

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## New Rules: AT&T Wants to Shake Up CBRS Operations

The FCC began a proceeding in August to take a fresh look at CBRS operations, and AT&T unveiled its vision for the future of the spectrum Wednesday. Its proposal immediately drew criticism from stakeholders that have invested in the CBRS band in recent years.

NCTA said AT&T's plan is proof that cable's entrance in the mobile marketplace is not only benefitting millions of consumers, but is also scaring the traditional carriers into developing aggressive spectrum hoarding strategies that would harm the competitive marketplace.

"AT&T's proposal to reallocate the 3 GHz band should be seen for what it is—a desperate attempt to thwart competition and punish the many businesses, communities and consumers who made good-faith investments in reliance on the FCC's innovative CBRS framework," NCTA said.

AT&T's proposal would see the current CBRS allocation expanded and relocated to 3.1-3.3 GHz, something the company says would expand the amount of spectrum available for General Authorized Access uses from 150 to 200 MHz. Opponents argue that reallocation would give entities that didn't participate in the CBRS auction an opportunity to get exclusive licenses while also taking away from spectrum-sharing opportunities cable operators and others have advocated for and found to be useful for mobile operations.

AT&T's plan also includes an option to incorporate additional

PAL blocks in the new band. The 3.45-3.55 GHz and 3.7-3.98 GHz bands would not change and continue to be used for licensed mobile broadband services. The 3.55-3.7 GHz bands would be auctioned for licensed, full-power use. AT&T believes that would be a bridge to unite 5G services in the 3 GHz band.

As for how that auction would function, AT&T is pushing for an incentive auction similar to those conducted by the FCC for the 600 MHz and 39 GHz bands. Current CBRS PAL holders would have the choice to relocate to the new CBRS band, receiving vouchers to be used toward bids on new high-power licenses, or receive a cash payment in exchange for the relinquishment of their priority rights. Proceeds from the auctions of full-power licenses in the 3.55-3.7 GHz and any newly available PALs in the 3.1-3.3 GHz band would fund the relocation of incumbents to the new CBRS band. Of course, AT&T noted Congress must renew the FCC's authority to conduct spectrum auctions in order to make this happen.

"Due to a lack of auction activity in the U.S., other nations have raced ahead in the 5G revolution while the U.S. remains stationary. U.S. lawmakers and regulators must act quickly to reauthorize the FCC's auction authority, provide for additional licensed spectrum and modernize spectrum use to keep pace with the current landscape," AT&T EVP, Federal Regulatory Relations Rhonda Johnson said in a blog post laying out the plan.

Spectrum for the Future agreed with NCTA that the move looks far more like a power grab to give AT&T and others exclusive control over spectrum that is currently being shared among a diverse array of users. Spokesperson Tamara Smith said a framework around

# Corporate Licenses

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exclusive, high-power licensing like that used by China won't work for the U.S. consumer base, military and wireless industry.

"Four years ago, AT&T declined to participate in the CBRS auction alongside the other two major U.S. cellular carriers, and now the company is feeling left out of the private wireless boom and desperate to arrest the new competition driving down prices for U.S. consumers," she said. "Rather than make a good-faith suggestion for improving CBRS, AT&T is simply proposing to restrict others' use of spectrum, short-circuit innovation, threaten military services and undermine America's future global leadership in spectrum sharing technologies."

We'll hear more from stakeholders early next month. The FCC granted a joint motion from the **Wireless Innovation Forum**, the **OnGo Alliance** and **WISPA** in late September to extend the comment period for the proceeding. Comments are now due Nov. 6 and the reply comment deadline has been pushed to Dec. 5.

## BROADBAND LABEL DEADLINE LOOMING FOR SMALL OPERATORS

It's a busy week for small ISPs as they race to meet the **FCC's** final implementation deadline for broadband nutrition labels. Larger ISPs had an earlier deadline of April 10 to display consumer-friendly information on speeds, pricing, additional charges and more, but the Commission granted broadband providers with less than 100,000 subs an additional six months to comply with the order given their smaller organization sizes and the complexity of the implementation. **ACA Connects'** members have smaller workforces, budgets and resources to devote to regulatory compliance while also managing broadband buildouts and obligations to the communities they serve, so the additional time has been much needed. While the labels look simple, creating and displaying them in the way demanded by the FCC requires far more than meets the eye. "It's a complex undertaking that requires cross-coordination across departments and substantial training of personnel to ensure all requirements are met," an ACA Connects spokesman told **CFX**. "ACA Connects has conducted webinars, drafted advisories, hosted briefing calls, written articles, and conducted other initiatives to help our Members understand the broadband label rules and have the know-how to meet the FCC's deadlines." Tomorrow is also the deadline for ISPs of all sizes to make the labels machine-readable, giving third parties the ability to more easily gather and bring together data from the labels for the creation of tools for consumers to more easily compare plans between providers.

## NEWSMAX LIVE ON YOUTUBE TV

**Newsmax** made another addition to its distribution, announcing that it joined the YouTube TV lineup as part of the vMVPD's base

plan. It's a boost for Newsmax as it prepares to go public later this year or in early 2025, having [filed with the SEC](#) last month to conduct an IPO. The network claims the new carriage brings Newsmax to nearly 60 million pay TV homes. YouTube TV's base plan normally runs at \$72.99 per month, but it currently has a deal for new users that takes \$8 off for the first four months.

## FOX NEWS PITCHES DEBATE

**Fox News** is making one last effort to put together a debate between Vice President *Kamala Harris* and former President *Donald Trump*. The network sent letters to both candidates' camps asking to host a debate in Pennsylvania on either Oct. 24 or 27, with *Bret Baier* and *Martha MacCallum* as the two moderators. Included in the letters were proposed rules and a format that mimics **CNN** and **ABC's** debates. The debate would be 90 minutes with two commercial breaks and no opening statements—just two-minute closing statements for each candidate. Candidates would also have their microphones muted when it's the opponent's turn to respond, and there would be no audience in the room.

## GOTHAM IS A GO

The new TVE and DTC home of **MSG Networks** and **YES Network** has launched. The **Gotham Sports** app is now available to sports fans in both of the RSNs' markets. Those who receive both MSG Networks and YES can authenticate via their pay TV provider to access the app at no additional cost, offering access to general programming and live games across the Knicks, Rangers, Devils, Islanders, Sabres, Yankees and Nets. For fans who do not subscribe to a pay TV service that carries MSG or YES, The Gotham Sports App will offer **MSG+** and the YES App for purchase individually, as well as via a combination Gotham Sports package that includes both services for \$359.99 per year or \$41.99 per month. However, Gotham is running a discount through Nov. 14 and has the annual subscription price discounted at \$319.99.

## COMSCORE SETS THE SCORE

**Comscore** is looking to add more insight into what the U.S. consumer's viewing experience is like nowadays, and it's teaming up with media expert *Evan Shapiro* in what they're dubbing "The Score Report." It reports on the share of viewership time spent to advertising on TV in the U.S. on a household level, spanning cable, broadcast and streaming. Comscore asked Shapiro to evaluate that ad exposure metric and offer his take, finding that traditional TV still has much of TV's ad-supported viewing with broadcast accounting for 43.7%, cable 43.3% and streaming 13.1%. Note: vMVPDs are labeled under TV. Broadcasters accounted for more

than 40% of all ad viewing in 1H24, but **YouTube** tied with **Fox News** with 4.6% of ad exposure, which is indicative of YouTube's rise from a social video platform to a mainstream entertainment service. Among streamers, **Disney** took 19.1% of total TV ad views for 1H24. **NBCU** followed with 17% and **Paramount** at 16.8%, while **Fox** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** loomed with 12.9% each. **Netflix** and **Prime Video** recorded .5% of ad share. **Tubi** was the leader in the FAST group, with an ad share of 1.4%—over 250% more than both Netflix and Prime Video and 40% bigger than both streamers combined.

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## AWARDS

**NCTA** can add to its trophy case after winning the 2024 Greater Good Award's "Better Future" category for its 20-minute documentary "Every Last Mile." The awards seek to shine a light on the work being done around social causes, their impacts and those working toward a greater good. This year's Greater Good nominees also included 7-Eleven's work with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and Seed Health's commitment to improving the planet.

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## PROGRAMMING

**Monumental Sports Network** will have 20 live alternate broadcasts for the upcoming Capitals and Wizards seasons on the overflow channel **M2**. That includes five Spanish-language broadcasts for both the Capitals and Wizards, with the first one set for Tuesday's Capitals game against the Golden Knights at 7pm. The Wizards' first Spanish-language telecast will take place Nov. 2 during the NBA Mexico City Game against the Heat at 9:30pm. Other alternate broadcast plans include shows led by local radio hosts and prominent former players. – Sports icon and current Colorado football coach *Deion Sanders* is getting a talk show on **Tubi**. "We Got Time Today," hosted by Sanders and *Rocsi Diaz*, will premiere next month and have 20 one-hour episodes released on subsequent Tuesdays. The show will span topics like news, culture, entertainment and sports. – The **WNBA** Finals are set to begin Thursday between the New York Liberty and Minnesota Lynx. **ESPN** will have Game 1 at 8pm, and **ABC** will take Game 2 on Sunday at 3pm. Game 3 will return to ESPN next Wednesday at 8pm, and if necessary, Games 4 and 5 will be on ESPN at 8pm on Oct. 18 and 20, respectively.

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## PEOPLE

**Vantiva** has settled on its next CEO, naming *Tim O'Loughlin* to the position and co-opting him as a Director of the board. He replaces *Lars Ihlen*, who's been Interim CEO since August. Ihlen had temporarily replaced *Luis Martinez-Amago* after his two-year stint. O'Loughlin has been with the company since January when he became SVP of Vantiva's Americas Customer Unit. Prior to that, he spent 18 years in senior leadership roles at **Arris** and **Pace**, which were both recently acquired by Vantiva. O'Loughlin will work out of Vantiva's offices in Paris and Norcross, Georgia. Ihlen will remain the company's CFO.

## What We're Listening to

### "Killer Innovations with Phil McKinney"

CableLabs CEO Phil McKinney and his bus were stationed in Atlanta for the recent SCTE TechExpo 24, so it's fitting his recent "Killer Innovations" [podcast episode](#) was centered on the idea of how to navigate new waves of innovation. It's also apt he had longtime colleague Harry Beane join him on the bus—which serves as McKinney's podcast studio—as a guest considering the two have embarked on a few technological endeavors like launching the first GSM mobile carrier in the U.S. Omnipoint (now T-Mobile) as well as the first point-to-multipoint carrier Teligent, which was expanded to 12 countries.

While McKinney and Beane open the episode by discussing the trials and tribulations of being grandparents, they tie the sentiment into how the current younger generations are set up to use their imaginations. McKinney sees an ongoing battle to have kids avoid simply consuming technology or various forms of content and instead choose to be creative themselves. He also expressed worry about shortening attention spans and how that could limit the amount of knowledge one can consume.

"I jokingly tell my team I work with as the CEO of CableLabs that senior leaders inside of the organizations tend to have the attention span of a gnat—me included," McKinney said. "You got so much stuff going on, but you see it all the way down through kids these days. Deep thinking is just not a skill set for a lot of people. And how do you teach that? How do you reveal to people the value of truly understanding [something]?"

McKinney has been pondering the topic of creativity among kids for quite some time. He even [addressed](#) that very subject 13 years ago in a series of videos. Nowadays, his analysis is it's primarily up to the parents rather than the school system to influence and encourage creativity.

On the other side of the innovation equation is problem-solving. Beane recounted watching his granddaughter attempt to climb up a tree, but after struggling and asking for help, Beane suggested stepping back and taking a "big picture" look at the task at hand.

"You know you're going to fail," Beane said about approaching innovation. "The problem with today's businesses, if you fail at something that is treated as sometimes an extreme negative, [that] will then mean 'I'm not going to try again.'"

That room to fail opens the door for innovators to continue trying to find the next breakthrough. McKinney said he learned how to fail—and subsequently learn from failures—from his time as a Boy Scout. "Every 14, 15-year-old kid planning a campout menu is going to screw up. But let me tell you, ask them when they're 40 what happened at Boy Scouts, they'll remember that screw-up and what they learned from it," McKinney joked.

– Noah Ziegler



## Think about that for a minute...

### Picking Winners

Commentary by Steve Effros

This is a tough one. I'm going to endeavor to explore the policy difficulties we face with new telecommunications technologies by looking at some of the decisions of old. There's no easy answer here. The issue: should the government, whether legislature or regulatory body, pick a "winner" when there are competing technologies seeking dominance in the marketplace?

Notice that I'm only talking about those technologies that lend themselves to becoming "natural monopolies," not those that can openly compete side by side. A good example of what I'm talking about was the battle over a standard for the nascent technology of "color television." The FCC had to deal with this one back in the early 1950s. CBS had developed the first "color television" technology (using a spinning wheel) in the late 1940s. Robert Sarnoff's RCA developed an electronic technology somewhat later. Here was the problem; the CBS technology created a better picture, but was not compatible with the black and white (primarily RCA) televisions already in the marketplace, RCA's color design was compatible.

Do you go with the "better" technology or the one that's clearly more marketable and creates less of a strain on the early adopters of television, who would have had to abandon their black and white sets if they wanted to go to the CBS system? To be sure, the Commission could have punted and let both systems use the government controlled spectrum and let them fight it out in the marketplace. They didn't do that. They picked a "winner" in 1950, recommending CBS. RCA sued. The Supreme Court affirmed the FCC authority in 1951, but quality issues and the Korean War along with a lot of political and technological infighting mucked things up until 1953 when the RCA standard became dominant. And so it goes. Getting picked the initial "winner" didn't work out terribly well for CBS.

Jump forward to the late 1970s. Yet another technical war, this one between Sony's Betamax and JVC's VHS video recorders. Once again, incompatible technical standards, and once again, had there been a "referee," the issue would have been between the better picture (Betamax) versus the less expensive to produce

VHS machines. JVC also had an advantage because the producers of programming in Hollywood preferred VHS because it was less demanding (and thus cheaper) to film for. The marketplace decided this one. VHS became dominant.

But it's just not that simple. Take the recent battle of cell phones between Apple and just about everyone else. Apple introduced the most successful market dominant "smartphones" at first. Then Samsung and ultimately an entire alliance of other companies put out "Android" operating system phones. Pick your poison. That's still the case except for the power connector! Both consumers and ultimately regulatory authorities (in Europe, not the US) got fed up with having to have incompatible wires and connectors to power up their various phones. Apple refused to accommodate the apparent market demand for a single standard. They've now been required to do so. The "USB C" connector is now essentially the worldwide standard for powering new electronic devices. In this case the "market" failed, the regulators picked a winner, and it would appear consumers won.

So where should we go with all this? Clearly picking a winner in the early phases of the introduction of new technology is a bad idea. "Fiber," for instance, in the construction of wired broadband systems was a great technology, but "fiber to the home" turns out to be unnecessary in HFC systems, and needlessly expensive. Requiring it in new builds is a questionable government demand.

What about satellite for cell phones? The FCC hasn't considered it competitive for broadband use, but it's now the savior in hurricane ravaged North Carolina! The takeaway; keep your thumb off the scale as long as you can.



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*(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.)*

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