

December 10, 2021

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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Broadband Maps Still a Problem](#)

Washington is finally tackling one of the biggest obstacles to closing the nation's digital divide: identifying the broadband dead zones where millions of Americans lack fast internet service. But that's coming too late for the broadband gold rush of 2021.

[Senate Confirms Rosenworcel](#)

The Senate voted 68-31 to confirm Federal Communications Commission Chair Jessica Rosenworcel, the first woman to hold that title, to another five-year term, narrowly avoiding a Republican majority at the agency once her current term was set to expire at the end of the year.

[Social Media Haunts Nominees](#)

Republicans angling to stymie President Joe Biden's tech and telecom agenda are turning to an increasingly familiar tactic — dredging up his nominees' mean tweets.

[Bill Would Reform USF Contributions](#)

A bipartisan bill introduced in the Senate would expand the USF contribution base. The USF includes four programs, which fund rural broadband and telecom deployments; low-income broadband; telecom, school and library connectivity; and a rural telehealth program.

[NTCA Petition on Performance Testing](#)

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA), has asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to “waive limited aspects” of its Connect America Fund (CAF) broadband performance measurement requirements.

[Focus on Bridging Digital Divide](#)

After the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the deep broadband divide across the country, lawmakers on Wednesday said the recently passed infrastructure bill will connect many communities that struggled as much of daily life moved online.



Market Watch

[Fixed Wireless Coming to NC County](#)

[Google, Small ISPs Deliver Highest Speeds](#)

[Fiber Permitting Process](#)

[Median American Considers 50/5 as Broadband](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

IoT Still Under Attack

With IoT botnets continuing to cause problems and attacks on critical infrastructure an ongoing menace, Microsoft has conducted research to find out whether edge network devices are a threat to enterprise systems. The Microsoft-commissioned survey, conducted by the Ponemon Institute, looked at Internet of Things (IoT) and Operational Technology (OT) devices and what security threats they posed to IT systems that were once separated from edge network devices. OT includes devices and software used to monitor and control industrial equipment, bringing a physical element to cybersecurity.

Old Malware, New Tricks

Qakbot, a top trojan for stealing bank credentials, has in the past year started delivering ransomware and this new business model is making it harder for network defenders to detect what is and isn't a Qakbot attack.

Remote Working Job Surveillance

Remote-monitoring and surveillance tools could devastate employee relations unless efforts are made to put more power into the hands of workers, the author of a report by the European Commission's Joint Research Council (JRC) warns. Kirstie Ball, who spent five months compiling the JRC's extensive Electronic Monitoring and Surveillance in the Workplace report, says an increase in employee surveillance threatens to undermine trust and commitment to work amongst staff who are left in the dark about why and how data on them is gathered.

Effects of Amazon's Cloud Outage

Major companies using Amazon.com's data services got a painful lesson this week about how the complexity and market dominance of the company's cloud unit make it difficult to back up their data with other providers, analysts and experts told Reuters.

RDOF Winner on Gig Fixed Wireless

Resound Networks is seeing speeds of 1 Gbps downstream per customer over distances of five miles using fixed wireless equipment in rural deployments in the 5 GHz band, said Resound Networks CEO Tyson Curtis in an interview with Telecompetitor. To achieve this performance, the company has been deploying equipment from Tarana Wireless for about seven to eight months, Curtis said, adding "we usually open four to five markets a month."

IN FOCUS

Federal Broadband Funding

Federal broadband deployment funding is seemingly at historic highs, with numerous programs either under way or ready for implementation. Awards from two NTIA-administered programs—Broadband Infrastructure and Tribal Broadband Connectivity—are pending, and USDA's ReConnect round 3 program is currently accepting applications. The recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) contains around \$65 billion in broadband funding (see 11-12-21 Alexicon Insider), and there is still American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money floating around, some of which is being targeted for broadband deployment. Following is a brief update on these sources of funding.

ARPA. Some portions of ARPA funding (the \$195.3b [State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#) and the \$10b [Capital Projects Fund](#)) can be used for [broadband expansion](#), but cannot be accessed directly by service providers. Instead, state, local and Tribal governments decide how to allocate the funds, some of which relate to infrastructure improvement. There is a December 27, 2021 deadline for states and Tribal governments to apply for the CPF funds, and then a September 24, 2022 deadline for states to submit a grant plan. Funding is expected to start flowing some time during 2022 (much depends on state and Tribal government actions).

ReConnect Round 3. As mentioned in the 10/22/21 email distribution, the USDA's [ReConnect program](#) was funded for a third round to the tune of \$1.15b, which is nearly equal to funding for rounds 1 and 2 combined (and it received another \$1.926b via the IIJA). The biggest changes made in round 3 include increasing the speed necessary for areas to be eligible (90% of an area has to lack access to 100/20 Mbps speeds; round 2's minimum speed threshold was 10/1), funded

networks must be capable of 100/100 Mbps speeds, and the addition of a new 100% grant category for Tribal areas and proposed areas containing 75% "Socially Vulnerable Communities." The application window opened November 24 and closes on February 22. Given an optimistic 3-6 month review process, awards are expected to be announced sometime during third or fourth quarter 2022.

IIJA BEAD. The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program adopted in the IIJA includes \$42.5b for states to fund networks, connect anchor institutions, conduct mapping, collect data, and address broadband adoption. One issue is that NTIA cannot disburse funds to the state before Broadband DATA Act-compliant maps are implemented by the FCC (i.e., the DODC and location fabric-based maps). NTIA is to issue guidance during 2Q22, but consider the broadband map issue, funding may not be awarded until late 2022/early 2023, and then the states have to award funding to other entities, including service providers.

There are other [funding sources](#) out there, but the three mentioned above are the most comprehensive (and not administered by the FCC—a subject for another day). With all this funding awaiting disbursement, it will be important to keep an eye on the status, especially on the [\\$42.5b in the BEAD](#) going to the states.

Reminders

- * **Starting on September 28, 2021**, intermediate providers and voice service providers were prohibited from accepting calls directly from a voice service provider if that voice service provider's filing does not appear in the [Robocall Mitigation Database](#).
- * **Broadband Performance Pre-Testing** begins 1Q22 for ACAM II, CAF BLS, and CAF II auction support recipients. The first report is due to USAC on April 7, 2022.
- * The **EBB transitions to the ACP** starting on 12/31/21



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