

BROADBANDCENSUS.COM'S weekly report

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8/10/2009

All eyes are on the looming deadline this week for broadband application grants, but some are pushing for more time. They say the process is too overwhelming. Meanwhile, the FCC kicked off its workshops and more as it feverishly gathers data for its national broadband plan.

THE WEEK'S LINKS

FCC Filling Out

The Federal Communications Commission returned to full strength on Monday. Approved by the Senate, **Meredith Attwell Baker** was sworn in as commissioner on July 31. **Mignon Clyburn** was sworn in as commissioner on Monday in Columbia, S.C. http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/326128-Baker_and_Clyburn_To_Be_Commissioners_By_Monday.php?rssid=20065 and http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/326336-Clyburn_Sworn_In_As_FCC_Commissioner.php?rssid=20065

FCC Chairman **Julius Genachowski** also announced the appointments of several senior staff officers this week who will work on the development of a national broadband plan as part of the Omnibus Broadband Initiative.

<http://www.fcc.gov/> At an "all hands" meeting on Wednesday Genachowski also called for staff to follow a policy of openness as they step up their work. The agency this week held the first of a series of workshops. <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/08/fcc-workshops-to-cast-wide-net-for-broadband-data-use-cases/> and http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/326420-Genachowski_Urges_All_Staff_To_Step_Up_On_Broadband.php?rssid=20065

Net Neutrality Takes Center Stage at the FCC

The fallout from Apple's move to block Google's voice application from the iPhone continues. The FCC will be looking into **Apple's** rejection, strengthening the Obama administration's call for scrutiny of the telecom market. <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20090731-720215.html> Apple's action on Google Voice may have opened up a more intensive critique of the handset exclusivity deals brokered in the market right now. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/01/AR2009080101074.html?nav=hcmoduletmv>

The same week as Apple blocked Google's voice application, **Google CEO Eric Schmidt** stepped down from Apple's board of directors. That change comes as the Federal Trade Commission is looking into whether the two companies violated antitrust laws by sharing common board members. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/technology/companies/04apple.html?ref=todayspaper> and http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124930285423801287.html#mod=todays_us_marketplace

Questions surrounding the FCC's obligation or need to look into the incident have sparked an intense debate. <http://www.slate.com/id/2224340/> and <http://www.thebigmoney.com/blogs/feeling-lucky/2009/08/06/behind-eric-schmidts-apple-resignation> Some are praising the FCC's inquiry into the

CITIZENS MUST JOIN THE REVOLUTION

The technology revolution will improve the way that citizens and government interact, experts agreed at an FCC workshop. The government wants to engage the people to help shape technology, said Federal Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra, noting that the government is not the only source of technological innova-

tion. For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/08/citizens-must-embrace-and-benefit-from-technology-revolution-fcc-told/>

FCC EMBRACES SECOND LIFE

The FCC will cast a wide net, Chairman Julius Genachowski told staff during an "all-hands" open meeting in preparation for the first of several workshops on crafting a federal broadband plan. The commission is "looking for everyone's ideas," Genachowski said - and noted that the agency would seek input from as diverse a range of opinion as to include users of the Second Life online

community. For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/08/fcc-workshops-to-cast-wide-net-for-broadband-data-use-cases/>

GOVERNING.COM OFFERS LAST MINUTE WEBINAR

Governing.com will hold a webinar on Wednesday, August 12, at 1 p.m. ET, before the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) first-round applications are due on Friday. The webinar on "Connecting the Dots: Broadband and Stimulus" will include speakers from NACo, NARUC, Baller Herbst and Cisco. For more, see <http://www.governing.com/event/connecting-dots-broadband-and-stimulus>

CONTINUES ON BACK

HE WHO HOLDS THE GOLD

WASHINGTON, August 10, 2009 - The Federal Communications Commission has been vetting information for months as part of its process to form an effective national broadband plan and this week showed off some of its efforts.

The agency kicked off a series of workshops last week designed to include all voices in the broadband debate. Its inaugural seminar was hosted at the agency and focused on e-government and civil engagement. The speakers there generally agreed that all citizens must be a part of the process as the government crafts policies and embraces technology.

The FCC also last week announced that the **Columbia Institute for Tele-Information** based at the **Columbia Business School** in New York will act as an outside expert by reviewing projected deployment of new and upgraded networks to help the FCC's efforts in developing the national plan.

The institute is tapped with analyzing companies' public statements about those firms' future plans to deploy and upgrade broadband networks. It also will evaluate the relationship between previous announcements of intent and actual deployment.

"As we begin the tremendous task of creating a national broadband plan, high-quality data on the state of broadband networks will help to inform and enlighten the activities of the agency," said agency Chairman **Julius Genachowski**.

CITI Director **Eli Noam** expressed his confidence with the arrangement. "Too often, the debates over internet policy have been driven by narrow agendas, with facts used selectively as ammunition rather than enlightenment," he said. "By focusing on data analysis -- of investment plans and deployment figures of upgraded broadband infrastructure, especially in this century -- CITI looks forward to helping the FCC to change the past culture and develop a national broadband plan grounded in facts."

Meanwhile, the purse holders of the \$7.2 billion in government monies for broadband grants continue to get an earful about the application process. One such example is **Michael Curri**, founder and president of **Strategic Networks Group** in Cleveland. He offered a two-pronged approach to **Larry Strickland**, head of

the **National Telecommunications Information Administration**, as to how that agency should best handle the process. The NTIA, along with the **Rural Utilities Service**, is charged with doling out the much sought-after funds.

Curri said states should "work closely and in good faith" with communications carriers but cautions that states run the risk of becoming too cozy with carriers in the design and execution of their broadband mapping programs. However, he urged that states build their mapping process to include a strong multiple-source data collection system. That strategy will help if carriers are unable or unwilling to offer that data. Part of the FCC's broadband strategy and the administration's outlook on the state of broadband across the nation depends on a clean and honest map of where broadband networks are located and at what speeds.

Curri says that if everyone just hopes that "things will work out," they probably won't "because carriers have decades of practice in stonewalling to get their way." However his group agrees that the best way to get carrier cooperation "may very well be for each state to gather as much broadband data as it can without relying on them, while continuing to invite their cooperation in a shared national effort to serve the public interest."

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

A LESS IDLE BUCOLIC

WASHINGTON, August 10, 2009 - All eyes are on the prize this week as the applications are due for the federal monies being offered to groups offering to create innovative and necessary broadband projects across the nation.

As the much-anticipated day approaches, there are some in the broadband community who are seeking a 30-day extension of the August 14 deadline.

Luisa Handem, managing director of the **Rural Mobile Broadband Alliance**, posted a piece by **Successful.com** founder **Craig Settles** on RuMBA's blog. He says that no one reportedly has asked for an extension, which is "pretty surprising considering the scores of people laboring feverishly and for whom more time would be a tremendous help."

He and others are spending this week urging the community to write letters pushing for a deadline extension because it "benefits communities, local governments and their private sector partners, but the gist of it is this. You reduce the chance of good projects being deep-sixed due to lack of time."

He also argues that it would give the **National Telecommunications Information Administration** more time to train, and install management systems for the anonymous volunteer panelists who'll influence which proposals make the first cuts in the approval process.

Even if there was an extension of the upcoming deadline, **Telephony Online** is reporting that some of the first winners are already being named.

ICF International, a professional services firm, was awarded up to \$27 million to help implement stimulus fund distribution. The report says that others are being hired to map existing broadband coverage. Texas's Agriculture Department has hired **ESRI**, which makes geographic information system software, and **Connect-ed Nation** to help map that state's broadband availability. Author **Ed Gubbins** also notes that the stimulus process has "overwhelmed" many of the applicant candidates. Many of these potential innovators are

skipping this first round of funding – and could use more time – to focus on the second round.

Meanwhile, rural carriers are pressing forward with a complaint over the **Rural Utilities Service's** Broadband Improvement Program. They say the current plan would discriminate against small providers serving sparsely populated areas.

Several rural groups representing small communications providers urged RUS Administrator **Jonathan Adelstein** to change the requirements before the agency begins evaluating grant applications for BIP grants and loans.

The groups say that the criteria for BIP applications focuses on the absolute number of rural residents that would receive broadband service, not the proportion of those residents. They say that's inconsistent with the language contained in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provisions appropriating funds for the program.

The small providers point out language stating that for every 10,000 unserved households that will receive broadband service, one point will be awarded up to a maximum of five points, and they say that's a condition which skews the evaluation criteria toward the larger providers.

The group's signatories include representatives from the **Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies**, **National Telecommunications Cooperative Association**, **Rural Cellular Association**; **Rural Independent Competitive Alliance**; **Rural Telecommunications Group** and **General Communication, Inc.**

In other rural broadband news, Sen. **Mary Landrieu** (D-La.), who chairs the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, released two grant guides for small businesses interested in applying for Recovery Act grants to bring broadband service to unserved, underserved and rural communities across the nation. The the guide for the Commerce Department BTOP program is at <http://sbc.senate.gov/resources/Grant%20Guides/BTOP-Grant-Guide.pdf> . The guide for the BIP is at <http://sbc.senate.gov/resources/Grant%20Guides/BIP-Grant-Guide.pdf> .

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THE WEEK'S LINKS...

relationship as an indication that the agency is favoring the concept of net neutrality under Chairman Genachowski. <http://www.fiercebroadbandwireless.com/story/net-neutrality-roaring-under-new-fcc-chairman/2009-08-06>

In other net neutrality news, **Reps. Edward Markey** (D-Mass.) and **Anna Eshoo** (D-Calif.) introduced the Internet Freedom Preservation Act (H.R. 3458). The legislation would protect network neutrality under the Communications Act, and was written to safeguard the future of the open Internet and protect Internet users from discrimination online. The bill's language says ISPs will not be able to "block, interfere with, discriminate against, impair, or degrade" access to any lawful content from any lawful application or device. <http://www.freepress.net/node/71192> and <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/08/the-war-over-network-neutrality.ars> and http://www.mediapost.com/publications/?fa=Articles.showArticle&art_id=110927 **The Huffington Post** gives seven reasons why the U.S. broadband system needs net neutrality now. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/timothy-karr/seven-reasons-why-we-need_b_250175.html

European Study Says the U.S. Lags Behind

One-third of European Union citizens say they have never used the Internet, compared with 40 percent in 2007, an EU study showed on Tuesday. In the report on the digital economy in the 27-nation EU, the **European Commission** also said more than one in four Europeans had never used a computer and 40 percent had no Internet access at home. <http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssTechMediaTelecomNews/idUSL447336220090804> The EU study also says that Europe is leading the field in broadband access when compared with the United States. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/05/technology/internet/05broadband.html?_r=1&ref=global Even in the recession, Britain's internet service providers have done well and Britons are staying connected, and part of that is due to the EU's power to bundle. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/78fb1a4e-8207-11de-9c5e-00144feabdc0.html?nclink_check=1 and http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20090805-720617.html?mod=dist_smartbrief

U.K. ISP **TalkTalk** will begin a fiber-based broadband trial this month that will provide users with online speeds of up to 40 megabits per second, the company said. TalkTalk passes 80 percent of the United Kingdom and is upgrading its fibre broadband networks. <http://www.networkworld.com/news/2009/080309-talktalk-to-trial-40mbps-fibre.html>

Australia's **Telstra** has joined the roster of telecom operators testing 100-gigabit-per-second optical-transmission technology, saying its trials traveled a record distance over an optical link under both 100 Gbps and 40 Gbps transmissions. Telstra used **Nortel Network** gear from its **Metro Ethernet Networks** unit. http://www.lightreading.com/document.asp?doc_id=179987

Back in the states, **Verizon** will offer free Wi-Fi access to more than 13,000 wireless hot spots nationwide thanks to a deal with **Boingo**

Wireless. <http://www.smartbrief.com/news/ustelecom/storyDetails.jsp?issueid=968088F1-0B6E-4271-854F-4818FA95DD63©id=6FA65295-2F76-44F8-A00A-1EA8596D0D24&sid=a5cb4631-3d91-49fd-9ef5-cde482b34a24&brief=ustelecom>

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