January 6, 2022

Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

Broadband Maps—Not Until 2023?

The federal government is making an unprecedented amount of funding available for broadband deployments but still doesn't know where broadband is and isn't available. And according to broadband mapping experts on a webcast yesterday, we are unlikely to have an accurate broadband map until 2023.

NTIA Broadband Mapping Project

Two more states and two U.S. territories are now participating in the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM) project. Joining the project are Nevada, Louisiana, American Samoa and Puerto Rico, bringing the total of state and territory participants to 40.

Affordable Connectivity Program

Eligible US residents can apply for help with their internet bills under the new Affordable Connectivity Program. The program launched with $14.2 billion from the bipartisan infrastructure law passed in November.

More RDOF Funding Awarded

The FCC recently announced it is ready to authorize its largest batch of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) support yet, raising the total amount approved to more than $2.7 billion.

USDA Boosts Rural Broadband

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) dished out more funding for rural broadband, awarding more than $119 million in loans and grants for projects in 19 states.

5G Rollout Delayed

Both Verizon and AT&T on Monday said they have agreed to delay the rollout of their 5G wireless service at the request of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. Last week, Buttigieg and Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Steve Dickson sent a letter to the two wireless network companies asking that they delay the rollout of their 5G services due to concerns that flights would be disrupted.

Market Watch

Starlink Median Speeds in Decline

NTCA Members Provide Gigabit Broadband

Verizon Home Internet Will Reach 20m

Cable One Fiber Joint Venture

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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

Biggest Data Breaches of 2021

In 2021, thousands of new cybersecurity incidents have been recorded -- and while cryptocurrency theft and data loss are now commonplace, this year stands out due to several high-profile incidents involving ransomware, supply chain attacks, and the exploitation of critical vulnerabilities. The Identity Theft Research Center (ITRC) has reported an increase of 17% in the number of recorded data breaches during 2021 in comparison to 2020.

AT&T Taps IoT for Health Monitoring

AT&T is supporting remote patient monitoring (RPM) on its nationwide IoT network. The carrier is partnering with Smart Meter. AT&T says that its cellular approach to RPM is easier for end users in comparison with Bluetooth, which requires pairing with a device for data download and transmission. The SmartRPM platform supports iGlucose, iBloodPressure and iScale. A fourth product, iPulseOx, is being unveiled at CES this week in Las Vegas. End users insert the batteries — which are included — and press the start button to activate the service.

Automation Can Solve Talent Shortage

The COVID-19 pandemic may have essentially forced remote work models, but the practice seems poised to stick around long after infection rates diminish. According to LinkedIn's Economic Graph team, paid job postings on their site offering "remote work" have skyrocketed — in May of this year, the number sat at 357% over the year-earlier share.

Data Management Sector in 2022

According to thought leaders in the data management sector, we'll be using some new terminology when talking about enterprise data in 2022. CTOs and IT managers at all levels will be defining and testing terms like "data as code" and "just-in-time" data analytics for their own production use cases. AI will be working overtime in the data management space, enabling call centers to mine more cogent information from customers, patching gaps in supply chains, and bolstering healthcare services, both locally and in the cloud.

Log4j Flaw Attack Levels Remain High

Microsoft has warned Windows and Azure customers to remain vigilant after observing state-sponsored and cyber-criminal attackers probing systems for the Log4j 'Log4Shell' flaw through December. Disclosed by the Apache Software Foundation on December 9, Log4Shell will likely take years to remediate because of how widely the error-logging software component is used in applications and services.

In Focus

Coming Up In 2022

While 2021 proved to be a busy year for a number of reasons, 2022 is looking to be 365 days of non-stop action. Here are a few of the items to look out and prepare for this year:

Future of USF. Even before the FCC began its Congressionally-mandated look at the future of USF, various industry groups were working on the next phase of federal USF support. The ACAM Broadband Coalition was first to the table, filing a plan that would extend support in exchange for additional and enhanced deployment commitments. Groups representing other rural carriers receiving cost-based USF support (CAF BLS) and Alaska Plan support are working on a framework for support beyond 2023. The FCC then issued a Notice of Inquiry requesting comment on the report due to Congress by the end of August 2022. While much will undoubtedly be discussed this year, it is unlikely that any plans will be in place by the end of the year.

Broadband Mapping. When the FCC began the Digital Opportunity Data Collection proceeding in August 2019, it was already clear that broadband mapping needed a substantial overhaul. Congress recognized this fact when it passed the Broadband DATA Act, and finally provided funding to the FCC to commence the new mapping process. The next step is for terrestrial fixed providers to submit new data based on either polygon files or address lists (a six month warning will occur). Then, the actual broadband serviceable location fabric (BSLF) will be implemented, but delays in selecting the vendor (and, apparently, some controversy over the selection) may lead to new maps not being available until 2023.

Performance Testing. All recipients of federal USF will be conducting broadband performance testing during 2022. For ACAM I and Alaska Plan recipients, the pre-testing period is over (the final report on 4Q21 test results is due tomorrow) and testing begins. For ACAM II and CAF BLS recipients, pre-testing begins during the first quarter of 2022.

Broadband Deployment Funding. As stated in the 12-10-21 *Alexicon Insider*, federal funding for broadband deployment is at historic highs. To begin, funding programs that began during 2021 are still in the process of awarding support—the NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and Broadband Infrastructure Programs, among others. ReConnect 3 applications are due February 22, and don't forget the IIJA allocated more that $1 billion more to RUS. Coming up in 2022 (maybe) is funding contained in the IIJA—the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, administered by NTIA and eventually distributed to the states, middle mile deployment funding, additional money for Tribal connectivity, and the now-active Affordable Connectivity Program.

Other issues. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline (988) becomes effective on 7/16/22; industry efforts to implement STIR/SHAKEN and robocall mitigation measures will continue; USF contributions reform could be a major issue at the FCC and Congress; RDOF support continues to be awarded; 8YY access charges begin phasing-down; and possible action on Net Neutrality.

Reminders

* **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 **ACP** began on 12/31/21. The transition from the EBB program to the ACP ends on 3/22/22. Please see the 11/22/21, 11/29/21, 12/9/21, and 12/30/21 updates for more information

* Voice service providers are prohibited from accepting calls from providers not appearing in the Robocall Mitigation Database

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