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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Senators Push FCC on RHC Program](#)

More than a dozen Senate Democrats pressed the Federal Communications Commission Friday to increase funding for and improve operations for the Rural Health Care Program. In recent months, demand for telehealth services nationwide has skyrocketed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fueling increased costs and stretching the capacity of health care providers.

[FCC E-Rate Program Could Help](#)

The Federal Communications Commission has promoted several emergency measures to boost broadband connectivity during the coronavirus pandemic, which has required millions of people to rely on inadequate at-home internet connections for work and school. But without an immediate expansion of the agency's E-Rate program...students around the country will continually be locked out of their virtual classrooms, FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel said.

[USAC Considering HUBB Upgrade](#)

The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is considering an upgrade to the high cost broadband portal (HCBP). The organization wants to add a higher level of automation to the management of data submitted by carriers that receive Universal Service Fund (USF) money to help cover the cost of providing service in rural areas that are costly to serve.

[New Mid-Band Spectrum Auction?](#)

The White House and the Department of Defense on Monday announced a plan to free up for wireless broadband and 5G uses spectrum in the 3450-3550 MHz band that currently is used by the military.

[Carriers Balk at Drive-Testing](#)

The nation's biggest mobile network operators have loudly voiced support for the FCC's broadband mapping project, which seeks to obtain clear and detailed information on the extent of cellular coverage in the US.



Market Watch

[Frontier Bankruptcy Plan Approved](#)

[Analysis: COVID-19 Impact on Revenues](#)

[Broadband Monopoly Report](#)

[MO Company Receives ReConnect Grant](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Facebook Pushes for Data Portability

Facebook Inc (FB.O) on Friday pushed for legislation that makes it easier for users to transfer photos and videos to a rival tech platform, in comments it sent to the Federal Trade Commission ahead of a hearing on the topic on Sept. 22. Data portability - considered a potential remedy for large technology companies whose control of social media material makes it harder for smaller rivals to get started - has become a key part of the antitrust debate in the United States and Europe.

Data Sources for Tracking Economy

Policymakers, economists and investors are turning increasingly to so-called high-frequency data to get a more timely snapshot of the U.S. economy during the fast-moving coronavirus pandemic than traditional monthly and quarterly indicators can provide. These run the gamut from long-established government reports such as the Labor Department's weekly unemployment benefits figures - which in the latest week shot back above 1 million new claims...

SpaceX Starlink Broadband Speeds

A Reddit forum for SpaceX's Starlink has revealed the first speeds for the new satellite broadband service. SpaceX has already launched hundreds of low earth orbit (LEO) satellites that will power this next generation satellite broadband service. The speeds look promising, but we must recognize that Starlink is in pre-beta, so speeds always look impressive when at this stage of a deployment. Using the Ookla Speedtest app, Starlink beta users found speeds as high as 60 Mbps downstream and 17.7 Mbps upstream. Latency was as low as 31 milliseconds.

FBI & CISA Warn of Vishing Attacks

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) have issued a joint security advisory on Thursday, warning about an ongoing wave of vishing attacks targeting the US private sector. Vishing, or voice phishing, is a form of social engineering where criminals call victims to obtain desired information, usually posing as other persons.

Google 6 GHz WiFi Test Questions

A redacted FCC document reveals a request for a massive and secretive Google 6 GHz Wi-Fi testing program. Google cites the "highly sensitive and confidential" nature of this program that aims to leverage unlicensed wireless spectrum that the FCC has big plans for. The FCC filing was first noticed by Business Insider. Google is asking permission to test the technology in 26 cities across 17 states. It's asking for confidential treatment for the testing due to its "significant commercial value."



IN FOCUS **FCC Releases** **Broadband** **Deployment NOI**

The FCC recently released a [Notice of Inquiry](#) into its 16th annual broadband deployment report. This is the annual proceeding that the FCC uses to determine whether advanced telecommunications capability is being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely manner." For the past three years, the answer offered by the Commission (or at least the Republican-appointed members) has been "yes."

For the upcoming report, the Commission proposes few changes on what data to use, how to interpret the data, and what conclusion to draw. First, the current definition of "advanced telecommunications capability" of 25/3 Mbps for fixed service is proposed, as is the current speed for mobile broadband service (5/1 Mbps LTE). The Commission proposes to treat fixed and mobile service as complimentary, and not competing, for purposes of finding whether a customer has access to service or not. Finally, Form 477 data for the years 2015-2019 will be used in informing the FCC's annual broadband deployment finding.

Somewhat unique to this year's inquiry (hopefully) is a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of broadband services. Commissioner Rosenworcel makes the point that evidence is plentiful about the problems with availability—"the current crisis has exposed the hard truth that our nation's digital divide is very real and very big." To that end, the NOI requests comment on a number of COVID-19 related issues, such as if and how the pandemic might affect deployment in 2020 and beyond, and if there an adoption increase reflecting the newfound need of many people.

Tribal lands, as is customary, receives specific attention with the

FCC's long recognized need to promote and encourage the availability of broadband in those areas. While the FCC claimed in the [2020 report](#) that 72.1% of the Tribal lands population has access to 25/3 Mbps fixed and 5/1 Mbps mobile service, the truth is only 45.1% in rural Tribal areas in the lower 48 states have access. As a result, the NOI seeks comment on whether deployment still lags in Tribal areas, and if there are specific barriers to deployment.

The FCC does recognize the inherent problems with relying on Form 477 for its deployment analysis. The main problem is, and this is no secret, the census block-level "one-served, all-served" issue—"our analysis likely overstates to some degree the coverage experienced by some consumers, especially in large or irregularly-shaped census blocks, causing the report to possibly overstate the deployment of fixed and mobile services." Commissioner Rosenworcel puts it in more stark terms:

"The result is data that systematically overstates service across the country. By how much? Consider that other studies have shown that the true number of people without broadband access is 42 million or even as high as 162 million."

The 2020 report, due 180 days from the NOI release, is expected to result in the same conclusion, although the Commissioner makeup will likely be different. Interested parties can provide input on September 18 and reply on October 5.



Alexicon at Work

Broadband mapping is again front and center, as is investigating ways to mitigate the adverse effects of missing ACAM (and cost-based) support deployment obligation milestones. We are currently working with national organizations on both issues.



Questions? Comments?
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