executive Presence [Webinar](#), Virtual
- **June 8-11:** CableLabs [Interop Labs CPMP XGS-PON](#), Louisville, CO
- **June 16-18:** [Stream TV Show](#), Denver

ERGEN SEES VALUE IN LPTV BROADCAST

Charlie Ergen's latest venture has him diving into the world of low-power television stations. His SPAC **CONX Corp.** announced a merger agreement with the country's largest low-power TV operator, **HC2 Broadcasting**. CONX sibling **EchoStar** could get into the biz, with the deal giving it the right to purchase 80.1% of HC2 for two years. Terms allow HC2 parent **Innovate** the ability to purchase, for a period of 18 months after closing, up to 15% in the aggregate of the outstanding equity interests.

The **SEC** filing doesn't get into why Ergen and potentially EchoStar are interested in HC2, but the assumption is [5G Broadcast](#)—an emerging tech that allows a low-power station to transmit a single 5G signal with live TV, radio, sports, news and emergency alerts to any compatible mobile device within its service area with a one-to-many efficiency.

HC2 asked the **FCC** last year to allow low-power stations on a voluntary basis to use the 5G Broadcast standard as an alternative to the currently authorized ATSC 1.0 and ATSC 3.0 transmission standards. Just last month, the **LPTV Broadcasters Association** urged FCC Chairman *Brendan Carr* to fast-track HC2's petition, saying it has drawn ample comments to move forward, with detractors primarily entities vested in promoting ATSC 3.0. Even some of those detractors are now embracing 5G Broadcast as a value-add to ATSC 3.0, the group argued.

"It is absurd that the U.S. television broadcast industry continues to lag behind the world. Europe and Asia are already deploying 5G Broadcast because those countries understand that only a global standard with a mobile device pathway will deliver what consumers want and need. Free American LPTV to innovate, serve local communities and thrive in a mobile-first world," the association declared, leaning heavily on Carr's Build America agenda. "Chairman Carr, you're already the champion of spectrum, deregulation and American tech leadership. Extend that winning formula to broadcasting."

The particulars of the CONX-HC2 deal have CONX owning 75% of the combined entity with HC2's current owners holding the remaining 25%. CONX agreed to a bridge loan of \$105 million to HC2 that it's using for existing debt and to repurchase equity interests from certain noteholders. It matures in one year and carries 8% interest. The deal needs regulatory approvals, including from the FCC. The companies have customary termination rights if the transaction doesn't close by Nov. 29, though they can potentially extend the deadline to March 1, 2027 and May 29, 2027.

5G Broadcast proponents tout the tech as being able to deliver linear TV, live events and datacasting to any compatible 5G/6G phone along with emergency alerts in under 0.5 seconds, even if cellular networks are down. It's also painted as a terrestrial backup to GPS.

NAB is among those opposing HC2's petition, raising concerns about potential harmful interference to other broadcast services, including ATSC 1.0 and 3.0. **Sinclair Broadcast-**

ing argues that there is not a single widely available consumer device that can receive 5G Broadcast signals on the market today. “For such devices to get to market, manufacturers would need to install broadcast band antennas and new radio frequency filtering and front ends in mobile devices – exactly what they would need to do to receive ATSC 3.0 signals,” Sinclair said in recent FCC comments. “Indeed, manufacturers are already working on incorporating ATSC 3.0 receivers into consumer devices for the Indian market, which has over a billion mobile phone users.”

What’s more, there’s also the HC2’s request that the FCC consider eliminating the requirement that low-power stations engage in broadcasting and allow them to pursue datacasting without a free-to-air signal. “In essence, HC2 asks the Commission to allow LPTV stations to use valuable spectrum resources for free, on an exclusive basis, for any purpose. The Commission should do no such thing,” NCTA said in comments to the Commission.

The cable association also used the HC2 petition to argue against any mandatory ATSC 3.0 transition, saying it highlights how broadcasters lack consensus on the technologies that would best serve them going forward. It stressed that MVPDs should not be required to carry 5G Broadcast signals.

PROFITABLE PEACOCK

During an investor conference Tuesday, **NBCUniversal** Media Group Chairman *Matt Strauss* confirmed **Peacock** will reach profitability in 2Q26. The “big milestone” comes six years after the streamer’s launch. It has amassed 46 million subs since then, boosted by high-engagement live sports rights, including the **NFL**, **NBA** and the upcoming **FIFA World Cup** via **Telemundo**. “It’s a validation of the strategy that we’ve had from the beginning, because we’ve been very consistent and disciplined on the execution of our strategy,” Strauss said of Peacock’s progress. That strategy involved launching Peacock with an ad-supported tier at a time when competitors were still ad-free (how times have changed!). Coincidentally, streaming analytics firm **Antenna** released a report this week that backs Peacock’s approach, finding that nearly half of streaming subscriptions are now ad-supported across premium SVODs. Peacock has also focused on scaling the streamer domestically over globally, while many competitors have worked to grow in international markets. Asked whether an international expansion of the product is being considered, Strauss said Peacock will stay the course. “There’s not one way to approach a streaming strategy or market. Sometimes you have to play to your strengths, which is what we’ve been doing,” the exec said.

VERSANT’S DISTRIBUTION DEAL CONFIDENCE

Versant CFO/COO *Anand Kini* pulled back the curtain on the company’s distribution agreements during an investor conference appearance Tuesday, revealing the company has about 16% of its sub base up this year and roughly a quarter up next year. The balance is in 2028 and beyond, which “gives us a lot of confidence in the business.” Kini added that a lot of those deals that are up further into the future were secured after the spinoff from **Comcast** was announced. “It kind of highlights that the counterparties knew we were spinning, and with that, our brands and our networks are powerful, and we were able to secure terms we’re very pleased with,” he said, noting that distribution talks these days are

CFX Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC.
cablefax.com

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all about the skinny bundle, which Versant does well in with its heavy sports and news focus. As for M&A, Versant is focused on its core markets—personal finance, business news, political news and opinion, golf, genre entertainment and sports. “We don’t really want to dilute from that. We think that mix serves us well,” Kini said. Speaking of deals, news broke Tuesday that Versant has made a minority stake in **GammaTime**, a microdrama streaming app. Financials weren’t disclosed.

MCTV SUBS GET ARMSTRONG & AMC

Residents of Massillon, Ohio, and beyond will soon get the **Armstrong** welcome. The operator’s previously announced [acquisition](#) of **MCTV** was finalized on May 1. The transition process is underway, with consumer messaging expected to ramp up in the coming weeks. One of the first signs of a new owner in town came last month when **AMC**, **WE tv**, **IFC** and **BBC News** were added to MCTV customers’ Basic video package. MCTV opted out of the **NCTC** carriage renewal with **AMC Global Media** in 2021, dropping the nets and decreasing the basic rate by \$2/month. MCTV Basic Plus customers also saw **BBC America** added, along with **NHL Network** and **MLB Network**. **Sundance** is now part of the HD Essentials package. A few channels carried by MCTV got the boot once Armstrong took over, including **UP**, **Weather Nation**, **CNN International** and **Sony Movies**. The deal adds some 96,000 MCTV passings to Armstrong’s footprint in eastern Ohio and West Virginia.

T-MOBILE CFO TOUTS QUALITY OF CUSTOMER ADDS

T-Mobile CFO *Peter Osvaldik* used an investor conference appearance to stake the claim that the uncarrier’s 1Q26 results weren’t a flash in the pan. Instead, he believes they were a product of a company system working as designed, pointing to 217,000 postpaid account net adds, 11% service revenue growth, a 12% improvement in core EBITDA and a 24.4% free cash flow margin as evidence that T-Mobile’s “best network, best value, best experience” playbook is translating into sustainable success. Speaking at the **Evercore TMT Global Conference**, Osvaldik played up the quality of T-Mobile’s customer additions as well as the quantity. He cited port-in ARPA being 20% higher than port-out ARPA, plus 60% of new account lines chose premium plans, about double the existing base rate. “In Q1, of recent switchers to T-Mobile, the highest ever percentage of those cited network quality as the reason for switching, so that flywheel of network perception that has a long, long runway ahead of us is starting,” Osvaldik said, before touching on the importance of day-to-day benefits like streaming deals or access to concert tickets as ways to attract high customer lifetime value subscribers. Something else Osvaldik and T-Mobile have been attempting recently is shifting the way telecom analysts tally the score. Postpaid phone lines were what folks hyper-fixated on in years past, but in Osvaldik’s view, it’s also “what’s your ability to translate unit growth on one KPI into actual value creation that matters for investors in the long term.” T-Mobile recently changed its disclosures from individual lines to accounts and ARPA. “Account churn is structurally always going to be higher than postpaid phone churn. It’s really just a math equation for us,” Osvaldik said. “As accounts come on board and tenure, not only [do] tenured have lower churn, but tenured accounts... also tend to grow in size. Certainly other products beyond phone, but also grow phone lines on a per-account basis.”

CONGRESS WANTS TO HEAR FROM NFL COMMISSIONER

The government’s scrutiny of the **NFL** and the state of sports broadcasting escalated this week. On Monday, **House Judiciary Committee** Chairman Rep. *Jim Jordan* (R-OH) requested NFL Commissioner *Roger Goodell* to testify at a hearing next week called “Examining the Sports Broadcasting Act.” It’ll take place June 10 at 10am and examine how the 1961 legislation affects today’s broadcast marketplace for major sports leagues. “It will also examine the extent to which the antitrust exemption created by the SBA has been used by the professional sports leagues to harm consumers and whether potential legislative remedies may be needed to address that harm,” Jordan wrote in a letter to Goodell. If Goodell appears—his decision is due by Wednesday—it wouldn’t be the first time he testified in front of Congress. He spoke in a 2022 hearing regarding an investigation into the Washington Commanders’ workplace culture under then-owner *Dan Snyder*. Two years later, he was back to [discuss Sunday Ticket](#), but the NFL has since garnered more attention from various lawmakers. The **FCC** began taking feedback about the state of sports broadcasting back in February, most notably asking whether the NFL should keep its antitrust status. The

NFL met with FCC staff in late April to make the case that its media distribution strategy remains beneficial for fans. Also in April was the **DOJ** reportedly embarking on an investigation to see if the league participated in anticompetitive practices. It's not yet official who could be speaking alongside Goodell, but **ESPN notes** that *OutKick* founder and **Fox News** contributor *Clay Travis* is set to appear as well as "at least one other witness."

PSKY-WBD DECISION COMING SOON IN EUROPE

European antitrust regulators plan to decide whether to approve or open an investigation of the \$110 billion merger between **Paramount Skydance** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** by July 7, [per Reuters](#). The deal's foreign investors, which include Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds, will also require approval from the **European Commission**. On this side of the pond, the transaction can't close until the **DOJ** gives the thumbs up, which is reportedly [imminent](#). The merger could face challenges from the states, with California AG *Rob Bonta* said to be considering legal action to halt the combo. PSKY has said publicly it hopes to wrap this all up by 3Q26, although the company is reportedly pushing a more aggressive timeline internally to close the deal as soon as July.

MIDCO USES HUMOR, SODA TO MARKET MOBILE

A bit more on **Midco Mobile's** [marketing plans](#). The marketing machine officially gets underway in Bismarck, North Dakota, on June 8. And judging by the [new ad](#), "Speed Dating," it's a little cheeky. In the spot, a customer says she's nervous because the last time she went in for a mobile deal "it really cost her." It then cuts to flashbacks of those retail encounters with no branding, but there are certain prominent colors at play... **Midco** is also going local with its marketing push, teaming up with Bismarck food, er, make that beverage truck, Soda Drop. It'll be handing out Midco Mobile-themed dirty soda kits on June 20 along with swag and giveaways.

ROKU IN THE ZONE

Roku and the **NHL** partnered to launch a new hub on the streaming platform suitably named NHL Zone. Live now ahead of the Stanley Cup final, the centralized destination will feature national and regional games in the user's areas, scores, highlights and recaps, NHL FAST channel programming and more. Roku recently launched similar hubs for the 2026 **FIFA World Cup** and the **WNBA**.

FIBER FRENZY

Next up on **Charter's** network expansion list is Osceola County, Michigan, with Spectrum services now on the way in the communities of Burdell, Cedar, Ewart, Hersey, Le Roy, Lincoln, Richmond, Rose Lake, Sherman and Sylvan. Over 900 homes and businesses in these previously unserved or underserved areas.

RATINGS

It's been quite the eventful start to this year's French Open, and the first two days of the tennis tournament showed a 37% audience increase YOY on **TNT Sports** platforms. The peak of Days 1 and 2 came when 793,000 viewers were locked in on *Ben Shelton vs Daniel Merida*. Another note was the fact Day 1 and 2 viewership was 54% women. On social, Roland Garros coverage accumulated over 120 million content views—up 162% YOY—while total engagements eclipsed 4.2 million. -- **ESPN** posted the most-watched opening Thursday of the Women's College World Series on record last week, averaging 1.2 million viewers, according to **Nielsen Big Data + Panel**. That's a 63% leap YOY, fueled by Arkansas-Nebraska reeling in 1.4 million viewers, UCLA-Alabama garnering 1.3 million and Tennessee-Texas grabbing 1 million.

ON THE CIRCUIT

Adaptive Spirit reports that it's almost sold out of sponsorships for its [April 1-4, 2027 gathering](#) in Beaver Creek, Colorado. One gold and bronze sponsorship is left. The org, which was inducted into the **Cable Hall of Fame** this year, has held an annual networking and education event (with skiing) for more than 30 years. The event is the top fundraiser for the U.S. Paralympic Ski and Snowboard teams. – **Marquee Sports Network** and the Chicago Cubs' sixth annual Lou Gehrig Day [auction](#) is underway to help fight ALS. Up for grabs are tickets to *Noah Kahan's* sold-out Wrigley Field concert, the opportunity to call play-by-play on Marquee and more.