

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Wiggle Room: DISH Owner Asks For More Time for Mobile Buildout

**EchoStar** is asking the FCC for a little more time to meet some of the remaining 5G deployment deadlines **DISH** agreed to when it acquired **Sprint**'s prepaid businesses and customers as part of that company's merger with **T-Mobile** in 2020.

Its letter to the agency relates to two deadlines in 2025 and one in 2026, and its rationale is that a number of significant, unanticipated circumstances have arisen since 2020 that were beyond EchoStar's control and have impacted its ability to meet the goals DISH originally agreed to with the FCC and the **DOJ**.

Among the issues it cited were the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the workforce and fueled supply chain disruptions and skyrocketing interest rates. Technical and logistical hurdles plagued the company throughout the pandemic, and that ultimately slowed the development and implementation of technology.

"For example, the network construction difficulties and longer than anticipated timeline for resolution delayed OEM certification of devices for EchoStar's network. Launching 5G voice ('VoNR') at sufficient quality (an important element of a competitive wireless service) requires significant optimization and densification of towers compared to providing just 5G data (broadband)," the letter said. "To that end, EchoStar initially planned to commercially launch its first city in Q1 of 2021. But that was ultimately delayed until May of 2022, when EchoStar's first commercial launch in Las Vegas finally went

live." It claims that since then, it has continued to face delays, integration hurdles and increased costs that have negatively impacted EchoStar's ability to build out in certain license areas, densify others and grow subscribers.

As for what the actual changes would be, EchoStar is asking the FCC to extend the construction milestones tied to certain AWS-4, lower 700 MHz E Block, 600 MHz and AWS H Block licenses from June 14, 2025, to Dec. 14, 2026. Similarly, the company would like to push the deadline associated with its AWS-3 licenses from Oct. 27, 2025, to Dec. 14, 2026. Finally, it asked the Commission to delay its final construction milestones from Dec. 14, 2026, to June 14, 2028.

EchoStar argued that without these changes, it would not be able to effectively compete with the other big three wireless providers in the U.S. "Without EchoStar as the fourth nationwide facilities-based carrier, there will be a permanent dominant three-player wireless market in the United States," the company said. "This would harm competition, consumers and national security." In exchange for the extensions on the buildout timelines, EchoStar is offering up a number of new commitments to the FCC and the DOJ. It promised to increase its current obligations by providing 5G service to more than 80% of the U.S. population by Dec. 31 of this year, and it offered to accelerate and expand its final construction milestones for certain licenses to 85% of the population by the same date.

Among its other commitments is a dedication to offering a low-cost 5G plan and device to consumers nationwide for the

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duration of the extension period. The mobile wireless retail plan would offer at least 30 GB of data per month for no more than \$25/month to both prepaid and postpaid customers. Customers would be able to bring their own device or purchase an Echostar certified 5G device, the cost of which would be capped at \$125.

EchoStar also would increase its current 5G site obligation by 60% to deploy at least 24,000 5G sites by June 14, 2025, and upgrade its deployed sites to 3GPP Release 17, the latest 5G technology, by that date.

**New Street Research** believes political pushback on the requests will ultimately be minimal due to details in how the T-Mobile/Sprint deal was structured and a desire among lawmakers to maintain competition. “While there will be some muttering among other ISPs about ‘DISH not keeping their commitments’ we are skeptical that they will spend significant political capital opposing the DISH request, as doing so undercuts their argument; that is, for larger competitors to complain about the plans of still nascent competitors evokes the line ‘The lady doth protest too much, methinks,’” New Street Research said in a note to clients.

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**MOBILE TAKES FLIGHT AT SCHURZ**

**Schurz Communications** is the latest operator to launch mobile through NCTC’s MVNO. Customers served by its **Antietam Broadband** operations in Washington and Carroll County, Maryland, can already sign up for what it’s calling Flight Mobile. Its product suite already includes Flight Fiber and Flight Video. Prices for [Flight Mobile](#) for internet customers range from \$20/month for a 3GB data plan with unlimited talk and text to \$39.99/month for a 30GB plan. Schurz plans to expand mobile operations to its other broadband properties. Schurz Communications has construction plans underway to bring approximately 70,000 additional fiber passings across their broadband properties in 2024. NCTC is partnering with **Reach** and **AT&T** for its MVNO, which has been used by **Breezeline** and **TVS Cable** to launch mobile. In speaking to **CFX** over the summer, Schurz CEO *John Reardon* described mobile as a churn mitigator. “We don’t ever think we’ll be a big wireless company. Instead, this will be something that we’ll add to our broadband offering to allow customers to have a better price combination,” he said.

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**SAVALLE SIMS LEAVING WBD**

**Warner Bros. Discovery** Chief Legal Officer *Savalle Sims* is leaving the company after 13 years. *Deadline* was first to [report](#) the news, with sources quickly confirming. Sims started at Discovery in 2011 as SVP, Litigation and Intellectual Property, rising through the ranks and celebrating major wins with her significant

contributions to Discovery’s acquisitions of **Scripps Networks Interactive** and **WarnerMedia**. She’ll continue to be at WBD for a transitional period while a search for her replacement is underway, and there is no news yet on where she’s headed next.

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**NEW BOSS AT TELEVISIAUNIVISION**

*Wade Davis* is out as CEO of **TelevisaUnivision**, with the Spanish-language media company announcing late Wednesday that *Daniel Alegre* would assume the role of CEO of TelevisaUnivision beginning today. Davis, a former **ViacomCBS** CFO, led the acquisition of Univision in 2020 and completed the merger with **Grupo Televisa** in 2022. The company said the change-up was part of ongoing succession planning that Davis was a part of. Davis will transition to Vice Chairman of the board and serve on the board’s executive committee. Alegre was most recently CEO of Web3 company **Yuga Labs**, but also served as President/COO at video gaming company **Activision Blizzard** and as President, Global and Strategic Partnerships for **Google**. He opened Google’s offices throughout Latin America and Asia. “We could not have picked a better successor than Daniel, who brings an incredible track record of operational and strategic execution. He is the ideal executive to take TelevisaUnivision into its next phase of growth. The Company’s future is bright, and I look forward to supporting Daniel and the TelevisaUnivision team in my role as Vice Chairman of the board,” said Davis, who is one of the company’s largest shareholders.

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**MEDIACOM SAYS YES TO OPEN-VAULT PROFILE MANAGEMENT**

**Mediacom** is taking advantage of **OpenVault**’s Profile Management Application. The provider hopes to use the solution to drive peak levels of available bandwidth and consistent network performance for subscribers with DOCSIS 3.1 or higher modems. OpenVault’s product optimizes modulation profiles used by those modems and routinely monitors and adjusts those profiles based on changing RF impairments. Results so far show up to a 40% improvement in overall network capacity.

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**THIS IS NO 2009 HALLMARK COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS**

**Hallmark**’s annual “Countdown to Christmas” will celebrate its 15th year of warming hearts and decking the halls. A lot has changed since its debut. In 2009, the festivities didn’t start until Nov. 27—the day after Thanksgiving. This year, the merrymaking gets underway on Oct. 18 with the film “‘Twas the Date Before Christmas.” We’ll assume “date” refers to

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a romantic appointment instead of a day of the year since that's 68 days before Dec. 25! Hallmark's holiday slate has grown to more than 600 hours from the 450 touted in its inaugural year. Year 1's press release boasted four original movies compared to the 40 airing across Hallmark Channel and **Hallmark Mystery** in 2024. Newly launched streamer **Hallmark+** will feature seven original movies and, in a first, four seasonal series. They include "Mistletoe Murders" based on the Audible series of the same name and "Finding Mr. Christmas," a reality competition show pits 10 "handsome Hallmark hunk hopefuls" vying to show they have what it takes to be the next Hallmark superstar. The winner will make his debut this year in the Hallmark Channel original movie "Happy Howlidays."

### CSG READY TO EASE ROAMING PAINS

**CSG** is teaming up with roaming steering firm **Cellusys** to address well-known roaming issues and enhance innovation in the space. The two will combine their solution sets to bring intelligent roaming steering to life, and they plan to monitor network quality to identify and resolve issues before they impact customers. The pair will produce reports and dashboards with actionable insights for operators to optimize their roaming strategies.

### HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Hispanic Heritage Month runs through Oct. 15, and folks are starting to get in the celebratory spirit. **Charter's** Spectrum TV has an On Demand set of movies available for customers to rent for free throughout the month, featuring a mixture of action, drama, comedy and musicals. Customers of select Spectrum TV packages can find free movies through the National Hispanic Heritage Month On Demand category, including "Overboard," "In the Heights" and "Frida." **ESPN's** "Somos" (We Are) initiative is returning for another year highlighting contributions made by Latinos in sports. ESPN will have original programming air across its linear and digital platforms in both English and Spanish during the month. The network premiered "Las

Amazonas de Yaxunah" on Tuesday, a film about a Mayan women's softball team from Mexico's Yucatán region. Other programs include "Mi Deseo: Un Especial de SC Reportajes" (My Wish) on Oct. 11 at 9pm on ESPN Deportes and NFL Hispanic Heritage Month-themed games for Weeks 4 and 6 of "Monday Night Football."

### PROGRAMMING

**HBO** renewed drama series "Industry" for a fourth season. The series, created by *Mickey Down* and *Konrad Kay*, has seen a steady increase in popularity, with Season 3 averaging 1.6 million viewers per episode, a 40% increase from the previous season. There is no timeline yet for when the Bad Wolf-produced show will air its fourth season. The show, starring *Marisa Abela* and "Game of Thrones" favorite *Kit Harington*, will wrap up its third season on Sept. 29.

### DOING GOOD

**AXS TV** and **Spectrum** will partner with the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus as part of AXS TV's Band Together for Music Education initiative. The mobile music and recording experience, founded by Yoko Ono and Brian Rothschild in 1998, will make three stops at select schools nationwide, with AXS TV and Spectrum sponsoring each visit. The bus was set to stop at the Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center in L.A. today, the NYC LAB School for Collaborative Studies on Oct. 9, and James Whitcomb Riley School 43 in Indianapolis at a date to be announced later. Spectrum and AXS TV have awarded a combined \$160,000 in grants to 24 schools across 20 cities to date.

### PEOPLE

*Daniel Sanchez*, an attorney who serves on **Liberty Global** and **Liberty Latin America's** boards, will join **Warner Bros. Discovery's** board on Oct 1. Sanchez is also the nephew of veteran media exec and Liberty Chair *John Malone*. Sanchez's appointment follows the WBD board's recent vote to expand the number of directors to 12. He served on the Discovery, Inc. board from 2017-2022 and has previously served on the boards of **Starz** and **Lionsgate**.

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(09/09/24-09/15/24)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.985	3,124
MSNBC	0.658	2088
ESPN	0.654	2,074
CNN	0.410	1,300
HALL	0.212	673
HGTV	0.188	595
USA	0.163	516
DISC	0.144	458
INSP	0.141	449
TBS	0.132	419
HIST	0.116	369
TLC	0.112	356
FOOD	0.111	352
NWSMX	0.111	351
ID	0.108	343
TVLAND	0.102	322
HM	0.097	308
GSN	0.096	303
LIFE	0.096	303
REELZ	0.090	286
WETV	0.086	274
TNT	0.083	262
FX	0.077	243
OXYGEN	0.075	236
MTV	0.069	219
AMC	0.068	216
A&E	0.063	200
BRAVO	0.063	200
NAN	0.061	195
ESPN2	0.060	190
ADSM	0.059	188
NFL	0.058	185
BET	0.055	175
SNDNCE	0.055	174
NATGEO	0.053	169
TRAVEL	0.052	166
PARA	0.052	164
COM	0.051	162
FETV	0.049	154
APL	0.046	146
SYFY	0.046	145
E!	0.045	144
IFC	0.045	141
HLN	0.043	135
LMN	0.043	135
WTHR	0.042	133
BBCA	0.039	124

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



## BEYOND THE BANDWIDTH

### Riding the AI Wave

Proactive network maintenance, content recommendations and customer interactions are often at the top of the list of industry use cases for artificial intelligence. However, a plethora of other opportunities abound as we enter the AI Revolution. Cisco's investment arm, Cisco Investments, has launched a \$1 billion fund to invest in AI startups and develop secure AI solutions. Last week's IBC conference in Amsterdam was full of new offerings powered by AI. There's a lot to sift through, so we'll attempt to dive into some of the less obvious ways AI can help the bottom line.

Cable operators have long seen the value in serving small- and medium-sized businesses as well as a growing number of enterprise clients. In recent years, they've expanded their business services offerings to include mobile and managed IT and cloud services. AI could offer up even more opportunities to serve this important segment.

Chatbots are viewed today as sort of the baseline of AI. Equipped with conversational AI, they can help businesses respond to customer inquiries efficiently or help route them in the right direction. "Some service providers are looking at, 'hey, can I offer this as a service to my enterprise customers.' Service providers have long tried to come up with use cases for telco cloud edge, like edge computing," Gurudatt Shenoy, VP of Cisco's Data Center & Provider Connectivity Group, told **CFX**. "Some use cases have emerged quite nicely for service providers in their network cloud locations, like caching. They host a lot of caching content. This could be another one where they could offer some kind of AI services like chatbots to their end customers and now that's an additional monetizable capability they can introduce to their service customers."

Shenoy stressed that these conversations are still in

their early stages, with him unaware at this point of a provider who has actually deployed such an offering. He believes that's partly just because of the numerous seismic shifts the industry has encountered in such a short time. "We're now where folks are beginning to understand what AI means and how they can use it early. There was a mad rush, and there still is to some extent, to just build some infrastructure do something. But now a lot of folks, and service providers in particular, are starting to ask the question, how can I monetize this?" he said.

For example, service providers could work with school districts or hospitals to get documentation into an AI mechanism that could be used internally or externally. Some of the largest enterprises might pursue doing this on their own, but other businesses won't have the resources required. "This is where the notion of a service provider being an expert and leveraging its infrastructure come into play," said Shenoy. "That means you need to have the right compute, the right GPUs and software stack... Then you need access to the right kind of models, even understanding which model to use for their use case requires a degree of skill that not everybody may have."

Vendors like Cisco can help, equipping a provider with the entire stack, the switching infrastructure to connect all of those computes with GPUs. "You need power, you need space. You need to be able to host it, manage it, and then you need to be able to identify the right training models, get access to the data and post the data correctly," explained Shenoy. "There are questions around security, sovereignty and the data and so forth. It's a whole set of things that need to come together to be able to effectively this at the back end, so having someone do that service for you is where the business model is."

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