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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

New Rules: NTIA, White House Reveal Spectrum Strategy

NTIA has upheld its promise to spectrum stakeholders to release a national spectrum strategy before the close of the year.

On Monday, it released a plan to study nearly 2,800 MHz of spectrum for potential repurposing. That's almost more than double NTIA's initial goal when it began the process of creating a national spectrum strategy. As part of the plan, NTIA has identified five spectrum bands to study for possible repurposing: the 3.1-3.45 GHz, 5.03-5.091 GHz, 7.125-8.4 GHz, 18.1-18.6 GHz and 37.0-37.6 GHz bands. The study on those bands will be completed within two years.

The Biden Administration has also promised to establish a national testbed for dynamic spectrum sharing within 12-18 months. That's not only to increase the availability of outdoor wireless testbeds in general, but also to explore whether areas specifically dedicated to spectrum research should be established. The **Office of Science and Technology Policy** has been charged with developing an official national spectrum research and development plan moving forward, clearly setting forth key areas for work supporting spectrum innovation in the years to come.

The federal agencies are also being encouraged to get the private sector involved in the future of spectrum policy. They are being asked to collaborate with industry, technology developers and academia to encourage dynamic spectrum

sharing through a variety of techniques, including cloud-based spectrum management and methods that utilize AI. NTIA is also going to push forward the development of a common spectrum management platform to manage shared access moving forward.

Workforce concerns have been at the heart of several cable and telecom policy conversations in recent years, and the topic was also covered within the spectrum plan. The Biden Administration has committed to creating and periodically updating a plan for developing a robust workforce with individuals that can fill the various technical, operational and policy roles related to spectrum and the goals laid out in the plan.

The White House also released a Presidential Memorandum establishing a Spectrum Advisory Council to serve as the principal interagency forum for top agency leaders to advise NTIA on spectrum policy. In an effort to prevent spats between federal agencies over spectrum policy, the memorandum also creates a dispute resolution process to be led by the White House if NTIA and an agency disagree over a position the executive branch should take on a spectrum issue.

This has been a long time coming. NTIA first sought public comment in March, asking industry stakeholders to weigh in on how it could achieve its goal of identifying at least 1,500 MHz of spectrum to study for potential repurposing. And while there was some celebration that came upon the plan's release, the expectations of it were so high that it had little chance of winning universal applause.



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FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr*, who has been calling for the federal government to get moving when it comes to freeing up more spectrum, was far from impressed with the plan. “The Biden Administration’s much anticipated plan does not commit to making even a single MHz of spectrum available,” he said in a post on X. “The Administration’s continued inaction on spectrum undermines U.S. leadership and makes it harder to bring Americans across the digital divide.”

Charter Communications also weighed in, saying now is the time for action to promote innovation in 5G and 6G and push even more competition and lower prices into the marketplace. But it also had some questions, noting that testing has already been done to show that the 37 GHz band can be used by both commercial and federal users now through a simple sharing regime. It urged the Biden Administration and the FCC to quickly finalize rules and allow that deployment to move forward.

“The 3 GHz band was recently compressed (from 3.1-3.55 GHz to only 3.1-3.45 GHz) and has similarly undergone significant study that shows the 3.1-3.45 GHz band can be made available to commercial users on a shared licensed basis with **DOD** users, although not if there is additional compression,” the operator said. “We hope the Administration’s additional study into this band recognizes how it can be put into commercial use more quickly, at far less expense, and with protection of national security if efforts to further clear the band are foregone in favor of licensed sharing.”

This is one step forward, but there’s still a lot of work to be done before folks feel confident about the future of U.S. spectrum, and not all of it rests on the shoulders of NTIA and the Biden Administration. During a White House event focused on the announcement of the spectrum strategy, FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* again called for Congress to restore the agency’s spectrum auction authority to give the U.S. the tools needed to make the bands the NTIA is about to study eventually available for commercial use. The FCC lost its auction authority in March when Congress failed to renew it for the first time since the power was granted to the agency.

REPORT: MARIA POPO TO BECOME SCTE CEO

Cable industry veteran *Maria Popo* is set to become **SCTE**’s next CEO, sources have [told Light Reading](#). She would succeed *Mark Dzuban*, the group’s longtime leader who announced his intention to retire ahead of Cable-Tec Expo last month. Popo has a long history on the vendor side of the business, spending more than 10 years as Americas CEO/President, Global Chief Business Officer of equipment and services supplier **Ubee Interactive**. She also spent nearly three years as President of **The WICT Network**’s Rocky Mountain Chapter.

LRG: NEARLY 1M BROADBAND SUBS ADDED IN 3Q23

The top U.S. internet providers added about 950,000 net additional broadband internet subscribers in 3Q23, with most of the additions coming from fixed wireless, according to **Lightman Research**. **T-Mobile** and **Verizon**’s fixed wireless and 5G home internet services led the way with the most quarterly net adds ever for fixed wireless services, totaling 940,000 added subscribers in 3Q23. Cable companies added about 5,000 subscribers in the quarter, down from the 45,000 mark it achieved in the same time period the prior year. Wireline phone companies, which had 100,000 net losses in 3Q22, added about 5,000 this quarter. The 950,000 overall gain for the quarter is up from a pro forma gain of about 865,000 subscribers in 3Q22 and brings the total count across top broadband providers to 113.9 million. Cable companies accounted for 76.2 million of those subscribers, wireline phone companies had about 30.7 million subscribers and fixed wireless services came in with approximately 6.9 million subscribers. **Comcast** lost 18,000 subscribers in 3Q23 but still led the way with 32.29 million subscribers overall. **Charter** followed with 30.65 million, while **Altice USA**—which lost 30,700 subscribers—came third with 4.55 million. **AT&T** and **Verizon** had 15.3 million and 7.61 million, respectively, while **Frontier** (2.88 million) and **Lumen** (2.84 million) were neck and neck. **T-Mobile** led the fixed wireless category with 4.24 million following 557,000 net adds. **Verizon** had 384,000 adds itself, bringing its total to 2.68 million.

FETTERMAN REPORTS ISSUES WITH ACP TO FCC

The White House and Congress are working to develop some sort of solution to extend funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program, but *Sen. John Fetterman* (D-PA) says his constituents are reporting problems enrolling right now. In a letter to **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* last week, Fetterman said more than 700,000 households in the Keystone State have signed up to receive the benefit. But some report having been blocked from enrolling because certain service providers are requiring them to show proof of one month of service before qualifying for the monthly subsidy. He did not name any particular service providers in his letter. “This is wrong. ACP exists to cover these costs,” he said. “If the providers force them to pay, it means the program is not living up to its original mission.” He asked her if the FCC is aware of the issue, if there is any investigation into if it is happening and if it has any idea of what service providers could be engaging in this practice.

ESPN'S NFL RATINGS

We're over the midway point of the 2023-24 NFL season, and so far **ESPN** is averaging 15.4 million viewers for its "Monday Night Football" broadcasts, the best viewership the network has had at the halfway mark since it began airing MNF in 2006. Both reach and viewership are up YOY at 14% and 15%, respectively. MNF has also reached 101 million fans after 11 games on linear platforms. The "Monday Night Football with Peyton and Eli" telecast currently averages 1.2 million viewers per episode. "Sunday NFL Countdown," which airs from 10am-1pm, is coming in at 1.5 million viewers per show, the best it's had since 2016. Other viewership figures include "NFL Live" averaging 407,000 viewers per episode through November 3 and "Monday Night Countdown" averaging 1.2 million viewers and 1.6 million in the final hour.

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CARRIAGE

DISH and **Hearst Television** shook hands on a multi-year agreement to end a two-month-long blackout. Thirty-seven of Hearst's local stations were restored for DISH TV customers late Friday. "We're pleased to have reached a long-term agreement that benefits all parties and most importantly, our customers," *Gary Schanman*, EVP/Group President, Video Services for DISH, said in a statement. "Thank you to our customers for your patience and understanding as we worked through the negotiations."

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EPB NAMED SMART ENERGY PROVIDER FOR THIRD TIME

EPB was labeled a smart energy provider by the **American Public Power Association**. It's the third time EPB has earned the SEP designation, which looks at companies with four primary factors: smart energy program structure, energy efficiency and distributed energy resources programs, environmental and sustainability initiatives and customer experience. EPB scored a 94 out of 100 overall and achieved 100 points in the communications and customer education and environmental and sustainability categories.

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FIBER FRENZY

GoNetspeed will soon have its fiber internet service available for customers in Fairfield, Connecticut. Expanded construction has already begun, and the company expects customers to be eligible for service installation by the end of this fall. The expansion will add nearly 1,000 residents and businesses to GoNetspeed's footprint. - The first customers in Helena Valley, Montana, area have been added to **TDS**. The project in Helena and Helena Valley began earlier this year and provides customers in the areas with internet speeds of up to 8 Gbps. TDS is also working on other fiber network projects in the state in Billings, Butte, Missoula and Great Falls.

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AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC** proposed the creation of a program that would allow

the agency to gather data on what cybersecurity and advanced firewall services would best help schools and libraries protect their networks from cyberattacks. The Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program, through which the agency would invest up to \$200 million across three years, would be established within the Universal Service Fund, but exist separately from the E-Rate program. That funding would partially be directed to eligible schools and libraries to help subsidize the cost of cybersecurity tools for E-Rate-funded broadband networks.

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ON THE CIRCUIT

The WICT Network is now taking [applications](#) for Classes 50 and 51 of its Betsy Magness Leadership Institute. The deadline is Feb. 9. The Institute was created in 1994 and provides leadership development programs for women in the media, entertainment and technology industries. The programs focus on core leadership skills such as driving and implementing change, communication effectiveness, navigating career challenges, creating engagement and executing an organizational vision.

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DOING GOOD

Friday was Veterans Day, and **Comcast** is rolling on with its partnership with Operation Military Family. Comcast will donate \$20,000 and 100 laptops to Operation Military Family to help with the needs of veterans and their families. The two organizations will also work together with other veterans organizations in Washington state. Comcast and Operation Military Family have partnered for multiple years, with Comcast having assisted over 5,000 transitioning service members and their families with internet needs. - **Tubi** is teaming up with the Black List to provide emerging and established writers with opportunities to submit screenplays intended to be developed, produced and distributed by the AVOD. It's part of the "To Be Commissioned" initiative where Tubi is looking for five scripts that resonate with young, diverse audiences across the sci-fi, faith, comedy and romance genres, or a "wild card" that encompasses any genre. Writers can submit entries [here](#) through March 15. The Black List will executive produce all five films. Additionally, Tubi will provide fee waivers for one evaluation as well as one month of hosting for 200 writers from underrepresented communities.

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PROGRAMMING

CTAM and **Common Sense Media** teamed up to launch an online curation of holiday programming called the "Ultimate Where to Watch Holiday Guide." It's available on StreamSafely.com, featuring 107 movies that come without the risks of streaming pirated content. Movies in the guide include "A Christmas Story," "Elf," "It's a Wonderful Life" and "The Nightmare Before Christmas." - "Hard Knocks: In Season with the Miami Dolphins" will begin Nov. 21 at 9pm on **HBO** and streaming on **Max**. Eps will be released on Tuesdays through Jan. 9.