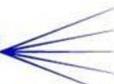




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The Pennsylvania Broadband Bill of Rights guarantees residents Broadband access at a certain speed and within a certain time. But Susquehanna County residents in the South Auburn area say they feel that Frontier Communications has forgotten that the law applies to them. Months of frustrations over very slow or dropped Broadband service and even spotty telephone service spilled over into an informational meeting sponsored by locals and held at the South Auburn Grange last Tuesday.

Despite promises made in Gov. Tom Wolf's Pennsylvania Broadband Investment Incentive Program last year, few in the audience held out any hope that Frontier Communications, a major provider of Broadband service in the county, can ever improve service for their area. The fact that Frontier stock was trading at under 80 cents a share last week also added fuel to the belief that the company lacked the money to make the improvements. "You know they're in trouble when you see what their stock is trading at," event organizer Charlene Tewksburg told the audience.

Alternatives to Frontier, including HughesNet or Viasat, are more expensive than Frontier and are not available in all locations, audience members emphasized. "I see so much extra fees in this, though. I don't know how many people it really is an option for," said Colleen Schake of Montrose. "There are so many people around here that are starving right now, to go to extra fees for everything and then to be locked into a 2-year plan without even a 30-day grace period to try it out. This is infuriating to me," Schake said. "The Internet is more like a utility. It's harder for us to survive. Our kids can't compete with other kids. It is a safety issue," said Judy Herschel, a candidate for county commissioner who attended the meeting.

Frontier Communications didn't respond to e-mailed requests for comment sent to its Eastern region press office, the company's director of public relations, Bob Elek, and vice president of corporate communications and external affairs Javier Mendoza. Complaints about poor Broadband access in the area aren't new. Last year they culminated in an April 2018 hearing of the House Majority Policy Committee at the Elk Lake High School, one of many legislative hearings held on the issue. Complaints about Broadband access also aren't confined to Susquehanna County, either. Earlier this month during a hearing of the Senate Communications and Technology Committee held at Penn State Fayette County, a rural county in the Southwestern part of the state which has a population of 136,000.

The Senate Committee is currently holding hearings on pending legislation geared towards increasing funding for rural Broadband access. At the third of four planned hearings on the issue, committee chair Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill, R-York County, noted earlier this month that 800,000 Pennsylvanians statewide lack reliable Broadband access. "The number of people without access or who have a discrepancy in actual speeds versus advertised speeds is actually in the millions," Phillips-Hill said pointing to statistics provided by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. "Marginal Broadband connectivity is a

Commonwealth wide problem but the problem becomes exceedingly worse in places like Fayette County and throughout most of rural Pennsylvania.”

Broadband access providers who also testified lamented the lack of an across-the-board Broadband policy and the huge expense of installing up-to-date fiber optics in rural areas. Pennsylvania State Grange president Wayne Campbell was one of several panelists who testified. “You all know what the problem is. How do we fix it? And it boils down to — and it doesn’t matter where you’re at — it boils down to money,” Campbell told committee members.

In June 2016 the FCC announced the award of \$3,891,253 to Frontier as part of Connect America Phase II Support for Pennsylvania, part of \$283 million it released to Pennsylvania and 27 other states. According to numbers provided by the state Public Utilities Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Services which documents consumer complaints, in 2017 Frontier averaged 95,148 residential accounts per month and the Bureau investigated 121 regarding Frontier. Of those, 59 percent were for unsatisfactory service and another 21 percent included a complaint regarding Broadband. In other actions, the BCS also cited Frontier for 52 informal infractions for unsatisfactory responses to trouble spots, accounting for 19 percent of the Bureau’s informal infractions against Frontier that year.

By 2018, according to figures provided by the Bureau, the number of Frontier residential accounts had dropped to 87,348, over a 12 percent loss, but the number of complaints investigated increased to 148. Of those complaints, the number involving Broadband issues also increased to 88, for over a 71 percent increase. Correspondingly, the number of complaints investigated for poor service calls jumped to 104 for a 50 percent increase.

While the PUC has limited jurisdiction over Broadband issues, PUC spokesperson David Hixson encouraged frustrated customer to file a complaint. “Again, if people have issues related to access or service, the PUC would like to know about it. First, they should report the problem/issue to the utility. IF they do not receive a satisfactory solution or answer to their problem, then they can contact the PUC’s Bureau of Consumer Services toll-free at 1-800-692-7380,” Hixson said. – ***Susquehanna (Co.) Independent***

Comcast has reportedly acquired Metrological, an application platform developer that integrates OTT video services and other content into the pay TV experience. [nScreenMedia analyst Colin Dixon](#) first reported the news and confirmed it through an unnamed source. It’s unclear what the financial terms were for the potential deal.

For Comcast, the acquisition is likely geared toward further integrating third-party streaming apps and offering a full app store on its X1 video platform, which Comcast also white-labels to other operators including Cox. As Dixon points out, X1 is built on RDK, an open source software platform for the connected home that standardizes core functions used in broadband devices, set-top boxes, and IoT solutions. But whereas a competing platform like Android TV has a large, built-in app store (Google Play), RDK does not. Approximately one year ago, RDK Management addressed this by launching a new app program to make

it easier to develop and launch apps across RDK-based set-top boxes. The program lets service providers use the new RDK App Framework to build and manage their own solutions, or choose a RDK pre-integrated app store solution, which is the Metrological App Store.

Metrological's app store includes access to a library of more than 300 apps. It can also be used to launch video apps including Netflix, YouTube and Amazon Prime Video; local and regionalized apps; and includes the back-office tools needed to launch and manage the lifecycle of an app store. If Comcast does indeed acquire Metrological, the deal will strengthen Comcast's position as an aggregator of traditional pay TV content (linear, VOD, PPV) along with SVOD services. Comcast has been one of the most active U.S. operators in terms of integrating SVOD applications into its platform. Comcast also recently launched **Xfinity Flex**, a service for its broadband-only subscribers that provides a set-top box that functions as an aggregated video streaming hub and a smart home control center. – **Fierce Video**

