

August 6, 2021

- ▶ RDOF WINNER DEFAULTS
- ▶ **NTIA CONNECTING MINORITY COMMUNITIES**
- ▶ FCC RELEASES FINAL COST CATALOG ...1
- ▶ ECF DELIVERY DATE SET
- ▶ LUMEN TO SELL NETWORK ASSETS
- ▶ BROADBAND CUSTOMER SURVEY
- ▶ **TELCO AND ELECTRIC COOP PARTNERSHIP**
- ▶ CORNING ON FIBER MOMENTUM ...1
- ▶ SENATE BILL ON CYBER SECURITY
- ▶ **KASEYA RANSOMWARE ATTACK**
- ▶ RANSOMWARE 1-2 PUNCH
- ▶ **NTCA REPORT: PRECISION AGRICULTURE**
- ▶ STARLINK SPEEDS REACH 97 MBPS ...2

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INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

RDOF Winner Defaults

The telecom industry rejoiced when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced last week it was prepared to release the first batch of funding — some \$311 million — from the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Phase I auction. But in the same breath the agency revealed a long list of winning bidders have already defaulted on their obligations and hinted many more could soon follow suit. So, where exactly do things stand?

NTIA Connecting Minority Communities

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today posted a Notice of Funding Opportunity that begins the application process for the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program that will invest \$268 million in broadband for minority communities.

FCC Releases Final Cost Catalog

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) has released its final Cost Catalog for the supply chain Reimbursement Program, also known as Rip and Replace. The Cost Catalog provides the eligible expenses and estimated costs of equipment and services available for reimbursement by qualified providers of advanced communications services to remove, replace, and destroy Huawei and ZTE equipment in their networks.

ECF Delivery Date Set

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) has released a public notice establishing a service delivery date for the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF). The public notice sets June 30, 2022 as the service delivery date for equipment and other non-recurring service funding requests for the ECF Program's initial filing window, if the equipment and services have not been received at the time the funding request is made.



Market Watch

- [Lumen to Sell Network Assets](#)
- [Broadband Consumer Survey](#)
- [Telco and Electric Coop Partnership](#)
- [Corning on Fiber Momentum](#)



Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Kaseya Ransomware Attack

A ransomware attack in July that paralyzed as many as 1,500 organizations by compromising tech-management software from a company called Kaseya has set off a race among criminals looking for similar vulnerabilities, cyber security experts said. An affiliate of a top Russian-speaking ransomware gang known as REvil used two gaping flaws in software from Florida-based Kaseya to break into about 50 managed services providers (MSPs) that used its products, investigators said.

Ransomware 1-2 Punch

The adoption of double-extortion attacks against companies in ransomware campaigns is a rising trend in the space, researchers warn. Ransomware variants are typically programs that aim to prevent users from accessing systems and any data stored on infected devices or networks. After locking victims out, files and drives will often be encrypted -- and in some cases, backups, too -- in order to extort a payment from the user.

NTCA Report: Precision Agriculture

When it comes to precision agriculture, broadband is moving beyond being nice to have; instead, it is fast becoming a “must have,” according to a new report from NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. The 28-page report, titled “From Fiber to Field: The Role of Rural Broadband in Emerging Agricultural Technology,” is well researched and in addition to explaining various types of precision agriculture, it includes a wide range of data points about the benefits of the technology.

Starlink Speeds Reach 97 Mbps

Speedtest Intelligence’s deep dive report on satellite providers’ speeds during the second quarter of 2021 easily gave top honors in satellite broadband in the U.S. to SpaceX’s Starlink service, with median download speed approaching, but still short of, fixed broadband providers in the U.S.

Senate Bill on Cyber Security

The Senate Homeland Security Committee on Wednesday advanced legislation aimed at making it easier for state and local governments to share information and receive intelligence from federal cybersecurity officials, including the Department of Homeland Security’s 24/7 monitoring unit. The Act... is aimed at giving states and localities access to DHS’s cyber resources, including security tools, policies and procedures developed by...

IN FOCUS

Infrastructure Bill— Broadband Provisions

The United States Senate is currently considering a “bi-partisan” infrastructure [bill](#) that includes ~\$62 billion for broadband-related items. If and once the Senate passes the bill, it will be up to the House to agree to it, propose changes, or reject outright. As of now, there’s a decent chance the Senate will pass it, but passage in the House is up in the air.

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program—This would create a \$42.45 billion grant program, administered by NTIA, that would be allocated to the states based on an application process. States can award subgrants to entities, including broadband providers, that build networks, connect anchor institutions, conduct broadband mapping, and create broadband adoption programs, among other uses.

- * Minimum allocation to states = \$100k
- * Allocation is based on unserved locations in high cost areas
- * Unserved location—lacks 25/3 Mbps service
- * Underserved locations—speeds >25/3 but <100/20
- * Service availability determined from Broadband DATA Act maps (i.e., FCC BSLF-based maps)
- * Subgrants must be awarded via competitive application process
- * Priority = unserved—underserved—anchor institutions
- * Projects are given priority based on service to high-poverty counties, speed of service
- * Subgrantees must deploy networks capable of 100/20 Mbps speeds
- * 25% matching requirement, except in high cost areas (can be waived)

Digital Equity Act—Would establish grant programs, administered by NTIA, to help states with digital equity plans and other digital inclusion efforts. The total amounts would be \$250m for the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program and \$240m for a State Capacity Grant Program.

Report on USF—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the FCC is to commence a proceeding to evaluate the implications of this Act and the amendments made by this Act on how the Commission should achieve the universal service goals for broadband.

Middle Mile—Creates another program to be administered by NTIA that would provide \$1b in funding for middle mile projects. The projects would need to be completed within 5 years, and federal funding would cover a maximum of 70% of project costs.

Broadband Affordability—The Emergency Broadband Benefit program would be extended, is renamed the Affordability Connectivity Program that is extended beyond the current COVID national emergency, and injects \$14.2 billion in additional funding.

USDA Funding—The Act would provide an additional \$1.926b for the ReConnect fund, and would make some program changes. Also adds an additional \$2b for distance learning/telehealth and \$74m for the broadband loan/grant program.

Reminders

- ⇒ **Reassigned Numbers Database.** All carriers receiving NANP numbering resources are currently required to maintain records of the most recent date each number was permanently disconnected and must age telephone numbers for at least 45 days after disconnection and before reassignment. This requirement became effective for small providers on January 27, 2021.
- * **Beginning October 15, 2021,** Small providers will be required to report to the online [reassigned numbers database](#) on the 15th of every month



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