

BROADBANDCENSUS.COM'S weekly report

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Entities focusing on the broadband stimulus program are watching closely for clues about the implementation details of the \$7.2 billion program. At the same time, individual state efforts at broadband data and mapping are beginning to take shape, as in Texas.

BROADBANDCENSUS.COM URGES 'SPARC' SCORES

In comments filed before the Federal Communications Commission, BroadbandCensus.com said that basic broadband data — information about the speeds, prices, availability, reliability and competition (SPARC) of local service should be part of a public and transparent national broadband database. The filing recommended the FCC take a two-fold approach to broadband data: first, publicly release basic broadband data collected from broadband carriers; second, the agency should take a consumer-focused approach by encouraging efforts to independently collect broadband data from consumers, which would allow for independent verification of carrier data.

For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/06/broadbandcensuscom-urges-public-broadband-map-with-sparc-scores/>

THE WEEK'S LINKS

As Television Stations Switch to Digital, Some Are Not Prepared

All television stations across the U.S. switched to digital television on Friday. The transition will be particularly difficult for people residing in the western United States, where cable penetration is lower <http://www.tvnewsday.com/articles/2009/06/10/daily.12/> and hence need exists to obtain set-top digital converter boxes. Some are likely to seek "alternative means to get video entertainment." <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-dtv-unprepared11-2009jun11,0,3448247.story?page=1> According to analysts, a number of people have been prompted "to switch to a pay-TV service to avoid the hassles of upgrading TV sets" http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/10/AR2009061003978_2.html?sid=ST2009061004007, although \$40 coupons are available from the Commerce Department to cover the costs of converter boxes to households in financial need.

Broadband Spurs Economic Recovery, But On Limited, Uneven Scale

Internet-related businesses has been responsible for successfully creating 1.2 million jobs, spurring hope for an economic recovery. http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9134231&source=rss_news But the prospects of recovery are still unevenly distributed, according to a new report issued by research firm **Leichtman Research Group Inc.** http://www.lightreading.com/document.asp?doc_id=177861&f_src=lightreading_sitedefault Those less affected by any broadband-related recovery are minorities <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20090608-711675.html> and rural dwellers http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2009-06-07-rural-broadband-digital_N.htm who need broadband the most, but are less likely to get it. Measures to increase the record high-cost portion consumers pay into the Universal Service Fund (USF), a large part of universal broadband, is being called into question by the **National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA)** <http://www.nasuca.org/PR%20USF%20May%202009.pdf> and **National Telecommunications Cooperation Association (NTCA)**, who says large Internet content providers such as **Google** ought to pay into the USF fund just like consumers. <http://telephonyonline.com/independent/news/rural-telco-universal-service-0612/index.html?imw=Y&smte=wr> 28 organizations joined to form the **Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition** on Friday to advocate for those with less-than-equal broadband access. <http://www.wo.ala.org/districtdispatch/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/shlb-mission-statement-6-11-09-final.pdf> and <http://microsoftontheissues.com/cs/blogs/mscorp/archive/2009/05/21/schools-libraries-hospitals-should-be-top-priority-for-broadband-funds.aspx>

Broadband Groups Clash Over Internet Regulation Policies

Congress Daily reports that consumer advocates including **Free Press**, **Consumer Federation of American**, and **Consumers Union** want the FCC

CONTINUES ON BACK

NO USF INCREASE SAYS NASUCA

A proposed increase, from 11.4 to 12.9 percent, in the consumer contributions to the Universal Service Fund (USF) came under fire Tuesday from the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates.

"With high unemployment levels, foreclosures across the nation and everyone's household budgets being stretched thin, we call on the FCC to reduce the proposed hike in the Universal Service Fund's contribution level," said NASUCA President David Springe.

For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/06/%E2%80%9Cno-new-universal-service-fund-rate-says-nasuca%E2%80%9D/>

THE QUIET OF SUMMER

WASHINGTON, June 15, 2009 - As the promised June 30 deadline for the federal government's broadband stimulus rules approaches, the three agencies responsible for aspects of broadband stimulus are directly engaged in detailed questions about how high-speed internet service is being defined.

Most of the attention this past week was focused on the Federal Communications Commission, which received hundreds of filings as part of its "Notice of Inquiry" into the national broadband service plan that it is charged with developing. <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/06/wireline-wireless-providers-clash-on-usf-reform-special-access-adoption-in-broadband-strategy-comments/> and <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/06/at-mondays-deadline-in-dustry-advocacy-groups-weigh-in-on-fcc-broadband-plan/>

The Commerce Department's **National Telecommunications and Information Administration** was outwardly quiet: no *ex parte* meetings are noticed has having occurred last week, although the agency did post details about a recent meeting with the state of Alaska. In the June 4 meeting, attended by NTIA Chief of Staff **Tom Power** and three officials from the governor's office, the state commerce department, and the University of Alaska, the Alaskans raised the question of how "unserved" and "underserved" are to be defined, and whether a minimum amount will be allocated to each state. <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/exparte/QuestionsIssuesNTIAMtg06042009.doc>

The officials, including **Russ Kelly**, the associate director in the governor's office, said that "Alaska has challenges not just in the last mile to the doorstep for broadband but in the middle mile which is infrastructure that gets broadband out to regions and communities." They continued, "Some of the proposals coming together from the carriers address the middle mile issues. If the NTIA NOFA emphasizes and gives preference to broadband to the doorstep proposals, it may again disadvantage Alaska."

At the Agriculture Department's **Rural Utilities Service**, the agency issued a memorandum to its staff <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16345490/ARRA-Broadband-Investment-Program-Guidelines-of-USDARUS-Issued-060909> noting that "RUS and NTIA will publish a joint Notice of Funds availability" in early summer of 2009. Previously, the two agencies had said they would issue separate notices.

-Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com



THIS WEEK IN MOBILE BROADBAND

Currently, all four carriers offer five gigabytes of air-card-based broadband for \$59.99 per month. **Sprint**, however, also has a plan that includes unlimited Wi-Max coverage (where available) for \$79.99 per month. The commonality of price and bandwidth offerings provides little to no reason to change carriers to get mobile broadband, but makes it more appealing to simply add an aircard to your current account. Still, it's surprising that neither **T-Mobile** nor Sprint have either lowered the price on their five Gigabyte (GB) plans or offered more or unlimited bandwidth at the \$59.99 price point to try and take customers away from **AT&T** and **Verizon Communications**. ... Monday June 8, 2009 Sprint announced a new mobile broadband plan for corporate-liable accounts. The plan provides 500 MB of access for \$39.99 per month. This could be very appealing for companies with employees who have a wired connection in the office but need additional coverage for off-site work. ... Wednesday June 10, 2009 **Virgin Mobile USA** announced a range of prepaid broadband options. Dubbed "Broadband2Go," the service will go live in late June and will be accessed via the Ovation MC760 USB modem from **Novatel**. The MC760 will be available exclusively at **Best Buy**. The aircard also contains a Micro-SD card reader, turning the modem into a flash drive, similarly to the USB modem used with T-Mobile's 3G aircard service. Most innovative about Virgin's offering are the price plans: 30-day plans are set at \$20, \$40 and \$60 dollars for 250 Megabytes (MB), 600 MB or one GB, respectively. The interesting price plan is the \$10, ten day, 100 MB plan. The availability of such an ultra-low commitment plan could provide a low-risk option for people without broadband access who worry that the Internet isn't worth the forty or more dollars a month that traditional broadband access can cost. The added fact that it's mobile may do even more to get these non-adopters online. ... Friday June 12, 2009 America's broadcasters have officially made the switch to digital. This means that the coveted 700 megahertz spectrum that was auctioned off last year can finally start being utilized for next generation mobile broadband. AT&T and Verizon, who won the lion's share of the spectrum, can move forward with their fourth-generation (4G) networks. With the new spectrum available it will be exciting to see the slough of devices and services that come to market. ... AT&T announced that the new **Apple** iPhone 3Gs would offer tethering at no additional charge. Until now, the only tethering option for the iPhone was via jail breaking the device. Also, there will be no change to the thirty dollar price point of the iPhone data plan, making tethering the iPhone 3Gs more appealing than tethering an AT&T BlackBerry, which would both be capped at 5 GB and cost \$65 per month.

-Alex Tcherkassky, Reporter, BroadbandCensus.com



National Cable & Telecommunications Association



The mission of the Benton Foundation is to articulate a public interest vision for the digital age and to demonstrate the value of communication for solving social problems.

STATES TAKE UP THE ACTION

WASHINGTON, June 15, 2009 - The next state to provide a detailed blueprint for its efforts at broadband data and display is Texas, on June 9 issued its Request for Proposals on broadband mapping. See: <http://www.Texas-Agriculture.gov>

Texas follows Massachusetts <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/massachusetts-broadband-institute-eligible-for-federal-funds-unveils-interactive-survey/>, Maine <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/states-seek-to-engage-in-broadband-data-and-mapping>, and others in seeking to "designate an entity to apply for" the funds under the Broadband Data Improvement Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Connecticut is one of the next entities to engage in the broadband data process. See: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/FC/pdf/2009HB-06426-R000960-FC.pdf>

Responses to the Texas RFP are due this week, on Friday, June 19. The state seeks a non-profit organization to achieve an array of objectives, including a "baseline assessment of broadband service deployment," and "detailed plan of how the entity will accomplish broadband mapping" and a variety of activities to help stimulate broadband demand.

Brian Black, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Agriculture (which is coordinating with the state's public service commission) said that his agency is involved because "we work very closely with rural Texas."

"These folks are, we believe, underserved right now, and we want to make sure that we do everything for rural Texas," said Black, providing a reason why "we need to be at the table."

The wording of the RFP highlight's the state's interest in reaching precisely those areas of the state. Among the requirements for bidders includes the "identification of unserved or underserved areas, including the approach taken to assess demand for broadband service and the long-term feasibility of providing broadband service to those areas."

The RFP also calls for the winning entity "to encourage deployment and use [of broadband], especially in unserved areas and areas in which broadband penetration is significantly below the national average."

In May, the agency issued a request for comments, and

received 20 proposals, from a diverse group of applicants, including both for-profit and non-profit entities.

According to the Texas Agriculture Department, the commenters in the May proceeding were: **Afterimage, Alpheus Communications, AMA TechTel, Broadmap, CHR Solutions, Cobb, Fendley & Associates, Com Control Inc., Connected Nation, GIS Data Resources, HierComm, Intrado, LinkAmerica, Longway Broadband Services, Michael Baker Jr., Inc., One Economy, RidgeviewTel, Spotts, Stevens & McCoy, T2C2, Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative, Inc., and Wireless Broadband USA.**

"It is very important to have broadband across Texas, and this map is the first step toward doing it," said Black.

TEXAS FOLLOWS MASSACHUSETTS, AND OTHERS IN SEEKING TO "DESIGNATE AN ENTITY TO APPLY FOR" THE FUNDS.

Passing of Libby Beatty

Individuals in the broadband community were saddened to learn on Friday of the passing of Libby Beatty, executive director of the **National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors.**

NATOA was at the forefront of efforts to engage local officials in efforts to bring better broadband at the local level. And for nearly a year, BroadbandCensus.com has been partners with NATOA in an effort to provide the public with better data about their high-speed internet options. See: <http://broadbandcensus.com/2008/07/broadbandcensuscom-partners-with-national-association-of-telecommunications-officers-and-advisors/> Details about a memorial service are expected this week.

-Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES TV (NLCTV)
BROADBAND STIMULUS NATIONAL TOWN HALL MEETING



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THE WEEK'S LINKS...

to re-classify high-speed internet access as a telecom service http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090609_2427.php, which would result in providers being required to permit non-discriminatory access to their infrastructure through strict adherence to network neutrality restrictions, according to **Mark Cooper**, director of research for the Consumer Federation of America. **Verizon** opposed such regulation through the national broadband plan <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=avBtFFUZExOY>, saying it would stifle innovation and investment. **AT&T** said that regulations must comport with Congress' goal of ubiquitous broadband, which AT&T equated with encouraging private-sector investment. http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/278835-AT_T_Wants_100_Broadband_Access_by_2014.php

Internet Video Will Require Increased Bandwidth

According to **Cisco's** research <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/09/online-multitasking-increases-bandwidth-demand/>, internet bandwidth will have quintupled in the 2008-2013 period. Cisco is now offering PC Pulse, an application that will "give people a look at their digital DNA and compare themselves to users around the world," said Cisco Senior Market Analyst **Arielle Sumits**. With video viewing on the Internet becomes more frequent, fiber technology may be the only way to keep up with the demand, according to **App-Rising**. http://www.app-rising.com/2009/06/what_happens_when_everyones_us.html Cisco intends to boost "the amount of video traffic flowing over everyone's pipes, so that it can sell newer, larger pipes to bandwidth providers" <http://arstechnica.com/business/news/2009/06/cisco-report-the-exaflood-will-be-televised.ars>, and expects video to account for 90% of internet traffic in 2013.

FCC Begins Broadband Policy Inquiry

Numerous commenters submitted filings to the FCC on Monday, but it is unclear how conflicting interests will be reconciled in the national broadband plan, writes **Wired**. <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2009/06/fccbroadband/> Free Press and Google urged the FCC to treat broadband as infrastructure, and the **Media Access Project** along and Free Press want the FCC to enforce strong net neutrality regulations http://www.multichannel.com/article/278723-Media_Access_Point_Put_First_Amendment_First_In_Broadband_Plan.php?rssid=20073 and <http://www.freepress.net/node/61262> and <http://www.freepress.net/node/61262>, while other public interest groups, including **United Church of Christ**, and **Public Knowledge**, weigh in with their own list of categorized questions about localism, diversity, and open networks for the FCC to answer. http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/279271-Public_Interest_Groups_Have_Lots_Of_Questions_For_FCC_Nominees.php?rssid=20065 Additionally, the Government Accountability Office is frustrated that the FCC has ignored numerous requests to come up with concrete goals for the national broadband plan, and with its faulty data collection methodology. <http://www.dslreports.com/shownews/GAO-On-Broadband-Please-Listen-To-Us-For-Once-Please-102891> The lack of accountability by carriers may be one reason why the United State ranks 15th in broadband, lagging behind countries such as Japan, Sweden, and Korea – a theory called into question this week by economists at a **Progress for Freedom Foundation** plenary. <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/06/american-broadband-market-works-economists-say/>

BROADBANDCENSUS.COM

BroadbandCensus.com is a premium provider of news, information and events about broadband technology and internet policy. BroadbandCensus.com is at the forefront of understanding and explaining the implementation of the \$7.2 billion broadband stimulus package on the federal, state and local level. Since January 2008, BroadbandCensus.com has been building a public, transparent and freely accessible database about local broadband speeds, prices, availability, reliability and competition.

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