BCAP NewsClips

July 17, 2019

Ars Technica
FCC gives ISPs another $563 million to build rural-broadband networks

TVNewsCheck
Nielsen Moves TV Ratings Platform To Cloud

DigitalNewsDaily
Lawmakers Blast 'Woefully Inadequate' $5 Billion Facebook Settlement

The Hill
Feinstein introduces bill to prohibit campaigns from using social media bots

Mayberry Township residents are livid over not having adequate internet service. "We are asking for your support to help lobby to get service. It would be worth Service Electric's while with the monthly fee they would be able to charge us," resident Cindy Bird told the Montour County commissioners Tuesday night at a meeting hosted by the township.

Commissioner Trevor Finn said the commissioners can have a conversation with the company. "Let us make some calls. We hear you loud and clear," Commission Chairman Ken Holdren said. Township Secretary Patricia Fahringer said she will invite a Service Electric representative to attend a township meeting.

Resident Allan Schappert said it could come down to affordability. He said they may have to tether their computers to a phone through a carrier. "Every time it rains we lose our phone," he said. Bird said lack of internet service was why many of the 11 people attended the meeting. The group included township Supervisor Rodney Bird, who is her husband, Supervisor Chairman David Bird and Supervisor Robert Dressler Sr. "We had to start somewhere," Finn said of Geisinger funding a broadband project in the county through DRIVE, the economic development council of governments. "Geisinger would like to have the service out here too," he said.

He said towers were identified for equipment placed on the county's Emergency Management Agency tower, a 911 tower on Bald Top, Geisinger's Hospital for Advanced Medicine and USG. "We're one and a half miles from the highway and three miles from Elysburg," Cindy Bird said. She said she can see two Verizon towers from her home. "It's extremely frustrating. Finn said the DRIVE system wouldn't be able to use Verizon towers.

He suggested residents also contact DRIVE, which has a link on its website. "They will come out and test to see if there is a signal," he said. Schappert said the people in the room will be dead by the time they get proper internet service. "We started one and a half years ago and built something. The U.S. government started 10 years ago and doesn't have a pole in the ground. We're at least trying to do something," Finn said. "It's frustrating that the world passes you by," Schappert said.

Finn said he has poor internet service where he lives in Danville because the buildings around his home, from the 1920s, are higher. "I understand your frustration," he said. He asked residents if they can sign up for satellite service. Fahringer said she can get on the internet, but can "take a nap" with satellite. Finn said she may be able to enroll in FirstNet, which doesn't slow down and is available to governments and to first responders. The township office is in her home. – *Danville News*

_____

Improvements to broadband internet and cell phone services may be coming to local residents over the next several years. SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) and Clinton, Lycoming, Northumberland and Union counties are conducting a broadband survey to assess current broadband internet service and needs. This feasibility study will seek the best path to a comprehensive broadband network in each of the four counties.

Last week, a meeting organized by Clinton County Planning Director Katherine deSilva was held in Lock Haven to get details about the study and what will follow. The goal of the study is to develop a comprehensive set of strategies to bring high performance broadband and internet services to all residents and businesses, according to Scott Kramer, principal IT specialist of SEDA-COG. County participation in this survey is extremely important, he said, as it will help support grant applications that can fund improved broadband.

The results will help SEDA-COG and the counties to determine where the need is the greatest and help guide them on how to ensure that all citizens and businesses have affordable and adequate access to broadband services, Kramer said. Interested residents can fill the survey out online at projects.designnine.com/survey/seda-cog-business-broadband or they can pick up a paper copy and mail to SEDA-COG/ Scott Kramer, 201 Furnace Road, Lewisburg, Pa. 17837.

"We want to see who has broadband and is happy with it, who has no service and anything in between. SEDA-COG has sponsored this. Input is valued," said de Silva. "These surveys can be found at every post office and library in the county. They are at the Porter Township Community Center, can be found at the Clinton County Piper building, or you can take the online survey. You can take the paper copies with you if your area has no internet service." "I understand the irony of asking people to do a broadband survey online, that is why we have

issued the paper copies. The more responses, the more we will see that there is definitely a need there," said Jack Maytum, senior broadband analyst of Design Nine Inc., a company out of Blacksburg, Va., that was founded in 1987 to provide technology advice and services to community, business, and public clients.

All survey responses must be returned by July 29. "This study is done to provide information to local leadership. All of us here realize a definite need for high speed broadband in rural areas. We put out a competitive RFP (request for proposal) to have Design Nine do this study for us, so we can recognize unserved and underserved areas, and analyze regional broadband needs, and identifying three areas of need in each county for pilot projects," Kramer added.

De Silva noted that the Renovo area is considered a top priority location for the first project, to provide improved service to Renovo Borough, Bucktail High School and Bucktail Medical Center. Commissioner Robert "Pete" Smeltz also noted the potential building of a power plant coming to Renovo which will bring "hundreds and hundreds of people that will be working there." "Not having towers or fibers on telephone poles … counties know how to do that now… there's no magic to it," Maytum said. "We will encompass all of those elements. We are trying to figure out what they have now, and work with the internet providers we have now. We are contacting GIS geographic information people to gather up any work that the counties have already done, and we are well along on that. We will outline on a map and analyze where those existing gaps are, to propose locations where new towers could be built.

"These students in school submit online assignments more and more, those are important considerations. For remote areas, it can be a legitimate safety concern. We can put up more antennas, get more coverage. People want more towers, and it is better for good economic development. Companies know who has broadband and they are going to where the activity is. Broadband access can even increase the property value of a house," he said.

According to Maytum, about 100 responses have already come in from the four counties, with this survey started about four weeks ago. "Our feeling is that, over time, every resident and every business will have fiber optic and wireless internet connections," Maytum continued. "We understand it is a long term project, but do not see any reason this can't be done. We will analyze what's available, what we need and see where we can start. Attitude of service providers will change once you do that. Just like electricity and water, everyone should have access to good broadband" "People will submit the surveys, and the data will be received," Smeltz said. "Then we will be on to the next step, the next step and the next step." – *Lock Haven Express*

_____

Comcast's Xfinity Mobile is beginning to add bring-your-own-device options for the nearly half of smartphone users in the U.S. who don't own an iOS device. The company announced Tuesday that customers are now able to bring Android devices over to the service, and while the eligible Android phones are limited now, it expects to expand the list later this year.

Customers who are already signed up for Comcast's cable or broadband service — Xfinity Mobile is only available to subscribers —

can now bring their Samsung Galaxy S9, S9+, S8, S8+ and both Note 9 and 8 models to its wireless service. The company is also offering a deal with a $100 prepaid card for new Xfinity Mobile customers who bring their Android device. The promotion ends Aug. 4.

The news opens up a new portion of the market for Xfinity Mobile — according to **global web analytics company StatCounter**, Android maintains a nearly 47% market share among mobile operating systems in the United States. Comcast introduced BYOD for iPhones in January 2018. "By expanding our BYOD capabilities to Android-based smartphones, we're enabling more Xfinity Internet customers to take advantage of the flexibility and savings Xfinity Mobile offers while keeping the phone they already know and love," Billy Stephens, Xfinity Mobile's senior vice president of wireless devices, said in a statement. "Consumers are holding onto their phones longer, and we're looking forward to continuing to expand the lineup of Android devices customers can bring to our network in the near future."

Comcast's wireless offering is positioned as an add-on for customers that's designed to save them money on their cell phone bill by offering both by-the-gigabyte plans, which executives said has been the most popular option, and unlimited plans. It's able to offer the service by combining both its Wi-Fi hotspots and Verizon's network, which Comcast buys capacity on wholesale, thanks to an MVNO (mobile virtual network operator) agreement with the telecom giant.

Since its debut in 2017, executives have said the goal isn't to compete directly with the country's leading wireless companies, it's to build Xfinity Mobile into a profitable operation that adds more value to customers' subscriptions and reduces churn. Xfinity Mobile drew in $225 million in revenue in Q1 2019, a $40 million increase year-over-year as it grew to 1.4 million customers. Losses totaled $103 million, down from $189 million in Q1 2018. During Comcast's Q2 earnings call this year, CFO Mike Cavanagh said they've seen a "significant increase in the uptake of" customers bringing their own devices. – *Philadelphia Business Journal*