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April 8, 2016

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial: Connectivity counts – FCC makes Internet subsidy a welfare benefit

Bloomberg ISPs Could Lose a Data Gold Mine

USA Today Are Facebook users sharing less personal stuff?

pennlive.com Gov. Tom Wolf calls lawmakers' claims of retaliation "fairly ridiculous"

Allentown Morning Call Wolf's poll numbers

AT&T will make several upgrades to its Philadelphia network — most of which will be permanent — ahead of Democratic National Convention this July, according to J. Michael Schweder, the president of AT&T Mid-Atlantic States. With more than 50,000 people set to flock to the city for the DNC, AT&T will make more than 500 upgrades to its 4G LTE capacity, which provides the fastest data speeds for uploads and downloads.

AT&T also plans to double its LTE capacity inside the Wells Fargo Center, a permanent boost that will also impact future events held in the venue, such as 76ers and Flyers games. LTE capacity in the downtown Philadelphia area will also double. Further enhancing its coverage, AT&T will add small cell services in certain downtown hotels. As a Voice-over-LTE enabled market, customers will also have higher quality audio and video calls in addition to better accessibility.

During the convention, AT&T will install temporary small cell services in certain locations to accommodate demand. "When all is said and done, our partnership with AT&T is not just technical or logistical," said DNC CEO Leah Daughtry. "We also share some important values. The support from AT&T will ensure the week in Philly will be experienced to the fullest." AT&T has invested over half a billion dollars in the Philadelphia area since 2012, and \$23 million for the papal visit. She added that AT&T will be rolling out even more upgrades in the coming months.

Mayor Jim Kenny said the city is unfazed by the DNC, its second major national gathering in less than a year. **"We're going to have 50,000-70,000 people** (Friday) for Villanova so we can handle big events," Kenney said. For Pope Francis' visit, AT&T was one of the cellular providers that partnered with Crown Castle. In addition to the above-ground nodes, Crown Castle laid over three miles of fiber-optic cables beneath the streets, which connect back to a central hub where the carriers have their own network. – *Philadelphia Business Journal*

Federal regulators said Thursday that they would seek to revamp their oversight of an obscure but important part of the telecommunications market, the bulk data service that telecom companies provide to businesses, including each other.

Details of the new plan being advanced by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler hadn't yet been made public as of Thursday evening. The agency

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said it would vote on the plan at its April 28 meeting. But even before the proposal emerged, industry groups began battling each other over how far it should go and which sectors should be swept up.

Smaller telecom companies reached an understanding with giant Verizon Communications Inc. to recommend replacing the current patchwork of regulation with “a permanent policy framework for all dedicated services,” one that would be “technology-neutral,” according to a joint statement. The current regulatory system has been criticized for focusing on older market players and technologies, leaving them feeling disproportionately targeted.

That announcement prompted a swift response from the cable industry, which said Thursday evening that such a move would target their firms. Some cable companies fear they might now face more regulation than in the past, since they represent a newer technology. “The FCC should reject any call to impose new, onerous regulations on an industry that is stepping up to offer meaningful choices to business customers,” the National Cable & Telecommunications Association said in its own statement. “The FCC will not achieve competition if it burdens new...entrants with regulation.”

The so-called special-access market has proved to be a particularly difficult regulatory puzzle for the FCC to solve, at a time of rapid transformation in the telecom industry generally. Some critics believe the FCC went too far in deregulating the market in 1999, the last time the agency made a major policy pronouncement.

For years, telecom companies such as Sprint Corp. and Level 3 Communications Inc. have griped that the big phone companies like AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. have taken unfair advantage of their power in the market. AT&T and Verizon, along with CenturyLink Inc. and Frontier Communications Corp., dominate the special access market because they effectively control the wires that were built by the legacy AT&T monopoly, which was broken up by the government in 1984.

Some smaller companies, for example, accuse the carriers of requiring them to make large volume commitments or face big fees. Sprint, which uses the special access to connect its cell towers, says it has had to pay huge termination fees to the larger carriers when it switched several thousand cell towers to alternative providers.

AT&T and the other large carriers have denied the allegations and said the market is generally competitive. In addition, companies of all sizes have complained that the FCC deregulatory scheme adopted in 1999 was both overly complicated and ineffective at determining areas where the market still needed stronger oversight. As a result, the FCC already has taken some steps toward a new system of stronger oversight.

Adding to the problems, the 1996 Telecommunications Act gives the FCC authority to police competitive behavior in the telecom market, but the agency's jurisdiction over these types of contracts primarily covers older technologies. AT&T, Verizon and other carriers have invested in newer network technologies that aren't subject to FCC oversight in this way. – *Wall Street Journal*

Verizon Communications Inc is ready to make a bid for Yahoo's web business, and hopes to make a merger more successful by also making an offer for a stake in Yahoo's Japan subsidiary, Bloomberg reported on Thursday, citing a source familiar with the matter. The telecom giant is planning to make a first-round bid for Yahoo's web business next week, the news organization said.

Alphabet Inc's Google unit is also mulling a bid for Yahoo's core business, Bloomberg reported, citing a source. However, Bloomberg said many companies that had been seen as likely investors in Yahoo were not planning a bid, including AT&T Inc , Comcast Corp and Microsoft Corp . Shares of Yahoo fell just over 1 percent to \$36.17.

Verizon, Yahoo and Google declined to comment for this story. AT&T, Comcast and

Microsoft could not be reached immediately for comments. Verizon showed interest in Yahoo's core business as early as December, when Chief Financial Officer Fran Shammo said the company would "see if there is a strategic fit" for its holdings, which include mail, news, sports and advertising technology.

Yahoo launched an auction of its core business in February after it shelved plans to spin off its stake in Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. The offer to purchase Yahoo's 35.5 percent stake in Yahoo Japan could put Verizon one step ahead of any rival bidders. The offer will also likely leave Yahoo Chief Executive Officer Marissa Mayer out of the mix, since Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam said in a recent television appearance that merging Yahoo's assets with AOL assets under the leadership of AOL CEO Tim Armstrong "would be a good thing for investors."

The New York Post reported last month that Mayer has been working to team up with private equity firms to create a "package deal" that sells the company and keeps her at the helm. Verizon shares were down 2.84 percent. – **Reuters**

Mark Radtke, research analyst for the Colorado Municipal League, said one of the most telling issues going before Colorado voters on Tuesday is one dealing with broadband Internet service. So far voters in 36 cities and towns in Colorado have **chosen to lift a state law that prohibits local governments from providing such service.** Nine communities, including Fruita, Mancos and Akron, will be making that decision Tuesday. So far, Radtke said, the override has passed wherever it has appeared on the ballot in the state. "There is a high level of frustration in rural Colorado in getting broadband service," he said. "People are hungry for this and see it as a necessary element for any future economic development." – Denver Post

"The New York Yankees baseball season began this week. The customers of Comcast Cable apparently are not going to get Yankees games because of a dispute between Comcast and Fox's YES Network. The only hope we Comcast customers have is the power of our advertising dollars. At some point, Fox/YES must realize that the 900,000 Comcast customers will not be seeing ads on their station, because the games are not being shown.

That is why YES is pushing Comcast subscribers to change providers. Some can't, some won't. It is in their interest for us to view what their sponsors are selling. No games, no advertising dollars. Also, how do we know that if we switch, Fox/YES won't do to Direct TV, Verizon, etc., what it has done to Comcast? Can you trust Fox/YES to keep their word? Believe me, this is hard for me because I love my Yankees games.

I hope cooler heads will prevail and a settlement will be reached. If not, the major fault is with Fox/YES" – **A letter to the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader**

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