

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## LEO A Go?: Industry Weighs In on Opening BEAD to Other Technologies

It's been nearly three weeks since NTIA released guidance on how states and territories can integrate alternative technologies like unlicensed fixed wireless and LEO into their BEAD plans, and industry groups made their voices heard this week on how much those technologies should be utilized.

WISPA submitted comments to the agency urging the NTIA to adopt the proposed guidance with some subtle changes. It voiced strong support for the notice's modification to NTIA's original Notice of Funding Opportunity to expand the locations where BEAD funding will not be available to locations subject to an enforceable commitment to deploy broadband via unlicensed fixed wireless and other alternative technologies. That would include locations for which Connect America Fund Phase II and RDOF winners have agreed to deploy without specifying what technology they plan to deploy to each location.

"Unlike BEAD, the FCC's CAF and RDOF programs do not require a particular technology to be deployed at a particular location," WISPA said. "Rather, the recipient can deploy whatever technology it believes is right for the job so long as it meets its speed and latency requirements and meets the buildout milestones. For this reason alone, it is reasonable and appropriate for NTIA to exclude areas subject to an enforceable commitment regardless of the technology that may be deployed to a particular location."

WISPA did ask the agency to direct states and territories to

draw or re-draw project areas to eliminate locations where one or more alternative technologies are providing eligible service, even where alternative technologies cover some, but not all, of the location in the project area.

ACA Connects also weighed in on the issue, urging states and territories to continue to prioritize funding the deployment of fiber to eligible locations with BEAD funding. If alternative technologies like LEO satellite broadband or fixed wireless are used in situations where they aren't the last resort, the association argued BEAD could repeat the failures of past broadband funding programs that tried to deliver incrementally better service to as many locations as possible. Those programs may have met their mission, but it wasn't long before better infrastructure was needed in many locations to meet the demands of American consumers and businesses.

Even if alternative technologies are used, ACAC has some concerns about the use of LEO systems within BEAD. NTIA has proposed a mechanism where states and territories can use BEAD funding to reserve capacity for LEO broadband. ACAC said such a mechanism would ultimately be unworkable and fail to meet the public interest objectives of the BEAD program.

"A preferable alternative would be for NTIA to negotiate a master agreement with an LEO provider that an Eligible Entity would then use and that would enable consumers at eligible locations to purchase terminal equipment on a supported basis (using BEAD funds with a provider match) and, on an unsupported basis, broadband service with ten-year performance

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assurances at reasonable rates, terms and conditions,” ACA Connects said.

It instead proposed that, given the wide range of questions that exist around how to embrace alternative technologies in BEAD, NTIA should issue a separate follow-on notice seeking more focused comment on how subsidizing shared connectivity on LEO systems could work practically and promote infrastructure investment.

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### SIMINGTON SPEAKS ON DIRECTV-DISNEY, NEED FOR REFORM

FCC Commissioner *Nathan Simington* is speaking up about the ongoing blackout of **Disney** content on **DirectTV**. In a statement, he said this moment is a time to recognize a number of truths about the changing video ecosystem, including that approximately of linear network content is available on streaming platforms today and there is no harmonization in rules for MVPDs and vMVPDs. He also lamented that so often in these disputes, independently owned and operated affiliates and station groups are left behind. He urged a future FCC to seriously consider the question of how to balance the uneven hand that is being dealt to various groups across the media marketplace. “The linear media marketplace is governed by a two-tiered system of rules—legacy rules for some, and close to zero rules for others,” Simington said. “We must either unleash the video marketplace from outdated rules or balance it with smart and targeted reforms, but what cannot persist is a system that entrenches marketplace power at the expense of the consumer.”

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### STORM FRANCINE AFTERMATH

We’re in the thick of Hurricane season, and this past week saw those in the Gulf Coast take shelter as Hurricane Francine made landfall in Louisiana as a Category 2 hurricane. Over 450,000 customers were without power in Louisiana during the storm’s peak Wednesday, according to data from PowerOutage.us, and although Francine has since been downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone, there’s still heavy rainfall and high winds expected as Francine moves inland toward Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and other states. As of Friday afternoon, nearly 117,000 customers in Louisiana were without power and the **FCC**’s Disaster Information Reporting System and Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative remain activated for nearly half of the parishes within the Pelican State. Mississippi, however, saw its DIRS and MDRI deactivated for 15 counties Thursday. State leaders in Louisiana are still assessing overall damage. Congressman *Troy Carter* (D-LA) conducted a joint helicopter

assessment with the U.S. Coast Guard on Friday morning to survey damage and assist relief and recovery experts. Though the storm is still set to impact more throughout the U.S., providers have already stepped into action to assist those impacted by Francine. **Verizon** is waiving postpaid domestic calls, text and data usage incurred through Thursday by its postpaid consumer customers, small business and prepaid customers in the parishes of Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, St. James, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist, Tangipahoa and Terrebonne. Prepaid customers will have their service end dates extended to Thursday as well. **AT&T** is waiving overage charges to provide unlimited talk, text and data for postpaid and prepaid customers with billing addresses in select zip codes through next Friday. It added that customers may experience wireless and wireline service disruptions, but that’s mostly due to power outages and storm damage. **T-Mobile** has deployed its emergency plans throughout the latter half of the week. The company has teams stationed at two T-Mobile stores in Houma and Gonzales, Louisiana, until 6:30pm CT (subject to change) tonight to provide WiFi, power and device charging for anyone who needs it. **Mediacom** reported no outages or additional issues with its network. **Vexus Fiber** also didn’t sustain any damage to its network. **Cox Communications** has crews assessing damage in impacted areas, but services are resuming as power returns for customers. **Sparklight** has customers in its Belle Chasse and New Roads, Louisiana, markets back up and running. Its service area in McComb, Mississippi, had some plant damage, but technicians completed temporary repairs and permanent fixes will be made through the weekend.

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### NTIA APPROVES BEAD PLANS OF THREE MORE ENTITIES

**NTIA** has offered its stamp of approval to three more BEAD Volume II plans—those of Idaho, North Dakota and American Samoa. The states and territory can now request access to their BEAD allocations. Idaho’s allocation is more than \$583 million, North Dakota’s is over \$130 million and American Samoa received more than \$37 million.

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### STARLINK FLYING WITH UNITED

**Starlink** is ready for takeoff. **United Airlines** signed an agreement with **SpaceX** to implement Starlink’s WiFi to its mainline and regional aircraft fleet for free. United will begin testing in early 2025 before the first passenger flights will be added later that year. The airline anticipates having Starlink on all of its aircrafts over the next several years. United claims the

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Starlink connectivity will enable live streaming, workplace productivity, gaming, e-commerce and more while users are in the air. United customers will also have access to Starlink on their seatback screens.

**NEW CHICAGO RSN NEARS FIRST DEAL, PER REPORT**

The launch of Chicago’s new regional sports network is set for Oct. 1, and it’s close to finalizing its first carriage agreement. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that the **Chicago Sports Network** is nearing a distribution deal with **DirectTV**. It’ll span satellite, **DirectTV Stream** and **U-Verse TV** customers, and the new RSN will replace the previous **NBC Sports Chicago**, which will sunset Sept. 30. CHSN will be the local home for the Blackhawks, Bulls and White Sox. No word yet on what the Jerry Reinsdorf-owned Stadium will do considering it once vied for those teams’ rights. On deck for CHSN distribution deals is **Comcast/Xfinity**, **RCN** and **DISH**.

**USL SCORES INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION**

The **United Soccer League** is going global after reaching a

multi-year broadcast agreement with **ESPN International** to bring the league to Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The games will be available on both ESPN linear channels and ESPN on **Disney+**. Part of the agreement entails a two-year partnership with **USL Super League**, a professional women’s soccer league that launched this month, in addition to a two-year extension for the USL’s men’s leagues—**USL Championship** and **USL League One**—starting in 2025. Each regular-season and playoff match for both the men’s and women’s leagues falls under the deal.

**LONG LINES BRINGS FLIGHT VIDEO**

**Long Lines Broadband**, an Iowa-based provider owned by **Schurz Communications**, is rolling out the streaming service **Flight Video**. The offering will replace the current linear cable TV service on Oct. 15, and current customers will need to convert their video service before that date. Flight Video comes with 145 streaming channels. Customers can either self-install Flight Video or have Long Lines install it at no additional charge.

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**NCTA - The Internet & Television Association** @NCTAitv  
While early planning for 6G is a worthwhile exercise, U.S. policymakers should invest in the current technologies and strategies that could spur 6G innovation and should refrain from adopting policies based on assumptions about what 6G will be this early in the process.  
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**Starlink** @Starlink  
Just 10 months after opening our factory in Bastrop, Texas, the Starlink team there has built 1 million Starlink Standard kits!  
The team is ramping production to meet the surging demand for high-speed internet around the world 🌐🌍❤️

 **Up Ahead**

- SEPTEMBER 16:** Final Deadline for Cablefax Most Powerful Women Nominations
- SEPTEMBER 24-26:** SCTE TechExpo; Atlanta
- SEPT. 29-OCT. 2:** NTCA Fall Conference; Indianapolis
- OCTOBER 21-22:** WICT Network Leadership Conference; NYC
- OCTOBER 22-23:** 38th Annual NAMIC Conference; NYC
- OCTOBER 23:** The Kaitz Dinner; NYC