

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Ticking Clock: How Long Will Fixed Wireless's Winning Streak Last?

Fixed wireless broadband providers have been on a tear in recent quarters, reporting subscriber gains far outpacing those from cable companies. But how long can that success last, and is this a temporary celebration before the limitations of fixed wireless access rear their heads?

As long as wireless providers have excess capacity to sell, offering low-cost broadband packages across America makes sense. As they make network improvements, however, each company will need to make decisions on how to distribute resources like spectrum across their product areas. **Verizon** excitedly [announced](#) earlier this week that it is able to use the entirety of its licensed C-band spectrum after receiving final clearance from **SES** and **Intelsat**.

CEO *Hans Vestberg* also said on the company's 2Q23 earnings call last month that while **Verizon** has had great success with its fixed wireless access in urban areas where it had already released some C-band spectrum, the company has its eyes on more suburban and rural areas. He believes this newly-released C-band spectrum will help it do just that.

"Of course, that's a great opportunity because usually there are even less different options for customers in those areas... that doesn't mean that we're changing our guidance, we still say 4-5 million by 2025," he said. "We want to show our stakeholders that we're a great company and we execute well, which I think we're doing." Verizon is also

examining opportunities to serve MDUs with its fixed wireless products.

But there are still plenty of folks out there that don't see fixed wireless access as something worthy of a long-term bet. The **Missouri Association of Councils of Government** tapped **Reid Consulting Group** to [submit](#) evidence Tuesday for bulk challenges of broadband availability by licensed fixed wireless access providers in the state.

The evidence looked at 93,343 locations at which it claims broadband speeds remain below 25/3 Mbps, and at 63,848 of those, licensed fixed wireless ISPs claim speeds of 100/20. At a high level, the analysis from Reid Consulting Group looked at raw **Ookla** Speedtest Intelligence records, limited those to tests taken on desktops and mobile devices over WiFi, rated geographies and layered on additional census, **FCC** and **USAC** data. It also examined how terrain and foliage within the state hinder the possibility of fixed wireless to provide widespread broadband access across swaths of land, calling coverage potential at all radio frequencies at or above 2 GHz, licensed or unlicensed, dismal, particularly because those frequencies are absorbed by water in the leaves of foliage.

"Combined, the evidence that the challenged ISPs have overstated availability is overwhelming," Reid Consulting Group President *Tom Reid* said in the challenge. "If the ISPs disagree, we request that the burden of proof be on the ISPs regarding their unsubstantiated and now contested availability and speed claims, claims that could block federal and



Cablefax

MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

DECEMBER 6, 2023

Cablefax recognizes the Most Powerful Women based on their influence and power within the industry—as well as their commitment to ensuring other execs receive opportunities to grow and flourish.

NOMINATE BEFORE SEPT. 8

www.CablefaxWomen.com

state funding for 96,343 unserved Missouri households.”

Those doubts about the long-term promises of fixed wireless and wireless providers’ commitment to the service weren’t assuaged during **T-Mobile’s** 2Q23 earnings call. **T-Mobile** is still looking at whether or not dedicating mid-band spectrum to broadband would make sense, with CEO *Mike Sievert* saying on the call that it’s not immediately obvious that there are economic ways to grow the business beyond its initial single-digit penetration.

T-Mobile’s models continue to show that it can serve 7-8 million households by selling excess capacity. Because the business isn’t burdened by capital right now given that T-Mobile delivers the service on an already built mobile network, it is able to profitably build the business at low prices. It’s a win for as long as things stay within this range, but what happens if there is demand beyond that is a mystery.

“You may see us doing trials in the marketplace as we experiment with this and try to crack the code. And so you’ll hear about us trying millimeter wave things or MDU strategies or non-standards-based solutions to see if there’s a way to get after it,” Sievert said. “And you see us trialing fiber, whether or not there’s a way for our team, our distribution, our brand to add value in the fiber ecosystem and I’ve made mention of that before. All these things are things we’re doing to try to learn. And the good news is we’ve got some time because we’ll hit this kind of initial terminal sizing of [high-speed internet], still we’ve got two more years to run.”

YOUTUBE ADDS SIX MORE SUNDAY TICKET FEATURES

YouTube and **YouTube TV** are kicking it into high gear to get as many **NFL Sunday Ticket** sign-ups as they can achieve before the regular season kicks off Sept. 7. After rolling out deals for new and existing **Verizon** customers and implementing anticipated features like multi-view and unlimited streams at home, six more features were unveiled. It starts with more flexibility with payments. Currently, plans range from \$349/month to \$489/month and include options to bundle **NFL RedZone** (with an ongoing \$50 off deal through September 19 for all plans). Beginning now and rolling out the over the next week, viewers in most states will be able to choose a monthly payment plan option when signing up instead of requiring the full payment upfront. States not included in that are Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Nevada and Tennessee. YouTube will also introduce student plans for Sunday Ticket within the next week. As for broadcast enhancements, the platform is adding more Multiview options that allow viewers to watch up

The WHO and the WHY

CFX’s spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



ANDREW
Georgiou
PRESIDENT, U.K. AND IRELAND
WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Andrew first joined Warner Bros. Discovery in 2019 as President, Eurosport and has since climbed to be President/Managing Director for WBD Sports Europe. Now he adds head of WBD’s media business in the U.K. and Ireland to his purview. Andrew will oversee the company’s networks in the region as well as **discovery+**, while also holding responsibility for consumer products, home entertainment and WBD’s theatrical business.
- Andrew fills in for Antonio Ruiz, who departed the company to return to Spain. Andrew has been in the sports business for more than two decades. He was CEO of Lagardère Sports and Entertainment before joining WBD. Throughout his career, he’s worked with properties like UEFA, English Premier League, International Olympic Committee, Formula 1 and more. Andrew also had a five-year stint as CEO of the PGA Tour, Australasia region.
- He spends time out of the office sitting on the board of Sports United Against Dementia, which raises awareness and funding for research to support those with dementia.

to four games simultaneously. On YouTube TV, combinations include local games alongside out-of-market broadcasts from Sunday Ticket. Another enhancement to come is a live chat and polls feature that fans can interact with during games, with future plans to add NFL Shop integrations. Lastly, the “catch up with key plays” feature that YouTube TV currently has will be extended to YouTube, and highlights will be made available on YouTube Shorts in real time.

ACI SAYS TO EXTEND ACP

To extend or not to extend. That is the question Congress is grappling with when it comes to the Affordable Connectivity Program, and more are starting to voice their support for re-funding the program. The **American Consumer Institute** this week joined supporters, saying that a permanent extension is preferred but even a multi-year extension could give Congress time to identify future revenue streams. “Despite only existing for over a year and a half, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) calculates that nearly 20 million people have already enrolled in the program at a cost of just \$14.2 billion

in funding,” ACI said in its assessment of the program. “While still a significant sum, the amount of funding allocated to the program is fairly small compared to other programs included in the \$1.2 trillion IIJA spending package. It also saves Americans an estimated \$500 million monthly on home internet costs.” ACI’s assessment focused largely on the economic benefits of the program, noting its role in facilitating economic growth and offering enhancements in education, healthcare and public safety. But there are still imperfections within the current state of the ACP, and adjustments could be necessary to avoid having the Program become overwhelmed with participants. “At present, nearly 40% of Americans qualify for the ACP, or roughly 48.6 million people,” ACI said. “If that figure is accurate, then the program may be too generous in the years to come. If that is the case, a small adjustment to income eligibility would bring the program in line with other social programs.”

LA LIGA EYES YOUNGER AUDIENCE

The top Spanish soccer division La Liga kicked off its 2023-24 season last weekend on ESPN platforms, and this year will see the league try to capture more attention with growing viewing options in the U.S. After undergoing a rebrand over the summer, La Liga made changes to its broadcast experience to make it more immersive and dynamic. Broadcasts will move away from using darker colors and instead use brighter hues to make its graphics stand out more. The league is also adding more cameras, such as an aerial view and from each team’s dugout. It’s part of an effort to capture a younger audience, which is why all 380 league matches will be available in English and Spanish on ESPN+. “This new identity, as was already mentioned, will take us to the world where the young people—and maybe the not-so-young people—where they regularly experience these games,” ESPN’s lead Spanish-language commentator for La Liga Fernando Palomo said on a call with media Wednesday. “We’re going to be a special focus on that matches that offer culture to La Liga. Derbies where there’s a match between two teams from the same cities, or the regional ones ... we’re going to show you all the atmospheres in their different cities.”

GCI LAUNCHES 5G IN UNALASKA

After a \$4.9 million investment, GCI has turned up 5G mobile service in the city of Unalaska, Alaska, while also launching voice over LTE mobile service. Residents in Unalaska now have the benefits of 5G mobile connectivity on top of 2.5 Gbps internet speeds that rolled out in late 2022.

FIBER FRENZY

Sparklight wrapped up its \$29 million expansion project in Gila County, Arizona, to bring high-speed internet to nine schools and school districts and eight libraries in the county. The project was part of the E-Rate initiative to help close the

digital divide. It used funding from three agencies: a \$2 million grant from the MHA Foundation, a \$1 million grant from the Arizona Commerce Authority and \$1.9 million in funding from Arizona state matching grants and \$17.9 million from the Universal Service Administrative Company E-Rate program for construction.

RATINGS

The 2023 Little League Softball World Series averaged 340,000 viewers across ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC, making it the most-watched since its 2010 edition. The championship game—aired on ABC for the first time ever—averaged 861,000 viewers, up 208% from last year’s title bout on ESPN. Meanwhile, the 2023 Little League Baseball World Series began in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, this afternoon. All 38 games will be broadcast across ESPN, ESPN2 and ABC, culminating with the championship game Aug. 27 at 3pm on ABC. Also making a return to Williamsport is the annual “MLB Little League Classic,” where the Nationals and Phillies will face off Sunday at 7:30pm. “KidsCast,” an alternate telecast featuring an all-youth broadcast team, will air on ESPN2 for the Nats-Phillies contest. – Monday night’s Bally Sports South telecast of the New York Yankees vs. Atlanta Braves generated a season-high 5.35 household rating in the Atlanta DMA to lead all networks in the 7:15-10:15 p.m. ET time slot.

ON THE CIRCUIT

SCTE will have two keynote speakers at its Cable-Tec Expo Opening General Session on Oct. 17. The first will feature CEEK CEO Mary Spio, who’ll share her thoughts on the opportunities that lie ahead for network technologies with VR, AR and AI in the fields of entertainment, education and healthcare. Second is Charter President, Product and Technology Rich DiGeronimo, whose “Future of Connectivity” keynote will look at the current state of the network and how the overall landscape is changing through industry alignment, modular network expansion and the power of multi-gig speeds. The Expo is scheduled for Oct. 16-19 in Denver.

PROGRAMMING

A&E greenlit a four-hour docuseries “The Chicano Squad,” which looks at the team of bilingual patrol officers who were promoted to detectives to form the first all-Latin homicide unit focused on Houston’s rising Latin homicide rate in 1979. – A new ep of “Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel” will air Tuesday at 11pm on HBO, available to stream on Max. – Season 2 of Investigation Discovery’s “Crime Scene Confidential” returns with eight episodes beginning Sept. 6 at 9pm. – Season 4 of the “Why Not Us” series “Why Not Us: Howard Golf” will premiere Aug. 21 on ESPNU with the first four episodes. It’ll begin at 7pm and be available to stream on ESPN+ after it airs.

Think about that for a minute...

Fix It First

Commentary by Steve Effros

I've been intending to write this column for a while now, but whenever I sit down to write, something else comes up and I just put it off. Well, a recent experience having nothing whatsoever to do with telecommunications or cable or broadband or streaming or AI has finally pushed me over the edge. The bottom line on this one is a fervent plea that all of you managers out there should never forget to try out your "new and improved" services, or whatever, before you spring them on your customers!

Now that may sound like a sort of obvious admonition, but from what I see as just a regular person going about daily things, it doesn't appear to me that it's being done by a whole lot of folks in charge. The trigger for this column came from the simple experience of having to drive to a new doctor's office in a complex of new buildings near Washington, DC. I suspect it could have been anywhere, and that's the problem.

The five-story modern brick buildings were arrayed around a big roundabout with several signs telling me where I could park for building number this or building number that, but I was looking for a specific building number (3025) and while these were all beautiful, well placed buildings with lots of landscaping and parking, I drove around and around trying to find a number, any number on a building! I finally had to stop and ask a nurse walking back from lunch which building was the one I was looking for.

As I parked in the front parking lot and walked up to the door I finally saw what I was looking for: the number, in large, beautiful black numbers on a brick wall in front of the building. The only problem was it was at "street level" and totally hidden by the cars parked in front of the building! Had it been put up on, say, the brick wall at the top of the "first floor" then everyone would have been able to see it from the street. As it was, it was worthless and always would be.

Now I know I have gone on at length about this, but it's a

great example of what I'm trying to point out. Had anyone, the architects of the building, the managers, or even the employees or tenants said something, that set of numbers would never have been put where it was. If anyone had actually "tried it" first... just driven up to the building as though they were looking for it for the first time, they would have recognized the problem and an easy fix.

How many of you have signed off on new graphical user interfaces, or designs for a new remote control, or required a new questionnaire, or set up a new way to subscribe to your service without first trying it yourself? Yes, I know, there are entire companies allegedly "expert" at designing this stuff and they are supposed to take all this into account. But I've filled out too many forms, tried to either subscribe or unsubscribe to services "on line," or done lots of other things that just make me shake my head and conclude that the folks responsible for them simply never tried to use their own products. That's a big mistake.

If you haven't gotten the drift of my columns of late, let me make it as clear as I can: we are in a highly competitive market now. The primary services are becoming commodities, especially as to delivery. The focus has to be on providing customers with the best service possible, and ease of use is without question the most critical part of that. So if you find it problematic yourself, fix it first.



Steve

T:202-630-2099
steve@effros.com

(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

our
Legacy.
A MOSAIC OF
POSSIBILITIES.
37TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CONFERENCE.NAMIC.COM

NEW YORK
MARRIOTT MARQUIS
SEPT. 19-20, 2023

Register Today!
conference.namic.com
#37NAMICconference
@namiconational