

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Don't Worry: NTIA Head Dismisses Concerns About Rate Reg via BEAD

Fresh from a trip to Alaska, **NTIA** head *Alan Davidson* has a better appreciation of just how difficult it is to connect America's most rural areas with broadband.

"[Alaska is] breathtaking. Obviously, it's beautiful. But it becomes instantly clear what the challenges are going to be like—unique, the topography, the scale of it. Just hundreds of miles flying over nothing to reach a village or a town where we're going to need to figure out how to get high speed internet installed," Davidson said Tuesday during a fireside chat with **Internet Innovation Alliance** Co-Chair *Bruce Mehlman*. "There's also just the massive opportunity to change people's lives."

He talked about a village of a few hundred people on the shores of the Yukon River sharing a 30Mbps internet connection. "It goes down all the time in the wintertime, and they pay \$700 or \$800... I talked to a 64-year-old grandmother there. She showed me her internet bill and her phone, \$700 for a month. That's like half of their income."

That brings us to the issue of affordability. Some Republicans have questioned whether NTIA's Notice of Funding Opportunity for the \$42.45 billion Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment [BEAD] Fund opens the door to rate regulation by suggesting a price point of \$30 price point for states' low-cost broadband options. "This appears to be an attempt to pressure eligible entities to set rates deemed appropriate by NTIA. Additionally, the NOFO prohibits all data usage-based

pricing options, which many existing providers use in conjunction with different tiers of service," said a letter last month signed by 13 Republican lawmakers, including *Susan Collins* (R-ME), *Roger Wicker* (R-MS), *Mitt Romney* (R-UT).

"I don't think they should be worried about that," Davidson said. "We're going to be very faithful to the statute, in terms of how it does say that the federal government isn't going to be engaged in rate regulation. The thing we should all be worried about, though, is affordability." He said there are options in the NTIA toolkit that aren't about rate regulation, but can help with cost barriers. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act does require that any state receiving BEAD funding offer at least one low-cost broadband service option. "It's up to the states to define it in the ways that make sense to them. We will approve those plans, but it's going to be different for different states," Davidson said.

Different strokes for different folks was a key part of Davidson's message Tuesday. While fiber is expected to dominate state broadband plans, other technology also will be deployed. "Being in a place like Alaska, it's super clear. There's going to be a lot of fixed wireless in the mix, there will almost certainly be low-earth orbit satellites in the mix," he said. "Fiber is definitely our priority. But we know there's going to be a healthy mix of technology."

With the **FCC** closing its first data collection window last week for more accurate broadband maps, the agency is already gearing up for challenges. Beginning Sept. 12, state, local, and Tribal governments along with service providers and other entities can

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- **JOHN C. PORTER II** – CEO, **Telenet Group Holding**
- **MICHAEL K. POWELL** – President & CEO, **NCTA-The Internet & Television Association**; Former Chairman of the **FCC**

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begin to file bulk challenges to data in the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, which serves as the foundation for the Broadband Data Collection fixed availability maps (an FCC webinar is slated for 2pm ET tomorrow to assist in filing such challenges). FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said the first draft of the map is being targeted for release in November. Once released, the FCC will open a process for the public and other stakeholders to make challenges directly through the map interface.

“We realized pretty early on that the first draft of this new map, which is going to come out this fall, it’s probably not going to be as good as we’d like it to be,” Davidson said. “We’re going to work to make sure everybody’s got that one shot [to issue corrections] before we allocate the money.”

Could states create their own broadband maps? Sort of... Davidson was clear that the FCC maps would be used for funding allocations, but NTIA is relying heavily on the states to get things done. That’s where their own maps could come into play. “I think states will be guided by their own information, and by that local coordination, in figuring out actually how to build this,” he said.

NAB WANTS 1.0 SIMULCAST SUNSET

Cable has encouraged the **FCC** to keep a requirement that forces broadcasters transitioning to ATSC 3.0 to continue to air programming on its 1.0 simulcast channel that is substantially similar to the primary video on the 3.0 channel, but **NAB** has a differing opinion. In reply comments filed Tuesday, the broadcast association argued that allowing the requirement to sunset would give broadcasters an incentive to try different programming on their ATSC 3.0 signals to entice viewers to voluntarily upgrade their equipment. Because 3.0

is not backwards compatible with legacy television sets or cable equipment, **NCTA** has argued the FCC should extend the “substantially similar” requirement beyond its currently scheduled sunset date of July 17, 2023. “The Commission should be skeptical of the cable lobby’s purported concerns with the welfare of over-the-air television viewers. Cable companies plainly have an anticompetitive interest in thwarting broadcasters’ efforts to improve picture or sound quality and provide innovative product offerings broadcasters cannot provide using ATSC 1.0,” NAB said in its reply comments.

MORE SCTE CABLE-TEC EXPO EVENTS UNVEILED

As this year’s **SCTE Cable-Tec Expo** inches closer to its first in-person iteration since 2019, more details of the agenda are being revealed. An invite-only **CableLabs** Member Forum will get the week started Sept. 19 at 8am, with the Fall Technical Forum sessions taking place that night. There, experts will discuss innovative technology to help power the 10G platform. SCTE President/CEO **Mark Dzuban** will talk about the state of the industry the morning of Sept. 20 before **Comcast Cable** President/CEO **David Watson** and **Liberty Global** Vice Chairman/CEO **Michael Fries** host a fireside chat looking at how connected technology and networking capabilities are being utilized for fully immersive experiences. Following that is Comcast Cable President of Technology, Product and Experience **Charlie Herrin** discussing how customer experiences can evolve globally. Capping the day is a panel of **Cox Communications** EVP and CTO **Len Barlik**, Liberty Global EVP and CTO **Enrique Rodríguez** and **Charter** EVP, Connectivity Technology **Justin Colwell**. Moderated by Comcast Cable Senior Technology Advisor **Tony Werner**, the three will highlight the future of broadband and the

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potential advancements and impacts it could make. Among Sept 21's highlights are CableLabs CEO *Phil McKinney* and **Corning's** *Cate McNaught* announcing the 10G Challenge winners. Expo will take place in Philadelphia from Sept. 19-22.

TECHNETIX BUYS LINDSAY BROADBAND

The UK-based telecommunications company **Technetix Group** completed the acquisition of Canadian-based **Lindsay Broadband**. The deal will allow Technetix to expand in the Americas and give customers more solutions for mobile, HFC and fiber networks. Technetix already has network offices in Denver and Mexico City and will add Lindsay's HQ based in Ontario, Canada.

TELEMUNDO PREPS FOR NFL SEASON

Telemundo Deportes will have Spanish-language broadcasts of the entire 20-game slate of **NBC** Sunday Night Football, as well as two Wild Card contests and a Divisional playoff game. The broadcast team of *Miguel Gurwitz* and *Rolando Cantu* will handle commentary duties with *Ariana Figuera* and *Jorge Andres* serving as analysts. The first telecast is Thursday at 8:20pm when the Buffalo Bills face the defending Super Bowl champions Los Angeles Rams on **Universo**, TelemundoDeportes.com and the Telemundo Deportes app.

RATINGS

All signs point to this year being *Serena Williams'* final U.S. Open, which was reflected in TV ratings. In her opening match against *Danka Kovinic* on **ESPN**, the broadcast averaged 2.7 million viewers and peaked in the 9pm-9:15pm window at 3.2 million. This helped bring the total-day average to 843,000 viewers—4% increase compared to the previous best mark of 809,000 in 2019. Williams' second-round match against *Anett Kontaveit* peaked in the final quarter hour (9:30pm-9:45pm) with 5 million viewers, lifting ESPN to be the second most-viewed network among households at P2+. Ratings from Williams' defeat to *Ajla Tomljanovich* weren't in by our deadline.

HULU'S NEW DEAL

Ahead of Thursday's opening game of the NFL season, **Hulu** is giving new and eligible returning customers \$20 off Hulu + Live TV for three months. The deal can be found [here](#) and will be available through 11:59pm PT on Oct. 5.

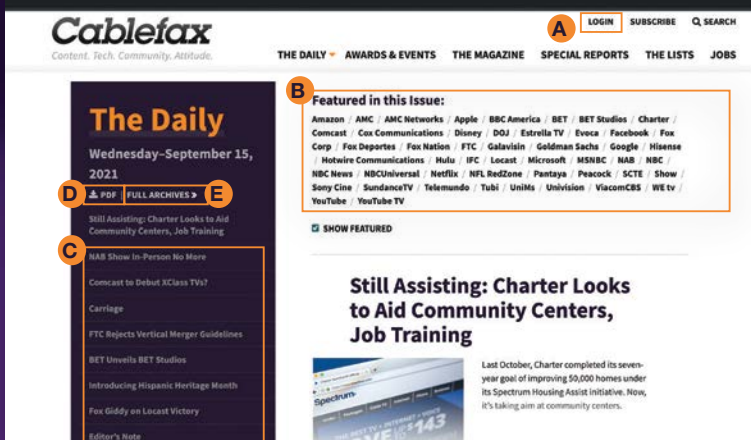
PROGRAMMING

Shudder original thriller "Dark Glasses" will make its streaming debut Oct. 13. It's also having a theatrical run starting Oct. 7 in New York and Los Angeles, with more details and theaters to be revealed soon. – **Nexstar Media's NewsNation** will premiere "NewsNation Live with Marni Hughes" on Sept. 19. The program will air during the week and run from 10am-noon. In its first week, senior national correspondent *Brian Entin* will report from crucial battleground states ahead of the midterm elections.

PEOPLE

WWE promoted *Paul Levesque*, also known as "Triple H," to Chief Content Officer. He'll oversee creative writing and service, talent relations and development and live events. Levesque will report to co-CEO *Nick Khan*. Additionally, the company promoted *Frank Riddick III* to President/CFO. Riddick—who'll report to Khan and co-CEO *Stephanie McMahon*—will manage financial planning and analysis, strategy and investor relations. – **FreeWheel** appointed *Soo Jin Oh* to the newly created CSO role, where she'll develop plans to support the company's long-term goals, boost business operations and foster relationships in the ad landscape. Oh joins from **Gamut**, where she was President. – **Disney Branded Television** made a slew of promotions. *Amee Dolleman* and *Charles Pugliese* were upped to VP, Original Movies while *Jennifer Dubin* and *Mahita Penke* were elevated to Executive Director, Original Movies. Dolleman joined the company in 2018 and has overseen "Prom Pact" (wt), "Sneakerella" and has previously worked on PBS' "Arthur." Pugliese, who joined in 2019, is currently overseeing upcoming movies "Under Wraps 2," "The Pocketwatch" and "Out of My Mind."

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