

FUN FACT

Marlene Dortch, the FCC's Secretary since 2002, is the granddaughter of four-time Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens. She helps keep Owens' legacy alive today—earlier this month, she was on a panel hosted by Ohio State University to celebrate 90 years since the 1936 Olympic trials. Read more about Dortch and her family's preservation efforts in this *Columbus Dispatch* [story](#) from August.

AI'S 'SUPER INTELLIGENCE' REBRAND

Just a day after President *Trump* hosted a tech summit where he rebranded AI as “super intelligence,” White House National Cyber Director *Sean Cairncross* joined **SCTE Tech-Expo26** to talk about what the move signals and why it “was a great day for the country.”

“It’s important for people to remember that this super intelligence that we’re dealing with now is because of a leap in American innovation,” Cairncross told **NCTA** President/CEO *Cory Gardner* during a Wednesday morning Headliners session. “The United States is leading the world in this technology, and the impact that that will have not only on job creation...but the future for our children moving ahead in terms of productivity, growth, technology and healthcare.”

Trump signed an executive order to make the name change official, directing all federal departments and agencies to use super intelligence or “SI” in official communications and policy documents and to no longer acknowledge the terms “artificial intelligence” or “AI.” A [fact sheet](#) released with the order explained that the new name conveys “the true capabilities of the technologies being developed today,” as they’re no longer “simply imitating or automating human intelligence” but “unlocking new forms of human creativity.”

Cairncross never slipped while talking to Gardner when referring to super intelligence, which actually felt a little jarring when sandwiched between operator panels exclusively calling it AI. The moderator of an AI panel later in the day quipped, “I guess we’re sup-



AOI is Celebrating!

This month, we have shipped more than

1 Million

1.8GHz amplifiers!

Thanks to everyone who has helped get us here!



posed to call it super intelligence now.” Even Gardner made a joke that saying SI would take a little getting used to because it made him think of *Sports Illustrated*.

Tuesday’s summit gathered a who’s who of AI leaders, including the heads of **Google, Meta, Nvidia, Anthropic, OpenAI** and **SpaceX**, who signed a “morally binding” (Trump’s words) pact to implement internal controls to ensure new models are being built and deployed safely. The group said it will meet regularly to “establish standards and best practices” for their AI systems. The agreement comes amid heightened anxiety around AI safety after several tech companies reported recently that their models hacked other companies.

“Yesterday was a good representation of how seriously the industry is taking the security and safety of their models that are under development,” Cairncross said. “There’s information sharing that’s happening, and it’s a very positive development.”

Collaborating with tech companies is part of the Trump administration’s effort to “build a new relationship between government and industry,” including the connectivity sector. “Without the folks in this room and the enterprise that you represent, SI wouldn’t be possible. You’re a key part of this whole component, and so in order to secure those systems, to work with you at the speed and pace that innovation is taking place today, we have to have a collaborative relationship. It has to be adaptive [and] flexible,” Cairncross said.

AI companies saying they’ll self-regulate is one thing, but equally important are the broadband operators protecting Americans from cybersecurity threats, especially as AI advancements enable more attacks. “What concerns me in my lane of cybersecurity is, with the increasing power of this technology, the ability to exploit systems is becoming democratized,” Cairncross said. “As that spreads, the need to deploy technology quickly on the defensive side at speed and scale is very important.”

One recent example of an operator using AI to fight threats is **Comcast Business’** SecurityEdge Preferred solution, a next-gen firewall that intercepts threats to small businesses at the network edge. It launched in June. **Comcast** EVP, Chief Network Officer **Elad Nafshi** shared on a panel Wednesday that the firewall is now defending over 10,000 businesses across the operator’s footprint, blocking more than 3.2 billion attacks in the last 30 days alone.

When asked where broadband providers can make the greatest contribution to strengthening the country’s cybersecurity, Cairncross answered that what he’s looking for the most is partnership. “We want to work with you to make sure that the technology that is cutting-edge is being deployed as quickly as possible. Where there are regulatory burdens that are creating friction in doing that, we are working with you to eliminate them or to get them in a place where form follows function—the function being the protection of the system. We are looking for ways to share information. There is a lot happening in this sector under the surface, and I think more context to operators is helpful.”

STRIKE HIGHLIGHTS VANDALISM SURGE

A Wednesday morning **TechExpo** panel about the fight against network vandalism felt like telecom’s version of assembling the Avengers. Leaders from **Comcast, Charter, AT&T, T-Mobile** and **Verizon** joined **SCTE** President/CEO **Maria**

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

EDITORIAL

Editor

Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704,
nziegler@accessintel.com

Senior Editor

John Saavedra, 908.477.1758
jsaavedra@accessintel.com

Editorial Director

Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760,
amaclean@accessintel.com

Editorial Director, Ad Tech & Convergent Media

Sarah Sluis, 212.621.4706,
ssluis@accessintel.com

ADVERTISING/BUSINESS

Chief Revenue Officer

Dave Colford,
dcolford@accessintel.com

VP Ad Tech/Convergent Media

Gordon Plutsky,
gplutsky@accessintel.com

Group Director, Sales

Kelly Mahoney
kmahoney@accessintel.com

MARKETING

Senior Marketing Director

Jessica Dombrowski,
jdombrowski@accessintel.com

PRODUCTION/CLIENT SERVICES

Sr Production Manager:

Joann Fato,
jfato@accessintel.com

Group Subs:

Kelly Mahoney,
kmahoney@accessintel.com

Subscription Questions:

Client Services: 301.354.2101,
clientservices@accessintel.com |
Annual subscription price:
\$1,999.00/yr

Access Intelligence, LLC,

9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor,
Rockville, MD 20850

Popo and **NCTA** CTO *Rikin Thakker* to give a status update on how STRIKE (Strategic Threat Response & Infrastructure Knowledge Exchange) is progressing in its efforts. The big headline is that, while attacks on telecom infrastructure are now a felony in 40 states, up from 28 states when STRIKE started making noise about the issue last year, the number of attacks has grown. “We’ve had 408 incidents this year. That’s running almost twice what it was last year, and so we’re still seeing about 40-45 incidents every single month. The volume hasn’t slowed down,” said *Tony Speller*, SVP, Network Operations at Comcast. The other panelists echoed Speller, including Charter EVP, Field Operations *Tom Monaghan*, who serves as STRIKE’s vice chair. Monaghan said attacks have not only doubled for Charter but also moved to different states. The Southern California region, and L.A. in particular, is a hotbed for vandalism, but Charter is also now getting hit in the Carolinas, Alabama and Georgia. “But if I see any hope that’s out there, I’m going to point to Texas [which] has done a really good job not only calling it a felony but actually the enforcement that goes behind it,” Monaghan said, noting the stats in the Lone Star State are trending in the right direction. T-Mobile SVP, Network Infrastructure & Operations *Lori Ames* flagged more attacks on wireless infrastructure, too. “The criminals are going straight for our cell towers, yanking down fiber believing it’s valuable, and even stealing the electronics right out of the cabinets. They’re diversifying,” Ames said. There were a total of 18,327 incidents reported in 2025. This year has already surpassed that number. While Monaghan reiterated that the industry needs to continue to push the issue with government officials and law enforcement, Comcast and Charter are also working to make their networks more resilient against attacks. “We’re designing these where the blast radius is much smaller. We’ve been adding lots of redundant circuits this year, so that when these locations get cut, we don’t lose the entire site,” Speller explained. “We’re adding third routes to a lot of areas... When we talk about blast radius, that’s how we’re trying to minimize that as much as we can,” Monaghan added.

COMCAST UNLEASHES FIBER SENSING

The unofficial theme of **SCTE TechExpo26** is detecting potential issues in the network before it can be a problem—whether that’s through data or, in the case of **Comcast’s** new fiber sensing technology, vibrations. The technology analyzes vibrations traveling through fiber to identify activity, giving the operator an early warning of potential damage so it can respond faster without the need for separate physical sensors installed everywhere. It’s smart enough to know the difference between a subway train passing an underground cable and construction equipment operating near a fiber line, with the latter more likely to cause a potential issue. This is an important step in the industry’s work to deliver a reliable network that can set it apart from rivals offering internet. The next step is looking at how fiber sensing could combine with AI, data and other technologies. That could mean a future where a drone is automatically dispatched to provide a real-time view of network damage, vandalism, wildfires or accidents. The technology could also be used for fiber owned by others that interconnects with Comcast’s network.

ON SCTE’S SHOW FLOOR

It’s hard not to be mesmerized at **Charter’s** booth by the cool robot and a VR experience that puts you courtside at an **NBA** game, but for *Steve Miller*, the coolest thing in the display is the connected amplifiers. “It shows we can talk to five, seven vendors represented on that board that all interop and all do the same things and drive that capability for us to pinpoint,” the SVP, Network Engineering and Technology said during a Q&A at the annual **SCTE Bob Gold & Paul Schneider** Media Dinner. **Harmonic’s** booth may not be as large, but it stands out with dozens of floating candles and a Harry Potter theme that promises to bring the broadband magic. Inside, the vendor is showing off SensAI, its newly launched, AI-powered platform to help broadband networks detect problems and resolve them automatically. And it’s just going to get better, according to *Asaf Matatyiaou*, Harmonic’s SVP of Product for the Broadband Business. “If somebody came to our booth this year compared to last year and how far that’s progressed, it’s night and day. Our software moves at the speed of new things every week,” he said. **AOI** is back on the floor with its bevy of hot sauces (Incoming **CableLabs** CEO *Mark Bridges* went toe-to-toe with them in a “Hot Ones-” style challenge) and a golden amplifier to mark its shipping of 1 million 1.8GHz amplifiers this year. AOI’s booth theme is pushing boundaries, further emphasized by its demo of a live downstream operation at 3.0GHz over a coaxial plant. “There’s a lot of work to get there—standardization processes and all those other things. But I think it shows the capability,” said *Steve Pederson*, AOI’s SVP and GM of AOI’s Broadband Business. Over at **OpenVault’s** booth, the buzz is around it moving its AI-powered

proactive network maintenance solutions long used for HFC into the world of fiber with Vantage Fiber. “We’re having pretty deep discussions with about 10 operators right now. They range from Tier 1 to Tier 3. We’re starting our efforts around that with our partnership with Nokia,” OpenVault CEO *Mark Trudeau* told **CFX**. **Hitron**’s new CGNDP4 DOCSIS 4.0 portable signal meter also received a lot of attention at the show. It’s a field tool giving real-time insight, with the vendor working to get the price point low enough that every technician can have one, said Hitron President/CTO *Greg Fisher*. About a dozen operators are already using it today, he said.

CARR: ABC LICENSE DECISION STILL PENDING

FCC Chairman *Brendan Carr*’s post-meeting press conference was again more focused on matters unrelated to the items the agency voted on. Carr spent a chunk of time fielding questions on the ongoing spat with **Disney** and its eight **ABC** stations, confirming no decision has been made on their early license renewals yet. That might be because a hearing is set for next week regarding a TRO Disney filed to block the early renewal order, though Carr argued “Disney has filed at the wrong time, in the wrong court, making meritless arguments. But other than that, I think they’re doing pretty well in their litigation.” Another item Carr was asked about was the national broadcast ownership rules update that was approved in July but remains unreleased. Carr said the delayed timeline reflects a normal process for working through dissents and legal arguments. Speaking of approvals and following protocol, Carr said that applies to the Team Telecom process used when the FCC approved funding for the **Paramount Skydance-Warner Bros. Discovery** merger. “As a general matter, we need to make sure that we have the massive levels of investment needed to sustain investment in local news,” Carr said. “... I think our North Star has to be how do we encourage and incentivize more investment, because local news gathering is resource-intensive.”

PSKY-WBD SETTLEMENT APPROVED

U.S. District Court Judge *Araceli Martinez-Olguin* approved the settlement between **Paramount Skydance** and the states, allowing the programmer to complete its \$110 billion merger with **Warner Bros. Discovery**. The judge also responded to criticisms that [the conditions](#) put on PSKY are only behavioral and will ultimately prove difficult to enforce. “The Court recognizes that this proposed consent decree reflects a compromise of the claims short of full adjudication—compromise that may leave some dissatisfaction for both sides and the public but a compromise that saves the risk, time and expense of litigating through trial,” Martinez-Olguin wrote. Start the countdown to closing.

FCC ADVANCES NEPA, SPECTRUM OVERHAULS

The FCC’s September open meeting produced five items, ranging from permitting reform to a large satellite spectrum release. Leading the way was an approval to modernize National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) rules, which narrowed the definition of “Major Federal Action” so most wireless deployments tied to spectrum licenses no longer trigger federal review. The FCC projects the full final rules will eliminate evaluations for more than 14,800 wireless deployments per year, avoiding an estimated \$2.2 billion in compliance costs and \$7.5 billion in lost economic activity over the next decade. While Chairman *Brendan Carr* and Commissioner *Olivia Trusty* approved the order, Commissioner *Anna Gomez* dissented in part, citing concerns that the new guidelines risk letting “interpretation of MFAs to swallow the rule.” On spectrum, the Commission freed more than 1,000 MHz in the 12.7 GHz and 42 GHz bands for satellite use, which Carr said would provide downlink spectrum for in-home satellite broadband and mobility services. Gomez, who approved the item, recommended that the agency continue asking whether additional spectrum is necessary to meet demand as the FCC weighs two other notices covering the Ku-, Ka- and D-bands. It also advanced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking overhauling its two-decade-old ultra-wideband rules. The update would implement a new device category for AI-enabled sensing, ranging systems and access-control applications. Other approved items from Wednesday: an inquiry on how next-gen technologies like AI can reshape the 911 framework, and a Report and Order giving consumers more simplified ways to revoke robocall consent without blocking wanted alerts such as bank fraud notices.

CORRECTION

An earlier version of [this story](#) misattributed some of **Charter**’s President of Product and Technology *Rich DiGeronomo*’s quotes to President/CEO *Chris Winfrey*. We apologize for the error.



Q&A with AOI's Steve Pederson

SVP and GM, Broadband Access, AOI

What does AOI's milestone of one million amplifiers shipped tell you about where cable operators actually are in the 1.8 GHz upgrade cycle?

It tells me the upgrade cycle is real and it's accelerating. When you're moving a million units, that's not pilot programs, that's network-wide commitments. It also tells me that operators are being deliberate about sequencing. They're upgrading outside plant while they work through the headend and node decisions. The amplifier is often the first domino in a 1.8 GHz deployment because it's the most field-intensive piece, and operators want that work behind them before they move deeper into the architecture. The appetite for extended spectrum is broad, and that's a healthy sign for where the industry is headed.

Cable operators are no longer competing with each other—they're facing fiber overbuilders, fixed wireless and subscribers with rising expectations. How does that convergence change what operators ask of vendors?

The ask has shifted from 'give us more capacity' to 'give us more intelligence.' Capacity was the first major challenge—operators needed spectrum to match what fiber could promise on paper. That problem is being solved with 1.8 GHz and DOCSIS 4.0. But the second major hurdle is about operational agility. When you're losing subscribers to a fixed wireless provider or a fiber overbuilder, often it's not because your speeds are slow—it's because your competitor installed faster, responded faster or detected a service problem before the customer did. So what operators are asking us for now is an outside plant that talks back. They want amplifiers and nodes that surface diagnostics proactively, that integrate with their orchestration layer, and reduce the truck roll. That's a very different conversation than we were having five years ago.

As operators push toward DAA and Remote PHY, the node-amplifier relationship is evolving. Where does AOI's Quantum18 fit in that transition, and does QuantumLink change the calculus for operators converging active hardware and network management layers?

The Quantum18 portfolio was designed with the DAA transition in mind. As Remote PHY nodes move deeper into the network and the cascade gets shorter, the amplifier has to perform in an environment where there's less tolerance for signal variability and more expectation of consistent, programmable behavior. Quantum18 handles the 1.8 GHz passband in that context without requiring operators to rethink their outside plant topology wholesale, which matters enormously for operators managing capital carefully. QuantumLink is where I think the

story gets really interesting. Historically, active outside plant has been something operators monitor reactively. When something fails, you find it. QuantumLink delivers a superior customer experience by preventing outages before they happen, resulting in little to no downtime. The calculus changes for operators when their OSS/BSS team can see the outside plant the same way they see the headend. The convergence of active hardware and management layer is where we're investing heavily, because that's where we can actually help operators reduce operating cost, not just capital cost.

What did you learn during your time at Cisco about what operators actually need on the ground that you couldn't fully address from inside a large platform vendor?

Large vendors are excellent at solving the problem they've defined. The challenge is the problem operators face in the field is often messier and more specific than the platform was designed for. At Cisco, I saw sophisticated technology sometimes struggle to get adopted at scale in cable because integration points didn't match what operators had deployed in the outside plant. There was a translation layer missing. What that taught me is that the outside plant isn't just a physical medium. It's also an information layer, and the companies that figure out how to surface that information in a way that fits operator workflows will win. This shaped how we're building AOI's roadmap. We're not trying to build the next great platform from the top down. We're starting with what's in the ground, what operators are trying to manage today, and building intelligence out from there.

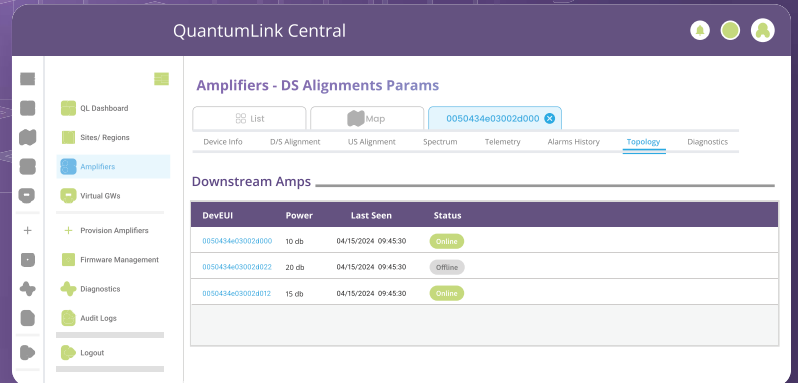
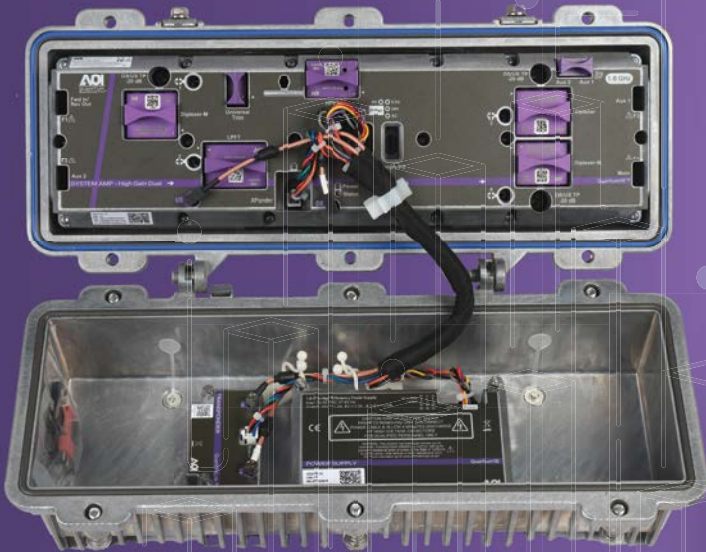
From where you sit, what does convergence mean for cable operators? Is the industry moving toward a unified vision, or are operators charting different paths?

The industry is not converging on a single vision. What I observe is three different bets being placed simultaneously. Some are doubling down on HFC—extending spectrum, deploying DOCSIS 4.0, treating coax as a durable asset for another decade or more. Others are running hybrid strategies, deploying PON in greenfields and new subdivisions while maintaining HFC in their legacy footprint. A third group is quietly accelerating their path to full fiber replacement, treating HFC as a bridge they want to cross as quickly as economics allow. What's interesting is all three strategies are defensible right now—the technology exists to support all of them. Where I do see convergence is in what operators are trying to achieve: symmetric multi-gig, low-latency performance, and operational efficiency. The destination is agreed upon. The route is still operator specific.



Intelligence
delivered

Total visibility and control for next-gen HFC networks.



SMART AMPLIFIERS + REMOTE MANAGEMENT

ao-inc.com