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# Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE  
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

## Regulatory Headlines

### [FCC Approves Sprint/T-Mobile Merger](#)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Wednesday voted along party lines to approve the \$26 billion merger between T-Mobile and Sprint, the final move needed for the deal to secure the U.S. government's full blessing.

### [Dems Offer IoT Security Bill](#)

Democratic lawmakers in the House and Senate on Tuesday introduced legislation to increase the security of internet-connected devices.

### [Congressman Introduces Mapping Bill](#)

Rep. Antonio Delgado, D-N.Y., introduced the Broadband Speed Act and the Community Broadband Mapping Act last Thursday, citing the "urgent crisis" of rural broadband access as one of the biggest problems facing places like his Upstate New York district. The bills are also the latest in a long list of legislation introduced this year aimed at closing the digital divide.

### [ReConnect Grant Goes to SC County](#)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it has awarded a \$9.75 million ReConnect grant to Orangeburg County, S.C. The USDA ReConnect rural broadband grant will go toward making broadband available to 3,911 households, 21 farms, 17 rural businesses, 13 educational facilities, nine critical community facilities and a health care center, USDA said.

### [Tribal Engagement Input Sought](#)

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC or Commission) Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB or Bureau), in a Public Notice, seeks comment on how to best facilitate communications between Tribes and eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) in furthering deployment of broadband on Tribal lands.



## Market Watch

[Large Telecom has Failed Rural America](#)

[Cisco Predicts Major Backhaul Upgrades for 5G](#)

[US Cellular Calls for Mid-Band Spectrum](#)

[T-Mobile to Cover 200M with 5G This Year](#)



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Questions? Comments?  
Contact Chris Barron

[cbarron@alexicon.net](mailto:cbarron@alexicon.net)

# Technology Trends

*New and notable technology and services*

## Adopt a Maintenance Mindset: Protect IT

As part of National Cyber Security Awareness Month, or NCSAM, the National Cyber Security Alliance is advising all computer users to "Protect IT" by taking precautions such as updating to the latest security software, Web browser and operating system. Protect IT is the third pillar of the NCSA's overarching message around this month's awareness program, which focuses on key areas related to citizen privacy, consumer devices and e-commerce security.

## Information-Stealing Malware is Popular

A new kind of easy to use trojan malware is gaining popularity among cyber criminals, providing them with simple means of stealing credit card data, passwords and cryptocurrency -- and it has already infected hundreds of thousands of Windows users around the world. Raccoon Stealer first appeared in April this year and has quickly risen to become one of the most talked-about malware services in underground forums.

## VZ 5G Edge Tech Targets VR and AR

Verizon has tested 5G edge technology aimed at facilitating artificial intelligence, machine learning and mobile virtual, mixed, augmented and cinematic reality services. The technology involves an independent GPU-based orchestration system.

## Congress Wants a Piece of Zuckerberg

Wednesday was open season on Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook — this time in the halls of the US Congress. Sixty different politicians had five minutes each to grill Zuckerberg about whatever they wanted, and they jumped at the opportunity to try and test him at yet another politically delicate moment in his company's history. With some notable exceptions, Congress came across as prepared, serious, and thoughtful — especially compared to prior outings, when technological illiteracy reigned supreme.

## What Google Knows About You

Google collects a ton of information about you -- maybe even more than you realize. Google remembers every search you perform and every YouTube video you watch. Whether you have an iPhone or Android phone, Google Maps logs everywhere you go, the route you take to get there, when you arrive and what time you leave -- even if you never open the app.



## IN FOCUS

### FCC Activity

#### Broadband Performance Testing

At the FCC's Open Meeting today, an Order on Reconsideration was adopted that revises the broadband performance testing framework originally adopted at the Bureau level in 2018 ([News Release](#)). The vote was unanimous, with a brief soliloquy by Commissioner O'Rielly on some, in his opinion, dramatic accusations being cast by an unnamed organization about how testing will be the end of broadband in rural areas (or something to that effect).

While the Order is not yet available, judging from the Wireline Competition Bureau's presentation and Commissioner comments, it appears the final product will be largely the same as the draft item (see 10/8/19 Special Bulletin): delay in the starting date for most support recipients, a 12 month "pre-testing" period for recipients of ACAM and cost-based USF, and affirmation of much of the Bureau's order.

#### Broadband Deployment Report NOI

The FCC [released](#) its annual Broadband Deployment Report Notice of Inquiry this week. This is the fifteenth of these inquiries, and has been common in the past few years, not without some level of controversy. The last report, released in May 2019, declared that broadband is being deployed in a reasonable and timely manner, based on the Pai-led Commission's standard—year over year changes in availability (based on Form 477). Given the same framework will be used for this year's inquiry, it's not surprising that Commissioners Rosenworcel and Starks dissented.

Commissioner Rosenworcel argues that considering annual changes in availability is the wrong metric and results in false declarations of victory, noting that "too many rural households and tribal areas hear that they may be forever consigned to the wrong side of the digital divide." She also thinks the speed used to measure progress should be 100 Mbps and symmetrical. Finally, Commissioner Rosenworcel argues that broadband adoption should also be part of the Commission's annual Section 706 inquiry.

Commissioner Starks weighs in and complains about the continued use of Form 477 data, even after it has been found to be inaccurate, and also that the Commission is using the wrong definition of "progress."

Even Commissioner O'Rielly found something to complain about—that the Commission still doesn't consider mobile broadband a substitute for fixed service.

The Commission, while perhaps being a little more cautious before declaring victory after last year's [BarrierFree debacle](#), is likely to find that progress is being made in ensuring all Americans have access to broadband services in a reasonable and timely manner, regardless of arguments about the methodology.

Comments are due November 22; replies are due December 9.



## Alexicon at Work

Alexicon continues to be active in ensuring any changes to broadband data collection by the FCC are properly balanced between accuracy and reporting burden. To that end, we have contacted national associations to discuss next steps—especially about any possible location-based methodology—and how best to represent accurate data in rural areas, Tribal lands, and remote areas of Alaska.



**Alexicon**

Questions? Comments?

Contact Chris Barron

[cbarron@alexicon.net](mailto:cbarron@alexicon.net)