BROADBANDCENSUS.COM'S
weekly report

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Broadband policy is becoming central to a host of debates concurrently occurring: it's about national infrastructure, the use of wireless frequencies, digital and social inclusion and connectedness, and even the future of journalism. These threads came together in conferences in Washington and in Silicon Valley.

THE WEEK'S LINKS

National Broadband Policy Gains Steam

The push for a federally-directed broadband policy continued unabated with calls for a centralized policy coming from all corners, including **Free Press** http://www.freepress.net/files/Dismantling_Digital_Deregulation.pdf , the **Public Knowledge's Art Brodsky,** http://www.huffingtonpost.com/art-brodsky/europeans-are-eating-our_b_200258.html and the **Center for American Progress's Campus Progress**. http://www.savetheinternet. com/blog/2009/05/08/why-young-people-should-care-about-internet-policy/ A **Knight Center of Digital Excellence** release states "America in desperate need of a broadband game changer." http://www.knightcentercommunityconnection.org/america-in-desperate-need-of-a-broadband-game-changer/ One critical voice was from **Mike Farrell** at **Multichannel News**, who asks, who is the stimulus (and the broadband policy) supposed to help? What exactly are the problems we are trying to solve? http://www.multichannel.com/article/231914-Cover_Story_The_7_2_Billion_Question.php?rssid=20059

Rep. Eshoo Introduces Conduit Deployment Act

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., last week introduced the Broadband Conduit Deployment Act, mandating the creation of pipe conduit banks in all future highway construction projects receiving federal funds. http://www.stimulatingbroadband.com/2009/05/rep-eshoo-gets-it-files-legislation.html *and* http://eshoo.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=608&Itemid=79 **TechDirt** raises transparency risks to a centralized broadband policy http://techdirt.com/articles/20090514/0202524880.shtml , while **Ars Technica** highlights the risks of agency capture and corruption. http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/05/did-the-fcc-cook-the-books-on-bpl.ars

Stimulus Fever Spreads From Rural to Suburban

White House officials say the Obama administration continues to support the broadband stimulus initiative. http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/white-house-aide-says-broadband-is-and-remains-obama-priority/ On May 11, the White House Council of Economic Advisers released a report showing the entire fiscal stimulus plan (and not merely the broadband portion of the plan) would save or create 1.5 million jobs by the end of 2009 and 3.5 million by the end of 2010. http://www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSTRE54A5W120090511 Issues remain about the definition of "unserved" and "underserved." http://www.multichannel.com/article/231914-Cover_Story_The_7_2_Billion_Question.php?nid=2226&source=link&rid=6285503 Would Palo Alto, Calif., arguably one of the wealthiest and most wired communities in the nation meet such a

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WHITE HOUSE AIDE SAYS BROADBAND IS AND REMAINS OBAMA PRIORITY

Broadband is crucial to the Obama administration's economic policies, National Economic Council official Susan Crawford said at a conference on journalism on Thursday. "Access to broadband does not guarantee" success, but "lack of access to broadband will guarantee economic decline."
For more, see http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/white-house-aide-says-broadband-is-and-remains-obama-priority/

RICK BOUCHER: PRIVATE COMPANIES SHOULD EMBRACE STIMULUS

Because "the private sector has the expertise to do this quickly," House Commerce Committee Subcommittee Chairman Rick Boucher said, "We don't want ... an overly rigid interpretation to discourage private sector applications."
For more, see http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/house-chairman-rick-boucher-private-companies-should-embrace-broadband-stimulus-funds/

EVEN AMONG SUPPORTERS, BROADBAND PLAN IS IN EYES OF BEHOLDER

The rival goals of increasing supply or stimulating demand were on display in a discussion of national broadband policy at the Tech Policy Summit in San Mateo, Calif. "Supply-siders" pointing to China's embrace of fiber optics, while carrier groups urged demand stimulation.
For more, see http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/broadband-strategy

WASHINGTON, May 11, 2009 – The United States desperately needs a national broadband strategy, agreed a wide range of telecommunications experts, speaking last week at a conference on "Changing Media" at the **Newseum** in Washington.

The speakers at the conference differed on whether the policy should be run by the White House or the Federal Communications Commission.

But either way, the air of excitement toward broadband policy is strong. It's almost enough to overpower the mournful backward glance that many have recently been offering for the old media.

"Old media," otherwise known as the newspaper business, has been roundly memorialized within the past fortnight. As traditionally defined, journalism is on the ropes. Lots of people are spending lots of time to try to figure out why.

On May 6, the Senate Commerce Committee held a hearing on how journalism can survive. Among the ideas expressed at the hearing – repeated this past Thursday at the Newseum event – was the notion that the "cloud" of broadband connectivity will provide the way forward for news dissemination and consumption.

> "IF THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY'S NEWS AND INFORMATION IS ONLINE—THEN WE MUST ENSURE EVERYONE IS ONLINE."

Among the witnesses at the Senate hearing was **Alberto Ibargüen**, CEO of the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**. Referring to the issue of aiding journalism, he said, "Nothing Congress can do is as important as providing universal digital access and adoption. If the future of democracy's news and information is online—then we must ensure everyone is online."

The Knight Foundation is undertaking an ambitious effort to ensure that citizens of the 26 communities, where Knight newspapers once existed, have the kind of high-speed connectivity needed to effectively function in the digital world.

Ibargüen is *ex-officio* member of another group, the **Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy**, which met last Wednesday. And the Knight Foundation supported the Thursday Newseum conference, **"Changing Media,"** which was organized by the advocacy group **Free Press**. At the Thursday event, White House National

Economic Council member **Susan Crawford** specifically linked the fate of broadband to the fate of the newspaper industry. "These two futures go together. There is light at the end of the tunnel for this." http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/05/white-house-aide-says-broadband-is-and-remains-obama-priority/

Others at the event were also supportive of an energetic broadband policy. **Michael Powell**, Federal Communications Commission Chairman under President George W. Bush, said that while he was "enormous supportive of a national broadband policy," it "should be in the office of the president, and not at the FCC.

"The Bush administration did fail in that the president and the White House never committed to the broadband policy," Powell said.

"One of the biggest mistakes in the U.S. is that the idea that the nation's direction [on broadband] should be run out of one independent regulatory agency that has a severe amount of regulatory restraint," he said.

Others at the forum agreed that journalism's fate would be enhanced by a broadband policy that greatly increased digital access.

"The challenge for government about how to produce quality journalism, is, in the first instance, a broadband question," said **Jessica Rosenworcel**, senior legal counsel to the Senate Commerce Committee.

Rosenworcel cited the **Pew Internet & American Life Project's** 2008 study as showing that only 38 percent of rural Americans subscribe to broadband at home, compared to only 25 percent of low-income Americans and 55 percent of all adult Americans. Those numbers need to go up, she said. http://broadbandcensus.com/2008/07/broadband-internet-adoption-stalls-regresses-for-poor-says-pew-report/

"In the short term, the government should be focused on [broadband]," said Rosenworcel. In the long term, however, "journalism really can be built on the back of broadband infrastructure."

Reed Hundt, FCC Chairman under President Clinton, agreed: "From my perspective, the government should have nothing to do with journalism, just as the government should have nothing to do with retail."

Broadband is another matter entirely. "The government ought to be in the infrastructure business," he said.

-Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com

WASHINGTON, May 18, 2009 – The federal government's Commerce Department is at least one month off from finalizing the rules that will govern the broadband stimulus funds. But that isn't stopping an array of states from getting started on a variety of broadband data projects.

The state of Maine's **ConnectME Authority** Request for Proposal (RFP) is due on Tuesday. The RFP calls for a contractor to develop a "geographic statewide inventory of 'wired' (i.e. DSL, cable modem, fiber) and 'fixed-wireless' high speed internet service to identify where current terrestrial broadband service and infrastructure exists and does not exist at a street-level of detail."

The Maine effort is one of dozens by states seeking to get a handle on broadband data – which many observers believe will be vital for public and private entities seeking to utilize federal broadband stimulus dollars.

Among the other states that have, within the past week, released basic broadband maps of high-speed availability included Virginia and Wisconsin. http://otpba.vi.virginia.gov/ *and* http://psc.wi.gov/recoveryAct/sfMapsSurvey.htm Texas's Department of Agriculture opened the first step of its process of mapping out broadband data, which it hopes to do when it receives funds from Commerce's **National Telecommunications and Information Administration**. http://www.agr.state.tx.us/agr/program_render/0,1987,1848_6061_0_0,00.html?channelId=6061

Maine has had detailed broadband mapping in its sites far before the current focus on federal stimulus dollars. In 2005, Maine **Gov. John Baldacci** announced Connect Maine, said that it would "ensure that 90% of Maine communities have broadband access by 2010."

National Cable & Telecommunications Association

http://broadbandcensus.com/2008/09/connect-me-is-maines-mantra-for-90-per-cent-broadband-by-2010/

Despite the similar name, ConnectME has no connection to **Connected Nation**, the Kentucky-based organization that has mapped broadband availability in several states, including Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Shortly after the governor's 2005 announcement, ConnectME set out to determine what parts of the state were completely unserved by broadband providers in 2006. It state sought to improve on Federal Communications Commission data for the state that records service only at the ZIP code level. ConnectME was concerned about the possibility of households lacking access to broadband within ZIP code identified by FCC data as offering service.

ConnectME struggled to collect information from providers at the most granular level. It produced a map in 2006 that Executive Director **Phil Lindley** characterizes as a "fair interpretation" of broadband coverage. The map estimated that 26% of Maine lacked broadband access, compared to FCC data that states that 11% of Maine ZIP codes were unserved.

Maine has distributed $2.2 million in grants – most to small wireless operators who are "operating day-by-day" – to enhance broadband availability and adoption. ConnectME is also closing in on its third round of funding, with expressions of interest due on June 1.

Lindley said, "we are requesting smaller, more focused proposals than in previous grant rounds, with a suggested grant limit for each project of $100,000, funding no more than 50% of the total project."

For the mapping RFP, ConnectME requires that "the dataset must include road segments coded as to their availability of DSL and/or cable internet, including transmission speeds and levels and types of service."

With an island-geography that doesn't lend itself to continuous coverage, Lindsay said he knows that many portions of Maine need improved service. "That's one reason we're doing the survey - to find out," he says.

–Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com

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

INTERNATIONAL BROADBAND ELECTRIC COMMUNICATIONS

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THE WEEK'S LINKS...

definition? Rep. Eshoo suggested that it should apply for stimulus funds. http://www.fiercetelecom.com/story/palo-alto-urged-apply-broadband-stimulus/2009-05-13 Ars Technica presents the case that there is plenty of demand for rural broadband. http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/05/rural-america-not-ready-for-broadband-hogwash.ars With the pending divestiture of several of **Verizon Communication's** rural telephone lines, **Broadband Reports** declares "The rise of the rural super telco – Frontier, Centurytel, Fairpoint." http://www.dslreports.com/shownews/The-Rise-Of-The-Rural-Super-Telco-102469

Continuing Municipal Communications Battles

Activists for municipal communications solutions are having success in North Carolina http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A394877 and Tennessee. http://www.chattanoogan.com/articles/article_151121.asp **Fierce Broadband Wireless** makes the argument that **AT&T's** current pricing structure is a "house of cards" given the current highly competitive environment that is bringing down broadband prices. Even as providers become more efficient at delivering both voice and video over broadband, they strengthen regulators arguments that broadband is merely a commodity utility, argues **GigaOm**. http://gigaom.com/2009/05/08/how-isps-can-survive-becoming-dumb-pipes/ Wireless broadband users, including **Apple** iPhone and baby monitor owners, are using disproportionately more bandwidth than other users. Carriers themselves may find such a change of thinking useful in finally achieving their goal of metered and tiered pricing. http://www.muniwireless.com/2009/05/11/iphone-users-are-bandwidth-hogs/ *and* http://www.itproportal.com/network/news/article/2009/5/11/city-wifi-efficiency-harmed-baby-monitors/

New York City Seeks Free Wi-Fi in Parks

On May 15, New York City issued a request for information for free Wi-Fi service in parks and public areas. http://www.muniwireless.com/2009/05/15/nyc-rfi-for-free-wifi-in-parks/ New York already awarded a large contract for a public safety wireless network, which went to a defense contractor, not a telecommunications company. http://www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=20000

ABOUT 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.

BroadbandCensus.com is also host of the Broadband Breakfast Club, an on-the-record discussion forum that meets at the Old Ebbitt Grill on the second Tuesday of each month, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Registration is available here. Webcasts of previous Broadband Breakfast Club events are available for purchase here.

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