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When New York City was preparing to let Verizon offer its high-speed FiOS Internet service in 2008, a city councilwoman, Gale A. Brewer, warned that "New Yorkers need to know whether they are going to wait three years or six years."

For many frustrated residents, like Stephanie Brooks, it has already been seven years and there is still no FiOS in sight. Ms. Brooks, who owns a brownstone in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, says she doubts that she and her neighbors will ever have the kind of speedy Internet options available in other parts of the city. "Why aren't we getting the opportunity to get service and have a choice?" said Ms. Brooks, who pointed to more affluent neighborhoods that Verizon wired years ago. "They built around us."

Ms. Brooks's complaint goes to the core of an increasingly bitter dispute between Mayor Bill de Blasio and Verizon, one of the nation's biggest and most profitable telecommunications companies, that may end up in a courtroom. Mr. de Blasio has made universal access to affordable broadband a top priority for his administration to help bridge the so-called digital divide between those who can get online easily and inexpensively and those who cannot, as well as to make the city a competitive technology hub. Verizon had agreed to have fiber-optic cable for FiOS pass all three million homes in the city by the end of last year. Lawyers for each side, however, are arguing about the definition of "pass." The company says it has met the deadline. The city's response: not even close.

FiOS remains unavailable in large swaths of the city, including the vast Co-op City complex in the Bronx, which comprises more than 15,000 apartments. "We've had some rather impassioned meetings with some of our residents who say, 'We want Verizon,' " said Jeffrey Buss, general counsel for Riverbay Corporation, which manages Co-op City.

The city's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications released

criminal case against her ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*** **Editorial: Compromise, already – Leaders in both parties are hurting Pennsylvania**	**a scathing audit report in June** concluding that Verizon "systematically refused to accept orders for residential service." By the company's admission, nearly one-fourth of the blocks in the city have no buildings wired for FiOS, the report said. "We want them to make it available to everyone in every ZIP code and on every block so that everyone can get online, to do research, to do their homework," said Maya Wiley, the chief lawyer for Mr. de Blasio. "We need our residents to get online." Ms. Wiley said that her staff was negotiating with Verizon and that the city would prefer not to sue the company for failing to fulfill its obligation. But, she added, "if that's what we have to do, then that's what we'll do." Customers are still being told by Verizon that FiOS is "not available" to them, even after the company claimed to have wired the entire city. Ms. Brooks said that the last time she heard from Verizon was a letter in January telling her that the company was trying to figure out how to connect to her home. One of Ms. Brooks's neighbors, Barbara Cooke-Johnson, said that two years ago she escorted a Verizon representative door to door on her block, seeking permission to run fiber through the properties. Ms. Cooke-Johnson, 75, a retired lieutenant for the city's Emergency Medical Service, said she got about 10 neighbors to agree and thought that she would have upgraded from her poky DSL service by now. But she said that she never heard from Verizon again and remained stuck with an Internet connection so slow that it takes nearly 15 minutes to download her email. Her 30-year-old grandson, Laquan, was particularly annoyed, she said, because "he's on the Internet all the time." Some neighbors complain that it is impossible for them to work from home without a fast, reliable connection to the Internet, Ms. Cooke-Johnson said. Like most New Yorkers, they have been bombarded with ads for the FiOS service on television and, when they can get online, the Internet. Many of them have been persuaded, through those ads or personal experience, that FiOS is superior to competing services offered by the cable companies that had monopolies in different parts of the city before Verizon was granted a franchise to compete with them. That franchise, granted in 2008 by the administration of Mr. de Blasio's predecessor, Michael R. Bloomberg, was intended to promote competition that would improve service and hold down prices. One of Mr. Bloomberg's deputies at the time, Robert C. Lieber, called it a "seminal moment in the cable industry in New York City that was long overdue." He said that it would bring all of the city's households "not only a true choice of providers and competitive prices, but also a host of benefits." But Common Cause, a public interest group, has criticized the contract as being too favorable to Verizon. "The problem is that there really weren't significant penalties," said Susan Lerner, executive director of Common Cause New York. That omission has left the city with two options, she said: Either "pressure Verizon to live up to its promises or sue." Today, many New Yorkers say what they most want is an answer from Verizon about when the fiber-optic cable will actually reach them. After not hearing from Verizon since the letter in January, Ms. Brooks said she feared that the company had decided against upgrading her neighborhood. For its part, Verizon says it has made no such choices. The company said in a rebuttal to the city's audit that it had met the requirement of having fiber in place throughout the city so that it could provide FiOS within a year to any resident who requested it. In virtually every case of a customer's having waited more than a year, Verizon ran into an obstacle, such as an uncooperative landlord, the company said. "I hope we're not headed to litigation" with the city, said Kevin Service, senior vice president for network operations for Verizon. "We've invested an enormous amount of money" in building out the FiOS network, he said. "It's absolutely in our interest to get it to as many subscribers as possible." Mr. Service said the company had completed the first phase of the project, laying the

main lines, and was still “laying a lot of fiber” as part of the second phase, which involves getting wires through backyards and into rowhouses and high-rises. As an example, Mr. Service cited the work necessary on a single block in Manhattan — 118th Street in East Harlem. “To get to the 10th floor in the middle of the block,” he said, “we’ve got to talk to not only that building, but the three buildings on one side and the four buildings on the other side.”

Mr. Service said he did not “see an end in sight” to that work, adding that it would probably not be completed during the term of the franchise, which runs until 2020. He said he expected Verizon would still be hooking up new customers “at least until then.” He said the company had “the pedal to the metal” with “no intention of slowing down.”

But several Verizon employees disputed the company’s assertions, saying that after wiring all of Staten Island, Verizon significantly slowed the expansion to the rest of the city. The company, they said, had been reducing the work force on the wire-line side of its business and had shifted resources to the fast-growing wireless phone business. The union workers, members of the Communications Workers of America, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they are working without a contract amid contentious negotiations with Verizon. The union represents about 39,000 Verizon workers, down from about 45,000 when the workers went on strike in 2012 to protest the company’s contract demands.

Bob Master, an official of the union, said that the experiences related by the workers seemed to add up to “a pattern and a plan not to finish” the expansion. City officials tend to agree. Scott M. Stringer, the city comptroller, said he believed that Verizon was “in violation of the intent of this agreement.” “We as a city have to hold Verizon to the contract that they agreed on,” Mr. Stringer said. “This is the equivalent of making sure that every apartment had electricity in a bygone era. Access to the Internet is no longer a luxury; it’s a necessity of life.” – ***New York Times***

When asked recently if she knew how many people were watching the comedy “Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt” on Netflix, co-creator Tina Fey said she had no idea. “We don’t have any actual numbers,” Ms. Fey said at a recent gathering of television critics. “I feel a lot of people are watching the show. Let’s go with that,” she cracked.

Netflix Inc. is notoriously secretive when it comes to sharing such information—be it with content providers, the media or Wall Street—arguing that since it doesn’t have advertisers to please, ratings for its subscription streaming service are irrelevant. But now Hollywood is getting its first real peek inside the black box of online video streaming. In recent months, measurement specialist Nielsen has been scaling up a program to track viewing on Netflix and other online services like Amazon.com Inc.’s Prime Instant Video and Hulu. Nielsen said it is now tracking nearly 1,000 shows.

Most major TV studios are receiving detailed readouts on how their own programming is performing, including the total viewers for any episode and basic demographics such as age and gender, Nielsen said. For media giants including Comcast Corp.’s NBCUniversal, Time Warner Inc. and 21st Century Fox, the new data could give them more leverage in their content-licensing negotiations with streaming services, especially industry giant Netflix. When shows perform well, they will know to push for higher fees when deals are renewed.

At the same time, if the data reveal that Netflix’s original content isn’t as popular as its acquired programs that could be a concern to Wall Street, given how much the company has been investing in its own shows. Netflix has been dismissive of Nielsen’s efforts, noting that the company still doesn’t provide ratings for content viewed on tablets and phones and that its numbers wouldn’t include viewing of shows outside the U.S.

There are limits to the media companies’ bargaining power. Despite their misgivings about Netflix—and its role in drawing audiences away from traditional TV—they have clocked robust revenue growth from their licensing pacts with streaming companies. Streaming services including Netflix, Hulu and Amazon will spend $6.8 billion this year buying reruns of TV shows from networks and studios, estimates David Bank, an analyst at RBC Capital Markets.

Netflix does share some viewing information with select studios. Studios that do large content-licensing deals with Netflix have been able to negotiate for data such as the number of times a show has been streamed on a monthly basis and some tracking info to see how a show is retaining an audience over multiple episodes, people familiar with the matter say. But Netflix doesn't provide demographic breakdowns or how many people watch any individual episode.

Some major suppliers said they don't get any information from Netflix, and expressed surprise and disappointment that competitors do, since Netflix's mantra has been that it doesn't share viewership data. Amazon and Hulu have a similar approach to sharing data with program suppliers. A Netflix spokesman said the data that has been shared is "very limited" and said the company isn't sharing any data on Netflix originals, including shows produced by the major studios. The one exception was Twentieth Century Fox Television's "Arrested Development," the spokesman said. Twentieth-parent 21st Century Fox and Wall Street Journal-owner News Corp were part of the same company until mid-2013.

For now, Nielsen is sharing data on shows only with the studios that own them and that pay for the information. Over time, it hopes to "syndicate" the data widely in the industry, so studios can compare their viewership against others', further aiding them in negotiations. Nielsen is measuring streaming viewership through the same sample of more than 25,000 U.S. households it uses to measure traditional TV ratings. Studios provide Nielsen with digital files that allow the measurement company to scan for audio fingerprints of shows and log viewing data. Nielsen can measure any show a studio has produced, including originals created exclusively for streaming services.

The data provided to studios doesn't specify which streaming service a show was on, but studios can deduce that since they generally have exclusive tie-ups with streaming services for certain periods. Not everyone is thrilled with the early results from Nielsen. One studio executive said the Nielsen samples aren't wide enough and don't capture viewing from tablets and mobile devices. Nielsen is planning on including such measurement in the near future. Competitors to Nielsen in this area are emerging, including Luth Research and Symphony Advanced Media, both of whom offer viewership information on subscription video services.

In addition to whatever data can be obtained from outside suppliers and Netflix, some production companies have tried on their own to gauge what's working on the service and what's not. A common approach is to closely monitor Netflix to see which shows it is promoting to get a sense of what is popular. One studio executive said he has multiple researchers who often devote several days a week watching the home page of the streaming service.

If a show is being suggested for a month, "it really tells you something," the executive said. Another dead giveaway is when Netflix calls a studio, unsolicited, seeking shows similar to one that recently started streaming. Then there are the old-school Hollywood ways to get information, such as hiring people who used to work at a streaming company or swapping data over cocktails. "People do talk," said a studio executive. "We go to lunch. We go to dinner. We drink." The data the studios are getting doesn't yet appear to be trickling down to show producers, actors or their agents, limiting their ability to cash in on the popularity of a Netflix series to grow their career. "This is most important psychologically," said one prominent television agent. "Creators want to know who, if anyone, is watching and enjoying their work." – ***Wall Street Journal***

Day 57: A day after Republicans failed to override portions of Gov. Wolf's veto of their own $30 billion budget plan, the governor and top GOP legislators postponed plans to resume negotiations. Wolf said he needed more time to review the two key issues on the table: The Republicans' plan to reform the public pension system, and his own request for a $400 million boost in education funding.

House and Senate GOP leaders said that the meeting was not rescheduled and that they had been told it would not take place this week, PennLive.com reported. Wolf's spokesman, Jeff Sheridan, blamed the legislators. "Republican leaders changed their numbers regarding pension savings three times during yesterday's meeting and cannot provide clarity on the details of their pension reform plan," he said, according to the website. GOP leaders said they had answered the questions about the proposal.

The shutoff of state funding continued to reverberate. Preschool operators in Chester and Montgomery Counties announced plans for a news conference with area superintendents this week to show classrooms they say would not be staffed because of a lack of prekindergarten funding. Some said they would have to take out loans to stay afloat. Next budget talks: Unscheduled. – ***Philadelphia Inquirer*****;** **from *pennlive.com*: Does anyone care?**

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