

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Ring Ring: NCTC Taps AT&T as Exclusive MVNO Carrier

NCTC has settled on AT&T to serve as its exclusive wireless carrier as its members get ready to launch mobile service, with co-op CEO *Lou Borrelli* saying the MNO made the most sense for its diverse membership.

“It was primarily their coverage and their performance. We have 700 members, and a lot of them are in rural, and what we used to call second- and third-tier markets. Having a partner that could provide a high level of service in all of our areas was important,” he told **CFX**.

In late February, NCTC inked a [preferred partnership agreement](#) with MVNO provider **Reach**, with the next step to choose an MNO. Reach is compatible with all the major wireless carriers, including **T-Mobile** and **Verizon**. Selecting AT&T sets the co-op apart from cable operators offering mobile. **Charter** and **Comcast** operate their MVNOs through a partnership with **Verizon**. **Altice USA** uses T-Mobile, but has a nationwide roaming deal with AT&T. **Cox**'s recently launched mobile service relies on Verizon. NCTC member **WOW!** also uses Reach, but selected T-Mobile as its MNO partner.

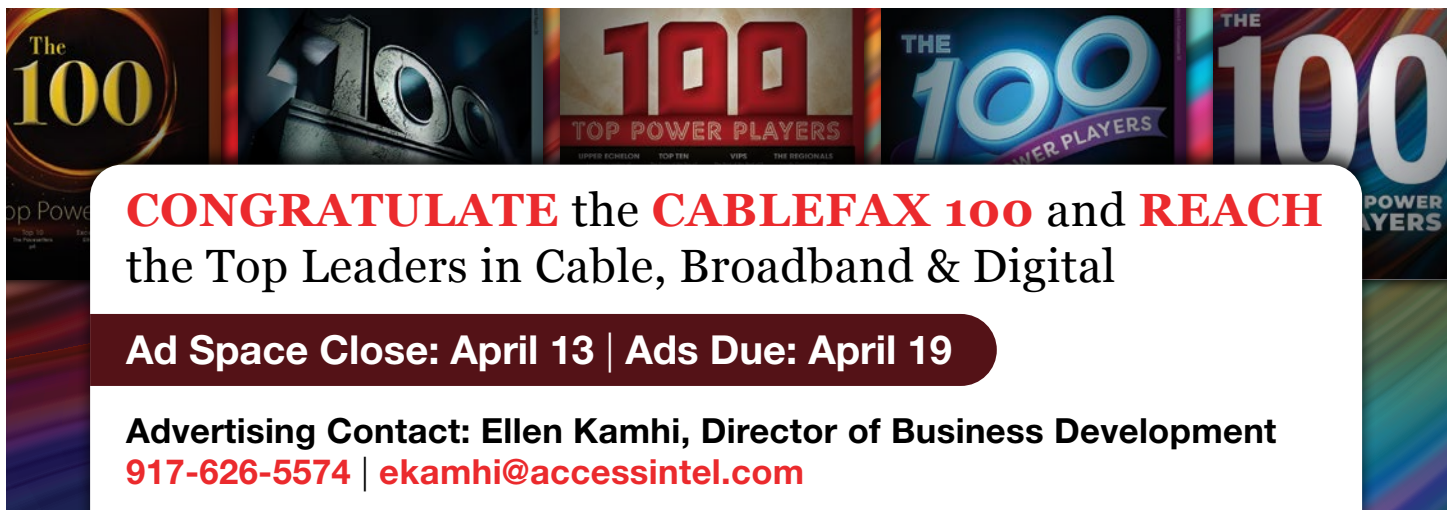
“Our path is different. Our deal is different. But it works for us,” said Borrelli, who is in Philly this week to discuss MVNO details with members at a [regional meeting](#). “We have a deal that is very flexible in order to meet the needs of the smallest guys who really just want an easy button to push, as well as our larger members who frankly will want to have a relationship

in terms of how it operates and their ability to maybe secure a little better margin by taking on more risk.”

NCTC's AT&T deal also includes domestic roaming at no additional charge, which Borrelli said was important given the rural footprint of many members. It also makes it clear that NCTC members will own the customer, with each company that opts in signing an agreement with AT&T Mobility. He estimated that there are about 50 companies in the co-op that are ready to jump in right away. It doesn't sound like **Cable One**, one of NCTC's largest members, is among that crowd. CEO Julie Laulis [recently expressed concerns](#) about a “negative halo” if wireless carriers don't have strong enough carriage in its markets, which are often in very rural or mountainous areas.

Borrelli doesn't seem concerned about meeting required subscriber line targets that are in the deal. After those initial members get up and running—something he thinks could happen as soon as June—NCTC believes a second tranche of 75-80 members are likely to launch mobile through the co-op MVNO.

The NCTC team has been working to get to this point for three years, Borrelli said, adding that he expects to hire some additional staff to help with the MVNO. He cited **Spectrum Mobile**'s recent launch of a \$29.99/month unlimited data line as a “game changer.” “It happened right at the point when we were starting to run models. And so what we've ended up with is a terrific network partner and a deal structure that enables our members to be price competitive,” he said. “It doesn't mean that everybody's going to sell it at the same price. But if



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they choose to, they can be price competitive in those markets where they have that kind of competition. If you're in a more rural area, the pricing is different, and they can price to the market."

Borrelli also gives Charter and Comcast credit for investing big money and showing that this can work, paving the way for NCTC members to join the mobile party. And they can ride on their coattails to some extent. "They have been spending—the two Cs in particular—a lot of money promoting wireless bundles. The fact that our members will now have the same opportunity is sort of like in the old days when we used to use movies to sell HBO," he said, referring to how cable operators could leverage the marketing money spent on big theatrical releases to tell subs those blockbusters are available on HBO. "I think there's a follow me-type of an approach here, where I think that the early success will be good. And I think we'll get in the trenches, and then it will be just like everything else. You've got to do the hard work. You've got to focus on the details."

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### FCC CHALLENGE PROCESS IS A STRUGGLE FOR SMALL PROVIDERS

Small broadband providers are finding that engaging with the FCC's broadband map challenge process is, well, challenging. During USTelecom's American Connectivity Forum Thursday, EPIC TOUCH President Becky Scott said there was a mountain of manual, time-consuming work that had to be done on the ISP's end to be able to engage in the process. Many of the locations she needed to challenge were those where EPIC TOUCH was already providing service to. "The other main issue with that was the challenges

that we submitted in the first round of challenges, they were not included by the time the second rollout of the map's fabric was there," Scott said. "We were unsure kind of where that was left in the process." DUO Broadband CEO/EVP Tom Preston agreed that the process has been complex, saying it feels like some providers are taking a "scattergun" approach to the challenge process right now and challenging locations whether or not they can back it up. On the states' side, in aggregate, Louisiana issued approximately 80,000 challenges to the fabric across all 64 of the state's parishes. It is waiting to see how many of those make it into the next version of the FCC's map, and it's also looking for NTIA to release its model challenge process for states. States won't be required to follow the guidance issued by NTIA, but the guidelines proposed will provide states with a starting point on how to think about their individual BEAD challenge processes. "Once we get that, we'll see how it applies as necessary to Louisiana, see where we can localize some of those efforts in Louisiana and then on the basis of that, we'll effectively start the process of running a challenge process involving local governments, ISPs and nonprofits," Veneeth Iyengar, Louisiana State Executive Director for Broadband Development and Connectivity, said.

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### DIAMOND, MLB FACE OFF IN COURT

Diamond Sports saw a day in court Thursday as Judge Christopher Lopez held a hearing to address an emergency motion from MLB related to the rights payments owed to two teams, the Minnesota Twins and Cleveland Guardians. Lopez was also scheduled to hear arguments tied to a separate emergency motion from the Arizona Diamondbacks demanding payments

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that date back to before Diamond Sports filed for bankruptcy. We don't have a resolution to the issue at our deadline, but it's safe to say the teams represented by **Bally Sports** RSNs won't be letting this issue go lightly. "Major League Baseball and its clubs are not going anywhere," MLB said in one court filing. "Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the debtors."

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### 17 STATES COULD SEE BEAD DELAYS

Restrictive legislation tied to municipal broadband operations could delay the deployment of BEAD funding in 17 states, **BroadbandNow** warns in its latest [research](#). No states with existing barriers have been able to successfully remove them over the past year, but that's not to say there's no movement on the issue. For example, Nebraska introduced a bill last year that would have allowed municipal broadband networks, but it was indefinitely postponed in April 2022. **NTIA** has laid out that states must disclose whether they will waive laws that would preclude certain public sector providers from participating in the subgrant process, among other things. **BroadbandNow** believes that language will open a discussion in states where restrictions are in place as municipal providers in those states will be able to petition the **NTIA** directly for funding if a state refuses to include them in its BEAD plans.

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### STELTER BACK ON FOX NEWS BEAT

*Brian Stelter*, former **CNN** media critic and host of the canceled series "Reliable Sources," is working on another book about **Fox News**. "Network of Lies: The Epic Saga of Fox News, Donald Trump, and the Battle for American Democracy" is due out [Nov. 14](#). "I feel like I have been working on this new book ever since 'Hoax' came out in the summer of 2020. So much has happened and changed since then—like the Fox trial. Network of Lies will use the legal filings from *Dominion v. Fox* to analyze the media world in a wholly new way," Stelter tweeted about the book from **Simon & Schuster** imprint Atria.

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### SPORTSGRID BETS ON NEW APP

**SportsGrid** is rolling out its first DTC sports gambling app that combines its live and on-demand video content with data and analytics related to betting trends. Users can personalize the app to access certain content and features while also being able to see projections and picks from the various **SportsGrid** analysts. **SportsGrid** is available on **YouTube TV**, **Fubo**, **Plex**, **Roku** and others.

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### CARRIAGE

Earth Month continues to roll on, and **DirectTV**'s lineup is getting a little greener. The MVPD agreed to a multi-year distribution deal with **EarthxTV** for all **DirectTV**, **DirectTV Stream** and U-verse customers in the U.S. starting Saturday—just over a week from Earth Day on April 22. **EarthxTV**, which also has carriage deals with **Charter** and **NCTC**, is debuting numerous original series

this month, including "Kill Your Lawn" and "Future from Above." Both will premiere April 22. – **Xumo Play** added the FAST channel **Love Wine**. Dedicated to wine culture, the channel features documentaries and series focused on the beverage's history and heritage behind it. – Nine new channels are coming to **Sling Freestream**, bringing its lineup to carry more than 265 channels and 41,000 on-demand titles. Of the nine include **Real Disaster Channel**, which focuses on survival stories, **FilmRise Anime** and **Property & Reno**. **Sling Freestream** can be found via the **Sling** app on **Roku**, **LG**, **Samsung**, **Comcast** and **Vizio** devices.

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### DOING GOOD

**Charter's** ad sales arm **Spectrum Reach** is set to assist more than 700 multicultural businesses as part of its "Pay It Forward" initiative for 2023. Selected businesses will receive unlimited access to **Spectrum Reach's** AI-powered advertising platform and a free three-month TV advertising schedule using a self-service ad portal to create, plan and schedule campaigns through June 30. Companies will also receive access to mentoring and support from entrepreneurs and other business owners, as well as educational resources like webinars and testimonials through the **Pay It Forward** portal. Since the initiative's inception in 2021, **Spectrum Reach** has given over \$45 million in advertising and resources. – **Comcast Texas** is continuing to help close the digital divide, announcing a \$1 million commitment to support over 60 organizations and programs that help folks learn digital skills. It's another step in **Comcast's** \$1 billion **Project UP** campaign, and **Comcast Texas'** investment will focus on connectivity and adoption, digital skills in the workforce and entrepreneurship.

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### PROGRAMMING

The 127th **Boston Marathon** will return to **ESPN** for the first time since 2004, also marking 10 years since the tragedy of the 2013 **Boston Marathon bombing**. The race begins April 17 at 8:30am and coverage will run until 1pm. Those in the **Boston market** will be blacked out from the network's coverage, but they'll be able to watch on **WCVB-TV (ABC)**. Additionally, **ESPN Deportes** will air the race in Spanish for the first time.

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### PEOPLE

**Twitter's** VP, Global Media and Content Partnerships *TJ Adeshola* is stepping down after nearly 11 years with the company. "I am so grateful for my time at **Twitter** and am looking forward to that next opportunity that will unlock my passion for driving impact in media and culture, building and elevating diverse teams, and pushing industries forward," he wrote in a **LinkedIn post** after *Sports Business Journal* [broke](#) the news. *Adeshola* was crucial in **Twitter's** deal to stream 10 of the **NFL's** Thursday Night Football games during the 2016 season. His next step will be becoming a strategic advisor role for the **Black Sports Business Symposium** and **Stagwell Sports Initiative** at **Cannes Lions**.

# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Looking Through the Lens of an FBI Agent

There are certain moments in life where one remembers the exact spot they were at when they first learned of a major event. Unfortunately, it usually involves tragedy, but there are the few who must race toward the epicenter to solve a case. In **Paramount+**'s "FBI True," agents detail their experiences tackling treacherous and high-stake cases head-on. The show's 10-episode sophomore season rolled out Tuesday, chronicling events like the Oklahoma City bombing or the San Bernardino mass shooting. It begins with a two-episode feature on the manhunt following the Boston Marathon bombings. While there are pictures and videos to set the scene, the trio of featured guests—two retired FBI agents and a former police sergeant—illustrate how quickly their jobs and lives changed April 15, 2013. The camaraderie among the three adds to the element of gaining more insight into the life of an FBI agent amid a major event, something that the show's co-creator and retired FBI Special Agent *Anne Beagan* told **CFX** was noticed with feedback from Season 1. "We talk about stories that are out there that people think they're familiar with, but then we brought forward part of the story not told before from the personal perspective of the agents," Beagan said. "How the agents felt, what the emotion was like, that really humanizes a story that people think they know about." Another cog in the candid formula was the setting in which the interviews took place. Throughout Season 2 they were held at the Arts and Crafts Beer Parlor in New York City, a bar owned by a fellow retired FBI agent. The drinks in their hands and the location's atmosphere give a taste of what agents are like with their ties loosened and sleeves rolled up. "All we're doing is putting a camera in front of agents who speak to each other, which is what really happens in the real world anyway after work," Beagan said. – *Noah Ziegler*

### REVIEWS

"The Good Mothers," streaming on **Hulu**. Based on *Alex Perry's* fact-based novel of the same name, this compelling drama discusses how women helped neutralize the powerful Calabrian mafia, or 'Ndrangheta. Known for its prowess in drug trafficking, 'Ndrangheta dates from the 1790s and has spread throughout the globe. As you see in this series, 'Ndrangheta women are treated very badly, abused physically and mentally. One of the opening scenes shows a mother, *Lea (Micaela Ramazzotti)*, and her 17-year-old daughter, *Denise (Gaia Girace)*, headed to Calabria to meet *Carlo, Denise's estranged father (Francesco Colella)*. The ladies were in witness protection since *Lea* testified against her husband. She's put her safety at risk so *Denise* can know her father. We'll not spoil what happens. A related plot has Calabrian prosecutor *Anna Colace (Barbara Chichiarelli)* devising a strategy she believes will cripple 'Ndrangheta. Her plan sounds relatively simple: appeal to the 'Ndrangheta women and promise them a better life if they betray their abusive husbands and fathers. One character, *Giuseppina Pesce (Valentina Bellè)*, seems to have her life under control. She's collecting 'Ndrangheta payments by day and tending to young daughters at night. Yet her father doesn't accept that women have anything useful to say. He brings this home while smashing her face into a plate of food in front of her daughters. – *Seth Arenstein*

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P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(04/03/23-04/09/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.737</b>	<b>2301</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.466</b>	<b>1454</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.283</b>	<b>885</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.253</b>	<b>790</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.232</b>	<b>726</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.231</b>	<b>722</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.226</b>	<b>707</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.220</b>	<b>688</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.205</b>	<b>640</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.198</b>	<b>618</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.185</b>	<b>578</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.178</b>	<b>557</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.174</b>	<b>543</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.174</b>	<b>542</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.151</b>	<b>473</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.147</b>	<b>459</b>
<b>HMM</b>	<b>0.122</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.121</b>	<b>377</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.113</b>	<b>354</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.113</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.111</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>ESPN2</b>	<b>0.107</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.105</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.104</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.099</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.093</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.085</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.083</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>APL</b>	<b>0.077</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>NICK</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>FXX</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>COM</b>	<b>0.073</b>	<b>229</b>

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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