

DID YOU KNOW?

Sept. 17—the 2026 season opener of Amazon Prime Video's Thursday Night Football coverage (Lions at Bills)—was Comcast's largest day in internet history, with a peak of 148.21 Tbps. That's up 14.3% over TNF's Week 1 peak in 2025 (130.07 Tbps) and 20.4% over Week 1 2024 (123.48 Tbps), according to Comcast.

CABLE'S AI DREAMS AT TECHEXPO26

SCTE President/CEO *Maria Popo* [told CFX Download](#) that **TechExpo26** would have more programming covering AI than ever before, and she wasn't exaggerating. If there was one big takeaway at this year's expo in Atlanta, it's that cable is betting big on being the backbone powering the future of the technology, which the White House is now calling "[super intelligence](#)."

Comcast EVP, Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi* is certainly optimistic about the operator's capabilities in the AI era, especially as more of the compute supporting advances, including in physical AI (read: robotics), moves to the edge of the network. During a Wednesday morning Headliners session, he spoke about how edge AI investments can open up new revenue streams.

"At the end of the day, this is a revenue opportunity. This is opening up new segments. For example, commercial services. The demands of enterprises, the demands of work from home, the demands of new applications that enterprises rely on. Our edge is best positioned to be able to serve that, whether it's remote desktop opportunities or video processing in real time," Nafshi said. "Even if you're a smaller operator, don't look at [AI investment] as you're not going to be able to afford this. It's what new business opportunities is this technology going to open up."

During a separate TechExpo session, Nafshi noted that AI is still a small part of Comcast's overall traffic, but it's growing quickly. One stat he shared might surprise folks. In October 2025, text accounted for 85.5% of AI traffic on Comcast's network, while images were at 12.5%. Today, text is up to 99.3% of Comcast's AI traffic, with images at about 0.6%, with Nafshi blaming **OpenAI**'s shutdown of the Sora app for the decline in image and video traffic.

At a Comcast Connect event Wednesday evening, Nafshi hosted a conversation with



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Joao Gomes, **Nvidia's** Global Head of Business Development for Telco Edge AI, where they talked up broadband's unique position in the AI race.

"I think it's a great time to be in your business and [have] everything that you have built," Gomes said. It was a comment that lit up the room, with Nafshi quipping to the audience of operators and vendors, "Everyone heard that, right?"

As AI has moved from chatbots to reasoning models to agentic systems, the computing demand to power it all has increased by a lot, requiring new infrastructure to be built across utility sectors. Gomes sees broadband providers at an advantage here: "For broadband operators, because of the footprint that you have, that has become really valuable. These sites that are already permitted [and] that have been optimized over many years...that are connected by fiber and are close to the big metropolises and where people live," he said. "It's the perfect time to capitalize on that and start building this distributed infrastructure."

Comcast and **Charter** are both partnering with Nvidia to build out edge platforms to power the AI demand that's growing by the day. Charter EVP, Technology Strategy & Innovation *Justin Colwell* revealed on Wednesday that agentic AI traffic is surging on the Spectrum network. "It's probably the fastest-growing type of usage of our network since I've been looking at it for 20 years. Just in two and a half years, more than half of our customers used an agent of some kind," Colwell said. Charter has seen agentic AI traffic grow by 350% YOY, but Colwell noted that's still 0.1% of downstream, while it represents 0.3% of upstream "with a much larger CAGR."

Charter is in the middle of a network evolution that will bring multi-gig, symmetrical speeds across its footprint. It's an investment that Colwell believes is really going to pay off when considering the myriad of AI use cases demanding more and more juice. An example is AI-powered camera recognition tech in self-driving Teslas.

"An average Tesla that has full self-driving is several 100 GBs a month up. As you look at the proliferation of cameras and camera identification, whether it's in cars or later robotics, that could make a real material impact on the upstream," Colwell said.

Nafshi talked about how Comcast has the telemetry in place on its network to understand when something is wrong. The next step in its autonomous network journey is getting AI to resolve those issues. "To date, with the AI capabilities that we have, we're already able to deconflict about 45% of those. When I stand up on this stage, hopefully they'll have me back next year, I can guarantee you that it's going to be well north of 99%," he said.

There were plenty of AI use cases on display at TechExpo, including at the behemoth Spectrum booth, which boasted a cool robot that could dance and fist bump passersby. Another fun one we saw was during a Tuesday session about monetizing AI at the edge, where Comcast Fellow *Robert Gaydos* showed off an example of what personalized live content dubbing could look like running on the edge.

The demo? Nafshi artificially addressing the crowd in Canadian French, with gestures and mouth movements to match, making the dub look more natural to the viewer. Comcast is imagining this as a solution to the latency and buffering issues that would arise if you tried to pack multiple languages in a live stream-

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ing video. “We can do this in real time with edge computing,” Gaydos explained. “This is 10 milliseconds after the live video hits the GPUs. We’ve actually translated it and augmented the video to show that experience. These are some of the things that you can start doing inside of our cable plants with distributed GPUs.”

FCC RELEASES BROADCAST OWNERSHIP CAP ORDER

Nearly two months after the **FCC** voted to repeal the 39% national TV ownership cap, the agency has released the final [order](#). Thursday’s release came one day after a reporter asked FCC Chair *Brendan Carr* why the Commission hadn’t released the order yet, with him saying it reflected a normal process for working through dissents and legal arguments. Just like the draft, the final order from the Aug. 6 vote nixes the cap and replaces it with a case-by-case process that assesses transactions through the lens of whether they serve the public interest. Comparing the final order to the draft, one of the additions is language explaining that those opposing a transaction based on local news concerns must explain why a deal wouldn’t result in the acquiring company continuing to invest in local news. “In conducting such an analysis, historical experience involving the parties at issue is likely to be relevant. This includes the practical experience of viewers in communities where the potential acquiror expanded into new markets in the past,” the order said.

STREAMING DISCOUNTS ON DISPLAY IN VERIZON-STARZ SPAT

Verizon Fios and **Starz**’s carriage dispute is worth watching because it highlights the tension between programmers going their own way with direct-to-consumer streaming services while still putting a hand out to MVPDs for carriage fees. “While Starz is currently selling its service direct to consumers for as low as \$2.50 a month, they are demanding Verizon customers pay double that amount for access to the same content,” a Verizon spokesperson said. Starz is running a promotion for \$30 for the first year of a streaming subscription. “This is false and continued misrepresentation of both our position and pricing,” a Starz spokesperson said. At issue seems to be promotional rates vs. wholesale rates. Limited time, deep discounts to consumers are common. **AMC+** is currently offering one year for \$39.99 vs. a regular price of \$109.99. **Paramount+** has two months of Premium for \$1/month with a discount code. And with Prime Big Deal Days coming up Oct 6-7, it’s notable that streamers often slash prices to as little as \$0.99/month for two months during the promotion. But Verizon’s not alone in drawing a line. “When these companies offer a direct-to-consumer product, in some cases cheaper than what they’re offering it to us, I can’t do it,” *Geoff Shook*, **Buckeye Broadband**’s President/GM, said in an [interview](#) with **CFX Top Ops** magazine. Buckeye dropped **ESPN** and **NBCUniversal** nets from its lineup in summer 2025. Starz claims Verizon has mischaracterized its position and shown an unwillingness to negotiate—and it’s noting that it is one of the few remaining independent programmers in a market increasingly dominated by large media conglomerates. “For decades, we have

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invested in storytelling that reflects a broad range of voices, experiences and perspectives, while championing creators and audiences that have historically been underrepresented in mainstream entertainment. Verizon's decision to drop Starz deprives its customers of access to a unique slate of programming that cannot be found anywhere else and leaves viewers with fewer choices," *Alison Hoffman*, President, Starz Networks, said in a statement. Thursday's early morning drop came one day before the launch of Starz's new queer thriller "Tip Toe." The programmer has its third and final season of "P-Valley" debuting in December, and fans of the "Power" universe are waiting for a premiere date for "Power: Origins." Verizon offers Starz a la carte, but also as part of its largest video plan, the Most Fios TV package. The dispute impacts all Starz channels, as well as Starz On Demand and the Starz app through Fios. Verizon said it offers a rich, diverse array of programming and remains open to reaching a sensible resolution with Starz. Such disputes are rare for Starz. The last was in 2019, when negotiations went down to the wire with **Comcast**. The two ultimately reached a deal that repackaged Starz, but there was no blackout.

COMCAST TRAFFIC BY THE NUMBERS

Comcast's EVP, Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi* has become known for his fascinating stat drops, and he had plenty to share with the **SCTE TechExpo26** crowd. The first official Thursday Night Football broadcast on **Amazon Prime Video** on Sept. 17 delivered the largest day in internet history for Comcast at 148.21 Tbps maximum peak, breaking the record previously held by February's Super Bowl. "When you look at the rest of the year, I can already predict that Nov. 19, when 'Grand Theft Auto VI' comes out, that's going to shatter all-time records. That's the game of the century," he said. That's a big day for ISPs since no physical discs are being produced, meaning players will need to download it. Gaming and football are the biggest traffic drivers, with 72% of the data consumed on Comcast's network for entertainment services. Other notable stats: Upstream usage is growing faster than downstream. The downstream/upstream split was 12:1 a year ago. Now it's 7:1. That's partly due to IOT devices sending traffic up. The average home has 35 connected devices on the network—and autos are becoming one of the most connected devices, now representing about 4% in Comcast's upstream traffic. That upstream demand is why Comcast has been so bullish on launching DOCSIS 4.0 FDX, which offers multi-gig symmetrical services over the existing HFC network. By year-end, Comcast expects to have about 14 million homes with multi-gig symmetrical.

SCRIPPS' LEXINGTON STATION GOES DARK ON DISH

Kentucky is known for its horses, but a different kind of carriage news emerged early Thursday morning. **Scripps** said **Dish Network** removed its Lexington **ABC** affiliate WTVQ from lineups, a move the broadcaster labels as a "clear violation" of the agreement Scripps and Dish made when the former acquired WTVQ from **Morris Network** in August. That means Dish customers won't have access to **ABC** programming until a new agreement is reached, meaning folks could miss out on NCAA and **SEC** football (Lexington is home to the University of Kentucky). Plus, the **NBA** and **NHL** seasons are about to get underway, and the **WNBA** Playoffs continue throughout October. Scripps, which also owns Lexington's **NBC** affiliate WLEX, is recommending viewers access WTVQ programming OTA via an antenna, or they can get news updates from the aforementioned sister station. Dish did not respond to a request for comment by our deadline.

FCC GRANTS ACA CONNECTS, NTCA'S ROUTER WAIVER

The **FCC** approved a one-year waiver from **ACA Connects** and **NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association** that'll allow their members, suppliers and manufacturers to install required Class I and Class II permissive hardware changes to consumer routers and gateways, which now reside on the agency's covered list. The Commission said the waiver will prevent supply chain and service disruptions while still fulfilling national security and public safety protocols. ACAC and NTCA filed the joint request in late June after the FCC banned all consumer-grade routers made in foreign countries in March. "We look forward to our continued work with the FCC to meet the Commission's goals of guarding against security threats, protecting public safety, and keeping communities connected," ACAC President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer* and NTCA CEO *Mike Romano* said in a joint statement.

THAT'S A WRAP ON TECHEXPO26

Thursday marked the end of **SCTE TechExpo26**, with organizers already making plans for next year's show in Denver

(Sept. 28-30). This year's event in Atlanta had 300+ exhibitors, 245+ speakers and attendees from more than 50 countries. It was a little odd to be in Atlanta and not see an army of Cox Communications execs, given that the operator always showed up in force when the conference was held in the same city as its headquarters. Instead, it was an army of **Charter** employees, some newly rebranded in Spectrum blue after transitioning from Cox, with the \$34.5 billion merger closing about a month before the show. Spectrum and **AMC Global Media** co-hosted this year's conference, with it the first time a programmer has shared the role. The event featured a series of streaming tracks developed in collaboration with the Streaming Video Technology Alliance. Expo also featured the SCTE Industry Awards, whose honorees included **Comcast's** *Bahman Rashidi* (Wilt J. Hildenbrand Jr. Rising Leader Award), **Armstrong's** *Jeffrey Straitiff* (Excellence in Learning & Development) and **ISG Inc's** *Cody Bunnell* (Member of the Year).

BIG 3 CARRIERS LAUNCH JV TO CLOSE COVERAGE GAPS

AT&T, **T-Mobile** and **Verizon** formed a joint venture aimed at expanding connectivity in underserved U.S. areas. The move follows a May announcement that the three carriers would pool spectrum resources to tackle dead zones and extend satellite coverage nationwide. The JV is designed to complement terrestrial mobile networks, offering backup connectivity in areas with limited traditional services and during emergencies when ground-based networks go down. It also aims to streamline satellite service access across providers, speeding up feature updates and improving direct-to-device capabilities. The three carriers said the JV will open doors for additional satellite providers to compete and invest, while helping rural carriers bring new offerings to the market. Existing carrier-satellite partnerships will remain intact. *Paul Roth*, a former longtime AT&T exec, will serve as interim CEO of the JV until a permanent leader is chosen, while the JV will be managed by a board with representatives from each founding member.

RATINGS

Fox News swept the 3Q26 cable TV earnings across primetime and total day. The news network finished with an average of 2.06 million viewers P2+ in prime. **ESPN** followed in second with 1.23 million and **MS Now** in third at 933,000. **HGTV** and **CNN** filled the top five with 671,000 and 608,000, respectively. In total day, Fox News led with 1.32 million, while MS Now crept into the No. 2 spot with 592,000. ESPN (583,000), CNN (426,000) and HGTV (335,000) trailed behind. -- ESPN announced that this past Saturday's "College GameDay" was the highest-rated Week 4 episode in the program's history, recording 2.8 million viewers and a final-hour mark of 3.7 million. The episode—hosted in Knoxville ahead of Texas vs Tennessee—was also GameDay's fourth most-watched regular-season episode ever. So far this season, all four episodes finished among the program's top-10 most-viewed regular-season telecasts.

DOING GOOD

Lifetime's "Stop Breast Cancer for Life" campaign, which is in its 32nd year, will feature a PSA with actress, comedian and producer *Sherri Shepherd*. The spot was created in partnership with the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and will air across Lifetime and the **A+E Global Media** portfolio, including **A&E**, **History**, **LMN** and **FYI**, and will be shared across digital and social channels. Distribution partners, advertising sponsors and nonprofit collaborators will also amplify it throughout October and beyond.

PEOPLE

Well-known industry vet *Jamia Bigalow* changed her industry stripes to **NBCUniversal**, where she'll serve as EVP, Partner Marketing for Platform Distribution & Partnerships. She reports to division prez *Matt Schnaars* and will work to drive objectives across streaming, broadcast and cable distribution partner—all areas she has an extensive background in. Bigalow joins from **Amazon Fire TV**, where she led brand and integrated marketing, but she's also spent time at **Fox Networks Group**, **Disney** and the **NFL**. -- **Dell'Oro Group** selected *Frank Yang* to build out coverage on the Data Center Optical Connectivity market. Yang previously held product management and engineering roles at **Legrand**, **CommScope** and **Dell**, with experience in data center connectivity and Ethernet technologies supporting cloud and AI infrastructure. -- **WOW!** tapped *Christopher Sikora* as COO, reporting to CEO *Frank van der Post*. Sikora will oversee all brand, marketing, digital, call center and sales operations, in addition to product and pricing. He arrives following a three-year stint as CRO of **Great Plains Communications**, which recently merged with **Ritter Communications** to create **Rightfiber**. Sikora also made stops at **Charter** and **Level 3 Communications** (now **CenturyLink**) throughout his career.