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# Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE  
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

## Regulatory Headlines

### Senate Holds Hearing on Mapping

Stakeholders told a Senate committee this week about the impact of broadband map problems on their operations and about how those problems hinder the ability to bring broadband to parts of the U.S. that lack service.

### FCC Overstating Broadband Access

According to Federal Communications Commission chairman Ajit Pai, the FCC's current strategy has done wonders for closing the digital divide between those with access to broadband and those without it. Now Microsoft has added its voice to those challenging the accuracy of the FCC's broadband claims.

### Broadband Affordability Report

Nearly half of the U.S. population (45%) lacks access to a low-price wired broadband offering, according to a new broadband affordability report from BroadbandNow

### ReConnect Program Applications

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will start accepting applications for its Rural e-Connectivity Pilot Program (ReConnect Program) on April 23. The ReConnect Program enables USDA to create and implement innovative solutions to rural connectivity by providing various financial options to partners and customers.

### Can the Internet be Saved?

The House of Representatives has passed the Save the Internet Act, which would restore net neutrality. But both the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and President Donald Trump promise to stop this effort dead in the tracks.

### Life in the FCC Minority

The hallway outside of Jessica Rosenworcel's office is lined with framed copies of bills the FCC commissioner helped write during her time as a Senate staffer.



## Market Watch

[AT&T Expanding 5G to 7 More Cities](#)

[Online TV Getting More Expensive](#)

[Windstream Accuses Charter of Scare Tactics](#)

[ARRIS/Metrological Set-Top Box](#)



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# Technology Trends

*New and notable technology and services*

## Testing Verizon's Early 5G Speeds

A week ago, I trudged through a cold drizzle, coffee clutched desperately in hand, to test Verizon's new 5G network the day after it launched in parts of downtown Chicago and Minneapolis. After using it for six solid hours on the Moto Z3 and its 5G Moto Mod in Chicago, I walked away with a clearer understanding of the biggest issues facing Verizon and other carriers as the next-generation data networks begin to roll out.

## AT&T Speed Tests May be Overstated

AT&T is the fastest US mobile provider but probably not by as much as first reported, according to new information from speed-test company Ookla. AT&T's overall mobile speed was artificially inflated in Ookla's latest speed ratings by the sheer number of people testing their new "5G E" connections, whose icon notification has recently started showing up on newer iPhone models.

## Huawei: Cybersecurity Under Threat

Something fundamental has changed in the battle between Huawei and Washington in the last two weeks. The United States remains the center of global attention for Huawei, and although the Chinese telecoms equipment giant has been winning its battle in Europe and Asia and the Middle East, the U.S. had looked set to keep the business on the back foot for years to come.

## Disney Streaming Launch November 12

Disney has been talking about its plan to create its own Netflix since the summer of 2017, but it's been short on crucial details. Now we have them: Disney+ will launch in the US on November 12, for \$7 a month. It will have a very large library of old Disney movies and TV shows — crucially, including titles from its Marvel, Pixar, and Star Wars catalog — along with new movies and series made exclusively for the streaming service.

## 5G Connected Cows

They may look like regular cows, but a herd of Friesian dairy cattle at a British farm are internet pioneers and they are enjoying the benefits of 5G connectivity before you. Cisco Systems Inc, which is developing network infrastructure for the emerging technology, has set up 5G testbeds to trial wireless and mobile connectivity in three rural locations.



## IN FOCUS

### Alexicon Goes to Washington

Zach Cochran, Doug Kitch, and Chris Barron, along with Randy Tyree of GRTyree Consulting, visited several locations around the Washington, D.C. Capitol Hill area last week to discuss broadband mapping issues.

The first stop was the FCC, where we met with members of the Wireline Competition Bureau, the Office of Economics and Analytics, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, and the Office of Native Affairs and Policy (see [Ex Parte](#)). Next up was a meeting with representatives of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration at the Department of Commerce headquarters, followed by a brief meeting with members of the Senate Commerce Committee minority Staff. They wrapped up the trip with visits to USTelecom and Staff of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

Discussion centered on the need, acknowledged by a diverse cross section of industry stakeholders, for more accurate broadband availability data (see articles above). At the same time, small carriers are concerned about the level of additional reporting burden that may occur as a result of reporting, for example, Form 477 data at the sub-census block level. Various parties have offered solutions, including, recently, USTelecom's [announcement](#) of the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric (BSLF) method and a two state pilot project. In addition, NTIA is rolling out another [pilot program](#) in eight states in response to Congressional action.

USTelecom's BSLF, based on CostQuest's (the people behind the CACM), [location fabric](#) method, seems to have significant backing and would certainly solve the broadband availability accuracy problems currently faced. It consists of two main steps:

first, all serviceable locations in the United States would be identified, in a process involving a mix of open source and commercial data; and second, service providers would have to identify broadband coverage to those locations. Other methods would use road segments or would have reporting providers submit shapefiles.

The key for small providers will be the tradeoff between accuracy and burden. Alexicon has developed the GRID (Geospatial Rendering of Internet Deployment) to assist with this issue. Basically, the GRID breaks census blocks into definable sections that allow reporting carriers to easily note where broadband service is available and not available. When presented in the DC trip, the GRID was well-received, and even caught the attention of [NCTA](#).

We will continue to advocate for a balance between accuracy and reporting burden in the coming weeks and months. The GRID could present a middle ground between today's Form 477 and location-specific geolocating, or could be a bridge between today's inaccurate reporting and, for example, implementation of the BSLF in two years. Furthermore, most methods require some sort of "managed visual review", which the GRID can handle with relative ease.



## Alexicon at Work

Doug Kitch will attend and present at the The NTTA Tribal Engineering Broadband Summit in Mescalero, NM on April 16 and 17.

Zach Cochran will be attending the NTCA Legislative & Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. on April 15 and 16.

Zach will be moderating a Broadband Coverage Mapping panel on Monday starting at 2:50, with panelists Greg Guice, Consulting and Senior Counsel at McGuire Woods Consulting, and Brent Christensen, President/CEO of the Minnesota Telecom Alliance. For more information, please visit NTCA's [website](#).



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Questions? Comments?

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