

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Level Up: Wireless Industry Organizes to Take Down ‘Cableopoly’

The wireless industry is taking its fight for exclusive licensed spectrum to another level, launching a coalition lobbying for access to new swaths of the limited resource.

It's called Spectrum for Broadband Competition and its founding members are **CTIA** and **5G Americas**. Companies that are members of one or both of those groups include **AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, Apple** and **Ericsson**.

Spectrum for Broadband Competition also launched its first campaign Monday dubbed “End the Cableopoly.” It aims to put forth a message that the cable industry has long worked to undermine competition from fixed wireless access products, primarily by depriving wireless providers of the spectrum they need to expand availability and capacity of those services.

As evidence of cable companies attempting to block wireless players from accessing new spectrum, the group pointed to the launch of **Spectrum for the Future** in 2022. Spectrum for the Future counts **Charter, Cox, Comcast, Public Knowledge, WISPA, the Dynamic Spectrum Alliance** and more among its membership. Notably, Comcast is also a member of CTIA.

Spectrum for Broadband Competition also sprinkled its website with data supporting the strong customer response to the availability of fixed wireless access, claiming 99% of all net new broadband subscribers over the past three years chose 5G.

“While the Cableopoly works to restrict the supply of spec-

trum that could be used to compete against them, cable companies are also repeatedly warehousing and flipping spectrum that could be used to serve consumers,” Spectrum for Broadband Competition said on its [website](#). “Cable has repeatedly chosen to sell spectrum at huge profits instead of investing in the infrastructure needed to deploy robust wireless service nationwide. While ‘unlikely to need’ spectrum when they sell it, they still demand more at every turn.”

The wireless players have targeted the lower 3 GHz, 7 GHz and 8 GHz bands for future full-power use. Cable operators would also like that spectrum, but they'd like to see spectrum sharing mechanisms like those used for CBRS to be utilized. The cable industry has also lobbied for spectrum to bolster WiFi services.

NCTA fired back against the coalition's claims, saying that instead of misleading the public, the companies involved should focus on building out the rural areas in their “Swiss cheese” 5G networks.

“Big Mobile's sham coalition is nothing more than a smoke-screen to hide the fact that today's wireless robber barons want to advance policies that will allow them to hoard more public spectrum for their exclusive use, denying access to other innovators and wrecking national security in the process,” NCTA said in a statement. “It clearly galls Big Mobile that the cable industry is rapidly bringing real choice and savings in wireless service, saving consumers millions of dollars every month.”

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SUPER BOWL WINS FOR STARLINK, T-MOBILE AND TUBI

Those that watched Super Bowl LIX for the commercials may have noticed a presence from **T-Mobile** and **Starlink**. The two announced their combined service using specially configured satellites with Direct-to-Cell capabilities to deliver text messages to cell phones in mobile dead zones is now in public beta. Most notably in the spot was that everyone on any carrier, including **AT&T** and **Verizon**, will be able to test the service for free before its full launch in July. At that point, T-Mobile Starlink will be included at no extra cost on T-Mobile's Go5G Next plans. For customers of other mobile providers, it will be available for \$20/month per line. In the future, the service will also be able to deliver picture messages as well as data and voice calls. "We will be interested to see if AT&T and Verizon launch with similar pricing. We suspect they will," **New Street Research** said in a note. "Both companies will launch something more akin to T-Mobile's service in conjunction with **AST SpaceMobile** at some point in future. AST launched its first five satellites last September. They received permission to start commercial testing from the **FCC** in January. We haven't seen dates announced for a launch yet, but a ChatGPT query suggests a [probable] date in early 2026 (not considered a reliable source; we are working fast because there is football to watch)." The spot made an impression with measurement platform **EDO** claiming it drove the greatest consumer engagement of the Super Bowl ads, driving 12.6x as much engagement as the median Super Bowl LIX spot. – Also having a big night was **Tubi**, which was celebrating its first time airing football's biggest night. According to measurement firm **Phenix**, Tubi's stream lagged the least behind the on-field action, lagging only 26 seconds behind. That was far better than the next best streamer, the **NFL+** mobile app, at 51 seconds. Fubo was the furthest behind with its stream coming in 78 seconds behind. Viewers experience a wide range of lag times, but Tubi also had the smallest range of lag for viewers on the same platform. The FAST platform clocked in with a 39-second range for viewers while **YouTube TV** recorded the widest range with a 57-second range of lag times.

FOX ACQUIRES RED SEAT VENTURES

Fox Corp. is preparing to make a splash with its DTC product by the end of the year, and it made a move toward that Monday with the acquisition of Red Seat Ventures. The company teams up with talent to build up media businesses and brands with its creators generating more than 200 million monthly downloads and views on podcasts and other content. Its clients include some with Fox backgrounds including *Megyn Kelly*, *Tucker Carlson* and *Bill O'Reilly*.

The media company will operate as a standalone entity within the **Tubi** Media Group with Tubi Media Group CEO *Paul Cheesbrough* becoming Chairman, Red Seat Ventures. The Red Seat Ventures executive team, including founding partners *Chris Balfe* and *Kevin Balfe*, will continue to lead and operate the business.

FUBO SPORTS GOING OVER THE AIR

The surging trend of live sports being broadcast over-the-air continues as **Fubo** revealed it's distributing FAST channel **Fubo Sports** on OTA stations in more than 100 markets across the U.S. including New York, L.A. and Chicago. Fubo Sports is now available to over 12 million traditional TV households as OTA diginets while also remaining available as a FAST channel on the vMVPD and other FAST platforms. Featured programming spans sports like the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship and the World Poker Tour, in addition to studio shows and documentaries. Fubo Sports also broadcasts select live boxing and MMA events.

LOUISIANA WANTS IN ON AI

The **Louisiana Economic Development** launched a new division called Louisiana Innovation, or LA.IO, to help the state be a leader in developing high-growth technology startup companies. Its first initiative will be the creation of the Louisiana Growth Fund, coming with initial federal funding of \$50 million that can be used to establish and scale startups across the Pelican State. LA.IO will also develop the Louisiana Institute of Artificial Intelligence, which will be the home base for statewide AI strategies, research, development, commercialization, policy and more. Among the Institute's first tasks will be to upgrade 5,000 Louisiana small businesses with AI tools that'll allow them to scale their business.

STUDYING FIBER'S IMPACT

The impacts fiber broadband has on communities stretch far and wide, and that can be seen in areas like Central Virginia over the past 10 years. The **Fiber Broadband Association** analyzed the economic effects that the technology has had on Charlottesville, Virginia, and its surrounding areas, which first got fiber in 2014 after Blue Ridge InternetWorks (now **Ting**) installed 35 miles of fiber. Over a decade later, Ting is joined by **Lumos**, **Comcast** and **Brightspeed** as providers that Charlottesville customers can choose from. FBA found that high-speed fiber broadband accounted for around 35% (2,064) of Charlottesville's private sector job growth between 2015 and 2019. Specifically, Charlottesville has seen a nearly 40% jump in jobs across the professional, scientific and technical industries. The specific impacts on broadband from the pandemic

are still being evaluated, but FBA said the post-COVID efforts have focused on broadband adoption rather than infrastructure availability. Fiber has impacted the housing market as well, with it contributing to an estimated \$4 million annual increase in housing values in the Charlottesville area from 2015-2023.

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HOW DO CEOS FEEL ABOUT AI?

With AI finding its way into all corners of business operations, CEOs are watching the technology with a magnifying glass. Cisco unveiled a new study titled "Cisco Live," showing that while four in five CEOs recognize the potential benefits AI has and plan to integrate AI into operations, 74% fear it'll hinder decisions in the boardroom and 58% worry AI could hinder growth. Over 70% of CEOs are concerned about losing ground to competitors and missing opportunities because of IT and infrastructure gaps. However, when it comes to factors getting in the way of AI implementation, 40% of CEOs say skills and knowledge are the biggest barriers, 35% indicate infrastructure limitations, 34% cite security concerns and 33% point to budget constraints. That doesn't mean that 53% of CEOs worry that a lack of investment in AI will cost them a competitive advantage. To help with preparation of the further implementation of AI, 61% of CEOs are investing in AI education while 55% are expanding data capacity, 53% are upgrading their network, 51% are upskilling workforce and 49% are enhancing security. Cisco surveyed 2,503 CEOs from companies with 250+ employees worldwide.

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FIBER FRENZY

The Alabama Fiber Network wrapped up the next phase in its state-wide middle-mile network. AFN now provides service to 60 counties with 3,406 active miles of network, but points of presence have been constructed in 62 locations and three more counties will be online soon. That nearly fulfills the \$82.5 million middle-mile grant from Alabama's allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funds. AFN's network delivers at least 400 Gbps of capacity and scalability of up to 24 Tbps. – All West Communications is finished with the engineering and design work for its expansion in Rock Springs and Green River, Wyoming. Up next is the construction phase that'll begin this Spring before All West launches multi-gig speeds of up to 8 Gbps for residential customers and up to 10 Gbps for businesses. All West has served the Sweetwater County area since 2017 after acquiring Sweetwater Cable.

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SUPER BOWL FIGURES

As we wait for the full Super Bowl LIX viewership numbers to come out, Samba TV shed some light on the number of households that tuned in for the Eagles' dominant win over the Chiefs. Approximately 37.1 million U.S. households watched the Big Game, down 5% from 2024 but in line with 2022 and 2023. The halftime show featuring rapper Kendrick Lamar also

declined YOY after having 28.8 million households tune in—a 4% drop compared to last year's performance from Usher. Plus, 311,000 households turned on the TV only to watch the halftime show and not the game. The Eagles' blowout didn't help with retaining viewers either. The audience peaked during the halftime show, but the percentage of total viewership fell to 70% by the end of the game. For comparison, last year's game finished with 89% of the peak audience. The lopsided game did help Eagles fans fire up their devices. OpenVault reports that broadband usage for systems in Pennsylvania was 18% greater than the average for the previous 12 Sundays by the end of the game.

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DOING GOOD

Fiber provider Brightspeed is sending a \$10,000 grant to the Gryphon Elite Esports team at Rocky Mount High School in North Carolina. The grant will be used to upgrade the team's equipment, expand student participation and improve the overall program.

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PROGRAMMING

Cineverse is extending its partnership with Davis-Panzer Productions in a deal that secures the digital rights to multiple titles from the "Highlander" film and TV franchise, as well as additional titles from the Davis-Panzer portfolio. Cineverse will have the rights to nine movie and TV series titles for its streaming services, including the original Highlander film, all six seasons of "Highlander: The Series" and its spinoff "Highlander: The Raven," "Cat Chaser," "O'Hara's Wife" and more.

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PEOPLE

John Nallen has been elevated to President/COO of Fox Corp. Nallen, who previously served as COO, also signed a long-term employment agreement through June 2028. He first joined the Fox family in 1995 when he was hired at News Corporation from Arthur Andersen where he was a partner leading its Media and Entertainment practice. – Jordan Bartow was named GM, North America for Quickplay as the company looks toward its next phase of market expansion and innovation. He joins from Google Cloud, where he helped lead strategic initiatives like accelerating AI adoption for global media, entertainment and sports companies, such as working with LIV Golf to create media and digital fan engagement strategies. Bartow spent three years at Oracle prior to his five-year stint under the Google umbrella. – David Prodian is joining FCC Commissioner Nathan Simington's office as Senior Legal Advisor while Sara Rahmjoo is set to become Legal Advisor. Prior to this, Prodian was an Attorney Advisor in the Competition Policy Division of the Wireline Competition Bureau. Meanwhile, Rahmjoo was Simington's Policy Advisor and Confidential Assistant. She joined the Commission as an intern for Simington in 2023.