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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Mind the Money: Pennsylvania ISPs Want Clarity on CPF Process

As we get closer to the distribution of billions in government funding, broadband providers are speaking up to make sure state government officials hear their concerns and questions. This was on full display Thursday at the **Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority's** public meeting, which saw several providers and members of the **Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania** weigh in during the public comment period for the state's Capital Projects Fund, a program that includes \$200 million in federal funds for broadband infrastructure projects.

The 2021 American Rescue Plan allotted \$10 billion to the Capital Projects Fund for states and tribal governments to fund critical capital projects, with many using that money for broadband. As of May, the U.S. Department of the Treasury has officially released \$6 billion to 40 states. While it's a smaller pot than the \$42 billion in BEAD money that states will soon dole out, CPF offers a glimpse at some issues that could arise during that process as well as what may happen in states yet to release CPF money.

"We want to express interest in the Capital Funds Project [but want to] make sure that we can provide rural broadband as a cost-effective solution so the more information the authority can produce and provide to providers like ourselves would be appreciated," said *Mike Starner*, Senior Business Development & Government Affairs Manager at **Service Electric Cable TV**

& Telecommunications.

He asked for more clarification on the CPF's job classifications for linemen. "We are an **IBEW** shop, but our folks do not work in the electrical space. And those electric rates that we would have to provide the prevailing wage would be extremely hurtful in terms of trying to distribute broadband on an equitable basis," Starner said, adding that the state also needs to examine the workforce development process to ensure there is enough labor in the state and Service Electric's Lehigh Valley region.

Breezeline's Director of Government Affairs *Fran Bradley* echoed those concerns. "Most of these contractors that will be doing a lot of this construction are paid incentive. They're done on production so they're paid by the front and in order for a contractor to prevail, use the prevailing wage that is listed that was stated as far as the electric space, it'll continually drive the price up," he said. Breezeline serves in more than 22 different Pennsylvania counties and just recently added service to the unserved Millheim Borough area of Centre County.

BCAP President *Todd Eachus*, who serves on the Authority's technical subcommittee, outlined some sticking points on clarity around costs. "The technical subcommittee has looked around at some of the assumptions made in the cost estimation. We have to do some work around cleaning up some of the assumptions made around pole attachment costs, make ready costs and probably the largest elephant in the room here, prevailing wage costs. Some of the labor cost assumptions

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were at \$25 an hour in that assumption,” he said. “I think it lends the Commonwealth well to think about what an appropriate wage determination would be so that we do what our core mission is and treat these taxpayer dollars responsibly, use them most efficiently and stretch them as far as possible in the execution of these projects.”

Providers also spent some time on the CPF application process itself. “We’re halfway through the application window and we’re maybe 10% of the way through the process in the application. We’re working again as strenuously as we can. We do have some specific questions, but it’s going to be difficult to meet the timeline,” said Jackson Broadband’s Michael Hain.

Eachus noted that there have been some issues raised around flexibility within the portal, including the number of characters allowed, etc. Verizon seconded that. “The single application portal, we’ve recognized that there’s some formatting and attachment limitations that do not accommodate things like tabular data and graphics to support the narratives that are required under the CPF guidelines,” said Pedro Romero, Director of Technology & Public Policy, State Government Affairs at Verizon. He wanted to know if the state Broadband Development Authority will evaluate both portal submissions as well as email proposals to ensure it has all the required info in an applicant’s submission.

The challenges with the application are one thing, but applicants have also been left without answers to basic questions about what availability data they should be looking at when vying for project funds. At the time of the meeting, Jennifer Cloonan, Government and External Affairs Manager for Frontier, remained unsure about whether applicants should use the FCC maps or the state’s maps as their reference material.

BALLY SPORTS+ SUBSCRIBER COUNT REVEALED IN COURT

We finally have a Bally Sports+ subscriber count and it isn’t quite the number Diamond Sports was hoping to have at this point. During a hearing in the Southern Texas Bankruptcy Court that began Wednesday, Diamond CEO David Preschlack reported that Bally Sports+ has 203,000 subscribers, 55% of its corporate goal. That’s according to coverage from The Athletic. Preschlack still expects the service to have more than 850,000 subs by the end of the year, and Diamond’s long-term expectation for the service to have 10 million subs by 2028 is still in place. The hearing, set to decide if Diamond Sports Group should pay four MLB teams the monetary terms originally agreed upon in their RSN rights contracts, went nearly 12 hours before recessing into Thursday.

AMC THEATRES PHASES OUT ON DEMAND SERVICE

AMC Theatres’ is taking its on-demand streaming platform and moving it to the Fandango-owned digital service Vudu. The entire AMC Theatres On Demand library will now be available on Vudu, which has over 200,000 new releases of movies and TV shows to rent or purchase as well as free programs. AMC Theatres On Demand users can transfer their existing movie collections through August 31.

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APPLE DROPS MLS PRICE

As the **MLS** midseason point draws closer, **Apple** decreased the price of **MLS Season Pass** from \$99 to \$49 to cover the remaining matches of the season and the ensuing playoffs. Customers who already have **Apple TV** will see a price of \$39, and the monthly price of \$14.99 will remain unchanged.

MAY RATINGS

May was **Fox News'** first month without *Tucker Carlson* anywhere on the schedule, but the network's programs still dominated the month. "The Five" was the most-watched cable news network show in May, averaging more than 2.6 million viewers. It was followed by Fox News' "Jesse Watters" (2.1 million viewers), "Hannity" (1.9mln) and "Special Report with Brett Baier" (1.8mln). Fox News accounted for the top seven cable programs for May by total viewers, with **MSNBC's** "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell" taking the #8 spot with 1.49mln. Fox News edged out MSNBC for the month overall, with 1.34mln viewers in prime vs MSNBC's 1.16mln. It also led in total day 1.03mln vs MSNBC's 734,000. Meanwhile, **Spectrum News** showed the power of local news, averaging 1.9 million daily viewing in **Charter** households across linear and digital platforms. The most-watched cable nets for May prime were the big sports guns, with **TNT** taking first with 3.24mln total viewers and **ESPN** in second with 1.8mln.

CARRIAGE

Live shopping channels **QVC** and **HSN** are rolling out their combined streaming service QVC+ and HSN+ to **VIZIO** Smart TVs. The platform carries more than 50 hours of live content from QVC, **QVC2**, **QVC3**, HSN and **HSN2**, as well as programs from the digital channels In the Kitchen, Fashion Finds and Outdoor Escape.

FIBER FRENZY

Google Fiber is expanding to Franklin, Tennessee. Construction is slated to begin early next year and service will go live starting in late 2024. Current plans include 1 Gig for \$70/month and 2 Gigs for \$100/month.

HOT SUMMER FOR ADVERTISERS

While nearly 1 in 10 advertisers opt to scale back spending during the summer months, aggregated viewership data shows only a 2% difference in time spent viewing content on ad-supported platforms. An **Effectv** report on summer advertising and TV viewership trends revealed advertisers can increase share of voice—which represents the portion of advertising a brand has compared to others—in their market by 36% if they maintain a presence throughout the summer months. For specific categories like events, travel and political, they saw SOV increases of 78%, 61% and 26%, respectively, during summer months.

RATINGS

Make it two weeks in a row that **Warner Bros. Discovery** networks took more than a 50% share of primetime viewing in the A18-49 group for three nights. WBD nets had a 51% share on May 23 at 25, as well as a 61% share last Saturday. Those days were boosted by Games 4, 5 and 6, respectively, of the Celtics-Heat Eastern Conference Finals series on **TNT**. For May 25, programs on WBD nets—**TNT**, **TBS** and **HGTV**—took six of the top 10 cable spots among A25-54. – The 2023 NCAA Men's Lacrosse National Championship on **ESPN** averaged 757,000 viewers Monday, peaking with 915,000. That's good for the most-watched college lacrosse title game since 2007 and is up 36% from last year's championship contest. The semifinal games on **ESPN2** were up 45% YOY and were also up 32% for the entire tournament across ESPN's linear platforms. – **NBC Sports** wrapped up its 10th season as the home of Premier League soccer. In 2022-23, nine matches had an average total audience delivery of at least 1 million viewers, with the Arsenal-Manchester United match on January 22 setting a record with 1.9 million viewers across **Peacock**, **NBC** and NBC Sports Digital platforms. Richmond checked in as the top local market for matches on NBC and **USA Network**. Washington, D.C. and Cincinnati tied for second and Norfolk, Virginia, and Philadelphia took the fourth and fifth spots.

PROGRAMMING

Paramount+ has acquired the documentary "Milli Vanilli." It'll debut on the platform this fall in the U.S., Canada, U.K. and other select international markets after making a world premiere at the Tribeca Festival on June 10. – *Shannon Sharpe*, co-host of **Fox Sports'** "Undisputed," is [leaving](#) the show after reaching a buyout with the company, per the *NY Post* citing sources. His final show is "expected to be after the 2023 NBA Finals" which will take place this month. – **Fox News** is getting a new primetime lineup starting this Saturday. "The Big Saturday/Sunday Show" will change to "The Big Weekend Show" and air 7pm on Saturdays and Sundays. A new program "Fox News Saturday Night" will make its debut Saturday at 10pm. It'll have a rotating lineup of Fox News personalities giving a lighter take on events from the week. "Sunday Night in America" will shift from the 7pm slot to 9pm. – **HBO** renewed comedy "Somebody Somewhere" for a third season.

PEOPLE

David Leavy is switching gears in the **Warner Bros. Discovery** world. He'll become COO of **CNN Worldwide** effective June 20, moving from his role as Chief Corporate Affairs Officer for WBD. He'll report to Chairman/CEO *Chris Licht*. Leavy's new gig will have him oversee commercial, operational and promotional activities across CNN Worldwide, and he'll continue with public policy and social responsibility oversight on behalf of WBD. Leavy has been with the organization for 23 years, having played instrumental roles in the launch of **discovery+** and WBD's public listing in 2008.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Hailey's Going to Save Us All

Devin Bunje and Nick Stanton know their way around **Disney** live action, having created and/or executive produced **Disney XD's** "Gamer's Guide to Pretty Much Everything" and **Disney Channel's** popular sitcom "Zeke and Luther." But new series "Hailey's On It!" (premieres June 8 on Disney Channel and Disney XD) marks their first time creating and executive producing an animated series. That's pretty freeing given that the series is about risk-adverse teen Hailey Banks who needs to complete an ambitious to-do list in order to save the world. Hailey's bucket list forces her to face her fears—from performing in a musical to dealing with her complicated feelings for best friend Scott. "In animation, you can just go crazy places, you can tell different stories. We've always loved animation as a medium," said Stanton. "Our last show was a live action sitcom that was filmed in front of a live studio audience so the one drawback in animation is in that show you knew if something wasn't working immediately and you could rewrite it on the spot... But at the end of the day, it's really just about telling a good story." And adding some laughs along the way doesn't hurt. Bunje and Stanton are masters at tossing in little easter eggs that might fly over their younger viewers' radar, but will make parents smile. For instance, a visitor from the future who explains why Hailey has to accomplish her to-do list to save the world references President *Serena Williams*. "We also have a story in the back half of the season where the professor comes in and reappears in a hurry because she has Rolling Stones tickets later that night, even though she came from 50 years in the future," cracks Bunje. While there are plenty of comedic moments in Hailey's On It, the underlying message of having a teen face her fears and accomplish big feats is a meaningful one. "Anyone can make a difference and you can be the change you want to see in the world," said Stanton. "We also really liked setting up that this is the world is worth fighting for." – Amy Maclean

REVIEWS

"Saint X," streaming, **Hulu**. Viewers are pulled into this whodunit that you've seen before. Comfortable parents with two kids are on an island vacation. The older of two children, Alison (*West Duchovny*) is in her first year at college and enjoys pouring cold water on her parents' life as younger sister Claire (*Kenlee Anaya Townsend*) watches. Of course, Alison stays out late and unfortunately dies. Island authorities rule her death an accident, yet her parents and Claire disagree. Cut to the present—this happens too much—and Claire is grown, living in Brooklyn, unable to break free of memories of her deceased sister. Here's where things get too cute—she hops in a cab. Though it's been years, Claire is certain its driver is island native Gogo (*Josh Bonzie*) and he's her sister's killer. Hulu has a compelling story based on *Alexis Schaitkin's* novel. Unfortunately, the novel's details are translated badly for TV. – "Up Here," streaming, **Hulu**. While "Saint X" seems derivative, give Hulu props for taking a chance on an unconventional choice, a romantic musical, serialized as a TV series. There are other novelties, too, with voices in the characters' heads coming to life. Best, the series stars *Mae Whitman* and *Carlos Valdes* as the energetic romantic leads. Music from *Christophe Beck* and *Alex Kovacs* works well, too. – Seth Arenstein

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(05/22/23-05/28/23)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
TNT	1.174	3665
ESPN	0.580	1812
FNC	0.426	1330
MSNBC	0.373	1166
HGTV	0.250	780
INSP	0.219	685
DISC	0.193	601
HIST	0.181	566
TLC	0.174	544
HALL	0.174	542
FOOD	0.171	533
USA	0.152	474
TBSC	0.151	471
BRAVO	0.151	471
TVLAND	0.145	452
ID	0.141	440
CNN	0.129	403
PRMNT	0.126	395
HMM	0.113	354
A&E	0.111	345
LIFE	0.105	329
GSN	0.104	324
WETV	0.102	318
FX	0.100	312
SYFY	0.088	275
BET	0.088	274
AMC	0.086	269
OXY	0.085	266
NAN	0.084	263
E!	0.082	257
NWSMX	0.081	254
NATGEO	0.078	243
COM	0.074	230
SUND	0.069	214
FRFM	0.068	213

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



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