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Google's decision to rethink its broadband services strategy is a plus for AT&T, Comcast and Charter Communications, but it's much too early for entrenched internet service providers to declare victory. Google-parent Alphabet is putting plans to expand super-fast fiber optic services on hold while it explores less-expensive wireless technologies. The Google Fiber service for now remains available in just five markets.

The Federal Communications Commission plans to open up a swath of unlicensed airwaves in the 3.5 GHz frequency band. Google has been testing wireless broadband using those airwaves. Google Fiber provides internet speeds of 1 gigabit per second and above, with connections that are highly reliable. Does a Google-branded wireless broadband service now pose less of a threat to AT&T, Comcast, Charter, Verizon Communications and other ISPs? "I think it is too early to draw that conclusion," Blair Levin, former chief of staff to the FCC chairman, told IBD. "If wireless works for Google, the number of places where it could deploy a faster, better, cheaper network would expand greatly, expanding the level of threat."

"Cable is certainly in the strongest position, but whether Google's announcement represents a diminished or greater threat is still unknown and depends largely on what ... deployment costs and service quality turns out to be," said Levin, also former director of the FCC's National Broadband Plan.

Craig Moffett, an analyst at MoffettNathanson, has a similar view. "It's hard to say whether this is a genuine pullback or whether it is simply a pause to consider alternative technologies. At the very least, this will slow things down for a while, since testing wireless alternatives will take a fair amount of time," Moffett told IBD. "It's still too early to say whether wireless will pose a significant threat to wired broadband. That's certainly the intent, and it works well in controlled lab settings, but we're still in the early days," said Moffett. "There are still a lot more questions than answers about how it will perform in the real world."

Google in June acquired Webpass, which provides fixed wireless broadband services in San Francisco, San Diego, Miami, Chicago, Boston and Oakland, Calif. "The current delay either means the 3.5 (GHz) spectrum is ready for real testing and/or fiber is more expensive than they thought," added Levin, now a nonresident fellow at the Brookings Institution. "I think it is still unknown whether Google will be successful,

Daily News
Another Pa.
conviction: no
real surprise

Washington
Post
The Trump two-
step: How Sen.
Pat Toomey is
trying,
awkwardly, to
keep his job

Pittsburgh
Post-Gazette
Pennsylvania's
Senate race is
most expensive
in U.S.

but the last several months suggest a combination of new thinking and course corrections to achieve the goal of deploying faster, better, cheaper networks."

Google Fiber is available in parts of Austin, Texas; Provo, Utah; Kansas City, Mo., and neighboring Kansas City, Kan.; as well as San Antonio. Google announced plans early in 2015 to expand the service to Nashville, Tenn.; Atlanta; Charlotte, N.C.; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; and Salt Lake City. Google has also touted plans to expand its fiber-based services to large cities, perhaps including Chicago or Los Angeles. Alphabet stock was down 0.6 to 801.19 at the close on the stock market, but shares touched an all-time high of 813.88 on Thursday and were up 18% from late June. – ***Investor's Business Daily***

After a busy summer for Sinclair, during which it was fined by the FCC for bad-faith broadcast-retransmission negotiating just before signing a multi-million dollar retrans deal with top pay-TV operator Comcast, the nation's largest station group has embarked on a campaign to let consumers know they don't need the pay-TV ecosystem to enjoy their local broadcast stations.

Sinclair Broadcast Group, which controls 173 network affiliates in 81 markets, has partnered with NAB-backed TV Freedom and Antennas Direct for what's being billed as the "Broadcast TV Liberation Tour." According to a TV Freedom press release, the group's tour bus will over the next two weeks visit Little Rock, Arkansas; Macon, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Asheville, North Carolina; and Baltimore, Maryland; seeking to raise awareness among consumers that they "can access dozens of local broadcast TV channels via an advanced digital antenna in high-definition for free."

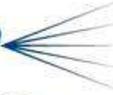
The tour's promoters say the tour has visited more than 60 U.S. cities so far and handed out more than a \$1 million worth of broadcast antennas for free. "We are proud to be working with Sinclair TV stations at each tour stop to provide TV antennas to so many people seeking to access their local news, lifeline weather coverage and the most popular entertainment programming on television for free," said Richard Schneider, president of Antennas Direct, in a statement.

Of course, with retransmission fees set to reach \$10.6 billion by 2020, and the nation's leading station owner spearheading that growth, it's puzzling just what Sinclair is trying to liberate its customers from. For its part, TV Freedom said it's just going where the viewers are — well, at least a few of them, anyway. Citing GfK research, the lobbying group said the percentage of Americans who get their TV primarily from broadcast antennas is up from 15 percent to 17 percent year-over-year. – ***Fierce Cable***

Attorney General Kathleen Kane's resignation, effective Wednesday, triggers a succession process:

- The Commonwealth Attorney's Act says the first deputy becomes attorney general if the elected or appointed officeholder resigns or is incapacitated. Former Montgomery County District Attorney Bruce Castor will be sworn in Wednesday.
- The state constitution gives Gov. Tom Wolf the power to appoint a temporary attorney general, replacing Castor. The governor does not need Senate approval if the replacement holds the title "acting attorney general."
- Voters pick a new attorney general on Nov. 8. The candidates are Republican John Rafferty and Democrat Josh Shapiro. The winner is sworn into office Jan. 17. – ***Allentown Morning Call***; ***in the Beaver County Times, state legislators want to move on***; editorials in the ***Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*** and ***Philadelphia Inquirer***

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