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MAW Communications, the company behind Lancaster's embattled LanCity Connect fiber-optic broadband network, has taken its dispute with PPL Corp. over access to PPL's utility poles to the Federal Communications Commission.

In a complaint filed last month, MAW accuses PPL of "punitive and abusive" practices, making much the same case against the electric utility [that it did in a public statement in November](#). The FCC complaint says PPL, instead of working collaboratively, made MAW seek permission to use its poles through an online portal "which has been plagued with problems since its inception."

The portal's programming, MAW says, does not accurately reflect relevant regulations and engineering practices. It thus routinely factors in unnecessary work to prepare poles for new attachments, resulting in wildly inflated costs. PPL refused to work through the glitches with MAW, instead sending MAW unreasonable bills and refusing to work with MAW until they were paid, MAW alleges.

MAW's complaint asks the FCC to give MAW immediate access to the PPL poles it needs, bar PPL from removing more equipment and pay MAW damages for disrupting MAW's business. No dollar figure is specified. In a statement, PPL said MAW's complaint to the FCC "does

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not change the central facts in this case" and that MAW's attachments were "unauthorized and unsafe." "MAW continues to want to play by a set of rules different than everyone else," PPL said.

PPL's allegation that MAW's attachments present safety concerns was a basis for [its lawsuit against the Reading-based telecommunications utility](#), filed at the end of 2017. Last spring, [PPL received permission](#) from a Lehigh County judge to take down MAW equipment it hadn't authorized. PPL's removals have caused more than 70 of LanCity Connect's roughly 300 customers to lose service, MAW said.

MAW says PPL's safety claims are unfounded. A January 2018 report by Robson Forensic, an independent engineering firm retained by MAW, found no risk to the public or utility workers from MAW's installations. PPL says it presented contrary evidence in court showing safety problems existed. According to the FCC, PPL is to file a response to the complaint by mid-March. Also, PPL and MAW must meet "to discuss the resolution or narrowing of as many issues as possible."

A conference at the FCC is scheduled for April. The agency says it anticipates resolving the matter within 180 days. Lancaster Mayor Danene Sorace said City Hall is aware of MAW's filing but has no plans to join the FCC complaint. — *Lancaster Intelligencer-Journal*

Governor Jim Justice (D-WV) and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) joined representatives from Facebook for an announcement regarding Facebook's plans to build a fiber optic cable that will run through parts of West Virginia. Sen. Capito says the project is expected to begin this year and will result in an around 275-mile route in West Virginia, providing the state with enhanced fiber optic connectivity. Gov. Justice says the route will travel approximately 275 miles through West Virginia, starting at the western border, through the Kanawha Valley, then turn northwest to bring the fiber through the Appalachia region.

Sen. Capito says she has worked for more than a year to make this project a reality, including discussing the issue directly with Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg during a Senate Commerce Committee hearing. "Making sure West Virginia has reliable, high-speed internet has been a priority of mine since I was first elected to Congress," said Sen. Capito. "Broadband development is absolutely critical to moving West Virginia forward," Gov. Justice said. "An investment of this magnitude in our state is really big news and will help us continue to show the world how great West Virginia truly is."

The construction, which is planned to last for roughly 18 to 24 months, will begin in Ashburn, Virginia, and end in Columbus, Ohio, connecting two major internet exchanges. Sen. Capito says as a result of the project, broadband providers will be able to expand middle-mile networks into communities along the route, and it will establish West Virginia as a preferred route for fiber backbone construction.

"Access to broadband internet drives economic growth and opportunity, but there are still too many unserved communities, including here in West Virginia. We see the need for long haul fiber as an opportunity to provide critical infrastructure where it did not

previously exist. To that end, we've designed our project to attract potential local and regional providers to expand broadband internet access for the communities surrounding our builds," said Kevin Salvadori, Director of Network Investments, Facebook.

In October 2018, Sen. Capito and Gov. Justice announced the global network services provider, Zayo's plans to make the first large investment of fiber infrastructure in West Virginia. Today's announcement marks the second long-haul fiber announcement in West Virginia in less than a year. – **WOWK-TV, Charleston WV**

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) announced Monday that Democrats will introduce a net neutrality bill to replace the open internet rules that were repealed in 2017. In a letter to her Democratic colleagues, Pelosi said a bill called the Save the Internet Act will be unveiled Wednesday and will be introduced in the Senate as well.

The text of the legislation has not been released, and it's unclear what will be included in the bill. Democrats have railed against the Trump administration's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) vote to repeal the net neutrality rules, which happened more than a year ago. The 2015 regulations prohibited internet service providers from blocking or throttling websites or creating internet fast lanes.

Republicans and the broadband industry have called for legislation codifying net neutrality, but there remain some partisan divisions over what rules should be in effect and how they should be enforced. The GOP has criticized the Obama-era rules as overly burdensome, in part because they reclassified broadband as a telecommunications service, which designates internet service providers as common carriers and opens up the industry to tougher regulation.

But many Democrats and consumer advocates believe the reclassification was necessary, as it put the industry under the FCC's oversight, giving the agency the means to crack down on violations. The repeal order is also facing a challenge from Democratic state attorneys general and consumer advocates. Last month, a panel of federal appeals court judges heard oral arguments in the case, and they are expected to issue a ruling by the summer. – **The Hill**

