

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Twin City Celebration: Revamped Independent Show Has More Than Ever

NCTC CEO Lou Borrelli told attendees of the 2023 **ACA Connects** Summit that this year's **Independent Show** was going to look and feel different, but all of those changes reflect the evolving identity of the co-op and the shifting needs of its members.

"We're going on what will be the third year of probably a three- or four-year pivot to emphasize things other than the core of what the co-op was created for, which is content negotiation," Borrelli told **CFX** of the show, a joint production with ACAC that hits Minneapolis from July 30-August 2. "I think that, frankly, we're getting more engagement from members who really appreciate the relationship relative to the benefit they get from the content, but there's really not a lot for them to do... But in terms of what we're doing, whether it's the **Qwilt** deal or transit/transport coming on, it's a much more engaging process."

The evolution of NCTC will be on display during the show with Borrelli describing it as something of a test kitchen for the group. Post-show research from 2022 showed a desire from vendors and members to have more time on the exhibit floor as well as an expansion in the number of sessions held during the show.

More than 100 speakers will share various stages across the show's approximately 30 sessions, and some significant changes have been made to booth sizing. In perhaps the biggest change of all, this year's show will be held in the Minneapolis Convention Center as well as the Hilton Minneapolis. Its exhibit floor is basically sold out with more than 100

exhibitors set to appear. The embracing of the change and the growth of the show is ultimately what inspired this year's theme—"More than Ever."

"The question will be, as we get finished with [the show], what is the response? Because we're not always going to be in a convention center," Borrelli said. "How would we reconfigure a hotel-related convention space, which is always smaller? How do you reconfigure the show to be more effective and absorb these broader topics? We may be creating a problem that we didn't anticipate by doing this, but I'll say I'm excited."

One of the major topics at this year's show will surely be NCTC's MVNO solution and how members can launch their own mobile services through the co-op's deals with **AT&T** and **Reach**. Progress in turning on the service with its members is moving slower than expected, but sessions are set to proceed with early adopters sharing lessons learned as well as tips and tricks for marketing a new mobile service.

"I thought we would have launched at least a few members by now, but it's just taken a little longer. We'll have members active in the market and in the summer. It just may not be before the show, or maybe it will," Borrelli said. "It's a moving target, but we have a lot of interest. We think it's going to be very successful."

For the folks at **ACA Connects**, the announcement of the funding obligations to be made through the BEAD program is their star of the show. **NTIA** made the announcements on the funding obligations last month, and states and organizations are in the process of pulling together their plans on how to proceed.

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“They’ll have had just enough time to digest it at that point and understand where the opportunities are and perhaps some of the threats. So the timing couldn’t be better, and I’m more enthused than ever that I’ve got a great set of engaged members not only on my board, but across the rank and file,” ACA Connects President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer* said. “We’re having a good time.” ACAC members also submitted a number of requests for sessions specifically focusing on retransmission consent due to the industry being in a retrans cycle year.

Members of both organizations are liking what they’re hearing and registrations are slightly ahead of where they were last year. But there is also the expectation that there may be a late surge thanks to the introduction of a day pass that gives folks a more affordable option that requires less of a time commitment.

“There are people who, especially in our smaller to mid-size members would benefit from coming, but they don’t necessarily have the ability or the budget to go for three days out of the office, so we just said what the heck,” *Borrelli* said. “We’ve just started doing more aggressive messaging on that, but I’m convinced a week or two before the show, it will be like ‘oh yeah, let’s go to Minneapolis on Tuesday.’”

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## SOHN TALKS NEW GIG IN PUBLIC BROADBAND ADVOCACY

*Gigi Sohn* made headlines again in May when she was named the first executive director of the **American Association of Public Broadband**, and she’s shedding light now on why that was the right move for her after the withdrawal of her nomination as an **FCC** commissioner. During an appearance on a live edition of the “Ready or Not?” podcast, she revealed that the organization, a coalition of municipal broadband providers, actually approached her before she was nominated for the Commission. She remained interested, and her passion for advocating for freedom of choice when it comes to broadband led to her taking the position more than two years later. “I want to promote the option and make sure that you could have some cities, some towns that have done it already mentor those who are looking to do it,” Sohn said. She has set a goal of doubling the number of community-owned broadband networks in the next five years through the promotion of those success stories and helping towns and cities that want to provide connectivity build out plans to do so. One of her first efforts to shed light on the immense hurdles municipal networks face was a July 9 [op-ed](#) in *The Salt Lake Tribune*. In Bountiful City, Utah, the city council voted unanimously to provide residents with fiber service through a partnership with **Utopia Fiber**. All seemed well until the **Utah Taxpayers Association**, who Sohn described as a “dark money” organization, hired **Gather Utah** to obtain signatures for a petition. That petition, if successful, would over-

ride the city council’s decision and put the matter on the ballot in November, delaying the start of the build by more than four months. Talk of the **NTIA**’s BEAD program was, of course, a hot topic as well. Sohn has major concerns about the next stages of the program, including a stipulation that requires prospective grantees to provide a letter of credit to demonstrate their ability to meet the program’s obligations through the entire build process. Sohn’s worry is that there are other ways to ensure that recipients are held to their responsibilities that could leave the door open for more small and/or minority-owned businesses to participate. “I understand if they want to make sure the entities are financially capable, that they don’t default, but there are other ways like performance bonds or insurance. Maybe you don’t have banks issue letters of credit, you could have venture capitalists or others,” she said. “There are other alternatives and I’ve been troubled by the lack of openness to considering those other options.”

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## ALTICE USA’S MATHEW ADDS CHAIRMAN ROLE

*Alexandre Fonseca* resigned from **Altice USA**’s board on Saturday, with the board tapping CEO *Dennis Mathew* to take over the role, according to an **SEC** filing. His resignation comes following reports that French telecom company **Altice Group** saw its co-founder *Armando Pereria* detained in Portugal as part of an investigation into alleged corruption, tax fraud and money laundering. Altice USA, which was spun off from Altice NV in 2018, said Fonseca’s resignation is not a result of a disagreement with the company on any matter relating to the company’s operations, policies or practices. Mathew will not receive any additional compensation for his service as a director, and there has been no change to his employment arrangement with the company.

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## GOFUNDME LAUNCHED FOR LEGAL FEES IN FOX FCC FIGHT

*Preston Padden* has organized a [GoFundMe campaign](#) seeking to raise \$20,000 for legal fees related to the petition asking the **FCC** to deny renewal of **Fox**’s broadcast license for Philadelphia station WTXF. The petition, filed by grassroots group **The Media and Democracy Project** on July 3, alleges that senior management of **Fox Corp.** manipulated its audience by knowingly broadcasting false news about the 2020 election. As of our deadline, the campaign had raised \$3,000 from two donors. “We need to raise money to pay lawyer fees for later stages of the FCC proceeding and related litigation...”

Even small contributions are welcome and add up!” tweeted the former Fox and Disney lobbyist. Petitioners are asking the FCC to hold an evidentiary hearing into Fox’s conduct and senior executives’ character qualifications to hold Commission licenses. Citizens volunteer group **Media Action Center** has voiced its support of the petition. The group notably filed a petition to deny the renewal of the broadcast license for **Entercom Communications** (now Audacy) Sacramento radio station KDND after a woman died of water intoxication in a contest that the station held. The FCC designated the matter for a hearing, with Entercom relinquishing the station before the hearing was held, citing its acquisition of **CBS Radio**.

## BARRY DILLER SOUNDS ALARM OVER HOLLYWOOD STRIKES

Former movie studio head *Barry Diller* had plenty to say about the current actor and writer strike during an [appearance](#) Sunday on **CBS’** “Face the Nation,” calling the timing a perfect storm. “You had COVID, which sent people home to watch streaming and television, and killed theaters. You’ve had the results of huge investments in streaming, which have produced all these losses for all these companies, who are now kind of retrenching,” he said, adding that there will be big repercussions if the strikes aren’t settled by December or if they bleed into next year. “There’s not going to be many programs for anybody to watch. So, you’re going to see subscriptions get pulled, which is going to reduce the revenue of all these movie companies, television companies... And at just the time the strike is settled that you want to get back up, there won’t be enough money. So, this actually will have devastating effects if it is not settled soon. And the problem with settlement in this case is there’s no trust between the parties.” He suggested a settlement deadline of Sept 1. While actors and writers are complaining that top execs are being paid too much, Diller, currently chairman of **IA** and **Expedia**, thinks cuts should be broader. “The one idea I had is to say, as a good faith measure, both the executives and the most-paid actors should take a 25% pay cut to try and narrow the difference between those who get highly paid and those that don’t,” he said. Diller called AI concerns in the stalemate overhyped, suggesting the tech will assist rather than replace.

## HOUSE JUDICIARY WORRIES ABOUT CENSORSHIP ON THREADS

The **House Judiciary** Committee is wary at best about **Threads**, and it has already reached out to [Meta](#) to voice its concerns about the newest social media platform. In a letter sent Monday to **Meta** CEO *Mark Zuckerberg*, Chair *Jim Jordan* (R-OH) said **Threads** raises “serious, specific” concerns because it is being marketed as a rival of **Twitter**. In line with a previously-issued subpoena tied to materials regarding content moderation policies and decisions, the Committee is also asking **Meta** to provide documents and information related to **Threads** by July 31. “Given

that **Meta** has censored First Amendment-protected speech as a result of government agencies’ requests and demands in the past, the Committee is concerned about potential First Amendment violations that have occurred or will occur on the **Threads** platform,” *Jordan* wrote. “Despite launching only 12 days ago, there are reports that **Threads** is already engaging in censorship, including censoring users but offering no grounds for appeal.”

## DSG MAKES REDS PAYMENT

**Diamond Sports Group** made its payment to the Cincinnati **Reds** prior to its Saturday deadline, keeping the team in the **Bally Sports** family (for now), [according to ESPN](#). The **Reds-Bally** case is interesting since the franchise holds a partial ownership stake in **Bally Sports Ohio**, but the team will continue having its games broadcast there at least through the 2023 season. Something else to keep an eye out for is the Arizona **Diamondbacks**, who issued a statement during a game Sunday warning fans that Tuesday’s bankruptcy hearing could lead to the transition of **D’Backs** games on a different channel than **Bally Sports Southwest**.

## DATA USAGE, SPEED TIERS RISING

Data consumption and the percentage of internet subscribers on gigabit speed tiers continue to climb, according to **OpenVault’s** 2Q23 Broadband Insights report. The monthly weighted average data consumed by subscribers in the quarter was 533.8 GB—a 9% increase from 2Q22’s mark of 490.7 GB. Along with that increase is the growth of power users, or those who use more than 1 TB of data per month. Approximately 15.6% of users fell under that category in 2Q23. Another trend among subscribers is the uptick in gigabit speed tiers, which reached 31.6% in 2Q23.

## CARRIAGE

As **Comcast** gears for the launch of **Xumo**, it’s beefing up its FAST offerings for **Xfinity X1** customers. The provider added 20 new FAST channels directly into the **X1** channel guide, which includes **NBC News NOW** and 19 **Xumo**-branded channels spanning genres like lifestyle, reality TV, game shows, movies and others. More FAST channels are slated to join the **X1** lineup in the future.

## PEOPLE

**Tubi** found its next CEO after its founder *Farhad Massoudi* stepped down at the end of June: former **Vimeo** CEO *Anjali Sud*. She’ll officially begin Sept. 1 and report to the **Tubi Media Group** CEO *Paul Cheesbrough*. *Sud* spent nine years at **Vimeo**, starting as a Director of Marketing before rising to CEO in July 2017. She helped generate scaled revenue growth and cash flow during her tenure. Before **Vimeo**, *Sud* made stops at **Time Warner** and **Amazon**.



## GUEST COLUMNIST

### Cable Execs Can Connect at Fiber Connect 2023



**Gary Bolton**

If you're a cable exec who wants to know where the fiber market is heading, please join us at next month's Fiber Connect 2023.

That's because our annual Fiber Broadband Association conference—at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Orlando from Sunday, Aug. 20 through Wednesday, Aug.

23—will focus on all things fiber.

Our numbers: 4 packed days, more than 200 industry experts, 55 educational sessions in 7 breakout tracks, plus a record expected attendance of more than 4,000.

With its focus on what fiber will disrupt next (in a good way), Fiber Connect 2023 will cover a wide range of cable-related topics. Here's a sampling:

- the new stream of public funding for broadband network builds
- fiber deployment opportunities and challenges
- efforts to close the Digital Divide
- the economics of fiber broadband
- the in-home fiber broadband experience
- pandemic-driven supply chain challenges
- the environmental sustainability of broadband networks

"It will be a great conference with a broad selection of topics and experts in the field," said Evann Freeman, director of government relations at EPB and chair of the conference committee. "If you're an operator, this is a conference that you want to attend."

In a program developed specifically for cablecos, Cablefax and ACA Connects will cover the industry's growing embrace of fiber. The "MSO Mandate" track on Aug. 22 will tackle trends in fiber upgrades and expansions, the feds' massive Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) subsidy program and best practices for public-private partnerships. These sessions will explore how fiber can enable operators

to expand their network footprints, maximize greenfield opportunities, and generally complement existing operations.

Throughout, Fiber Connect will feature breakout panels, technology deep dives, case studies, workshops, and sessions on other key topics, such as 5G mobile, workforce development, state funding programs for broadband, and broadband moves by utilities.

"With fiber-to-the-home increasingly becoming part of many cable operators' roadmaps, it's important to take the time to share best practices, challenges, and opportunities as the industry embarks on this major evolution," said Amy Maclean, editorial director at Cablefax.

And we'll be learning from the best. Fiber Connect's speaking roster includes top execs from AT&T, Google Fiber, Consolidated Communications, Ting Internet, EPB, Lumos Networks, Diamond State Networks, Utopia Fiber, LUS Fiber, Blue Stream Fiber, Four States Fiber, Quantum Fiber, and more.

As well, business and technology strategists from leading vendors will participate in sessions. That list includes executives from Adtran, Calix, Nokia, Corning, DZS, Viavi, Cisco, Ciena, Harmonic, STL, Plume, Fujitsu, Shentel, Radisys, CommScope, A10, SQUAM, Dura-Line, Sitetracker, DeepUp, Clearfield, Crown Castle, and Graybar, among others.

Fiber Connect 2023 comes at a critical time, when cable operators are flocking to fiber and increasingly deploying advanced PON technology.

As context, three of the nation's largest cablecos—Comcast, Charter, and Altice USA—are plowing hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars annually into fiber builds in greenfield and adjacent areas.

In short, Fiber Connect will give you a lot to learn and a lot of good people to learn it from. I hope you'll join us in Orlando to find out why fiber is hotter than the Florida sun.

— Gary Bolton leads the Fiber Broadband Association, whose mission is to accelerate deployment of all-fiber access networks.



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