



From the Office of the President & CEO

Fiber Broadband Association
3050 K Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20007, USA

July 12, 2021

Dear FBA Members,

The second quarter of 2021 got off to a strong start with a White House briefing on the American Jobs Plan that included \$100B for broadband infrastructure as a means to finally bridge the digital divide and provide digital equity for all Americans. The President's plan aims to build "future proof" high-speed broadband infrastructure to provide 100% coverage. FBA took on the challenge to build bipartisan support for this broadband funding proposal and we greatly appreciate our members' engagement during our Hill meetings over the past several months. A bipartisan group of Senators reached an agreement with the President on the framework for an infrastructure package that will include \$65B in broadband funding. While it will not be the \$100B initially proposed, this package is the single largest commitment of federal dollars ever for broadband infrastructure investment.

The \$65B broadband funding package is currently broken down as follows (but changing on a minute-by-minute basis):

- \$40B for broadband network construction
- \$14B for USDA/RUS Reconnects
- \$5B for affordability & adoption initiatives
- \$6B for broadband financing program

A subset of Senators is currently negotiating the final details of the broadband section of the infrastructure package, including which agency will administer the funds, network requirements and authorization amounts. We expect that there will be no mark up and the language will be added to the surface transportation bill when it is considered by the full Senate. The House will consider the package after the Senate.

While the infrastructure funding works its way through Congress, we do have billions (\$US) of Federal and State broadband funding that has already been appropriated. The \$9.3B of Rural Digital Opportunity Funds (RDOF) awarded on December 7 continues to work its way through the FCC's Long Form Application process. We expect RDOF approvals to be announced by the FCC in tranches, beginning with the FTTH-base projects. The first

announcements should begin anytime now. The FCC still has not issued the contract for a vendor for Broadband Mapping to begin the process of identifying all broadband serviceable locations in the US by geocode. As a result, the earliest we are going to see more accurate and granular data is not until later next year.

We are starting to see RUS ReConnect awards in the form of grants for the second round, with two recently issued for FTTH builds. NTIA will begin receiving proposals for the Public-Private Grant program in mid-August and the Tribal Grant program on September 1st. With respect to the American Rescue Plan Act/Local Block Grants, many States have adopted legislation to fund broadband deployment.

It is an exciting time for our industry as we are at the beginning of a major fiber investment cycle that will make a positive societal impact for generations to come.

2021 Fiber Connect Conference and FBA's 20th Anniversary

We are now only a few weeks away from our annual in-person conference in Nashville. As I reported at the end of the first quarter, we moved our conference from Dallas to Nashville and pushed out the dates from early June to July 25-28. This has turned out to be a fantastic decision as we have already surpassed every target and metric and we will have record attendance. This year's conference will be our best event on every measure. We will be kicking off on Sunday, July 25th with three outstanding workshops. The conference officially starts on Monday, July 26th with 150 speakers, over 50 sessions and 6 educational tracks. On the exhibit floor, we will be celebrating the Fiber Broadband Association's 20th anniversary with an Evolution of FTTH – Innovation Zone, highlighting the progress our industry has realized, milestones achieved and where we are heading in the future. I look forward to seeing everyone there in person.

Work Force Development

We have made excellent progress during the quarter with our efforts to develop OptICs, our accredited Fiber Optic Technician training program. The course development will be complete by the conference, and we have been meeting almost daily with the Department of Labor to ensure that we have a nationally recognized program. I would like to personally thank Mark Boxer from our Board, along with Brendan O'Boyle and Gene Scott, as well as members from our Deployment Specialists and Education subcommittees, in addition to Debbie Kish from the FBA staff on all their hard work on developing this program. I would also like to thank Larry Johnson for all of his long hours and hard work on the course development.



Our next steps will be to launch this program nationwide with community colleges, high schools and veterans entering the private sector. The future for fiber is bright and this program will ensure we have the highly skilled workforce we need to see it to completion.

Member Engagement

I am pleased to announce that we have added almost 30 new member companies during the quarter, including Windstream and Harmonic as premier members. We ended 2Q with 51% of our membership comprised of Network Operators and 49% of our members representing the supply side of our industry.

Our membership engagement continues to grow with high levels of participation with each of the FBA committees and working groups. The Public Policy committee, led by Ben Moncrief, C-Spire, has been highly active on a number of State and Federal advocacy initiatives. The Technology committee, led by John George, OFS, recently issued its whitepaper on *The Rural Digital Divide* and will issue whitepapers on *FTTH vs. Wireless* and *FTTH vs. LEO Satellites* before our conference. Our Public Officials working group, led by Bob Knight, Harrison Edwards, and Kimberly McKinley, Utopia Fiber, continues to grow well beyond 100 communities, spread across 29 States. Our Women in Fiber (WIF) steering committee, which includes Jessica Zufolo, Magellan-Advisors, Alexa Edens, KGP, Holly Ruser, Graybar, Tanya Kanczuzewski, Duraline, and Kim Hartwell, Corning, and led by FBA staff member Trish Ehlers has been preparing for our popular WIF Luncheon at our conference, featuring a keynote address from Jennifer Fritzsche, Head of North American Telecom & Digital Infrastructure at Greenhill & Co. The Education subcommittee, led by Gene Scott, City of Wilson, NC has diligently worked through all the details of our Certified Fiber to the Home Professional exam and associated documents. The Deployment Specialists committee, led by Brendan O'Boyle, Preformed Line Products, has been working closely with Mark Boxer and the Education subcommittee on our new OpTICs fiber optic technician training and certification program. I would also like to welcome Kimberly Bidy, EPB, as our new chair for the Marketing Committee. Finally, I am sure that Joseph Jones (JJ), OnTrac, and the Conference Committee will be looking forward to a wildly successful Fiber Connect Conference this month. I would like to thank all our committee members for all their hard work and success over the quarter. It is exciting to see all the wonderful progress as we work to move our industry forward.



LATAM

Our Latin America chapter, under the leadership of 2021 Chair, Nelson Saito, Furukawa Electric, and FBA LATAM Director, Edna Preuss, finished the quarter with an incredibly successful LATAM virtual Conference with over 2,000 registered attendees and achieved 144% of their revenue target. I would like to extend a special thank you to LATAM board member Liza Poe, Corning, and the LATAM Marketing Committee, led by Edwar Juarez, Fyco Telecom, and Luiz Henrique Felchner, Furukawa Electric, for their outstanding work to put together this successful event. The conference kicked off with this sponsored video from Corning.

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6815634518607704064>

The LATAM team has also added 8 new members so far in 2021 and is working on launching their network operator training program. We plan on holding another LATAM virtual event in the fall.

Operational Progress

In addition to our tremendous success in growing our membership this quarter and preparing for our upcoming conference, the team has been keenly focused on strengthening our operations across the board. Our successful membership growth is a result of the staff's efforts to optimize inbound membership requests, increased outbound recruitment efforts and improved membership satisfaction and retention.

Our webinars and weekly Fiber for Breakfast audiences continue to grow, with registration and attendance nearly doubling year-over-year. This success has attracted sponsorships for both our webinars and new email blast programs. The number of our webinars for the quarter increased over 50% and we significantly increased registrations from social media promotion, with the majority coming from LinkedIn.

FBA also began building a custom research and survey practice, under the leadership of Debbie Kish, FBA VP of Research. Debbie launched a global Work-From-Home survey, working with the leadership of the Fibre Council Global Alliance (FCGA) and she published the results of this important study - "[The Future of Work: Analyzing Global Broadband Trends](#)", along with a global webinar:

The Future of Work: What Should We Expect After the Pandemic?

July 13, 2021, 10:00 AM EDT

Register at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/271733719062249231>



This is part of Debbie's goal of building a library of market resources that help advance the market, address emerging issues as the market evolves, and highlight the strength of fiber as the optimal and clear economic choice for broadband development. As mentioned earlier, Debbie has also been working closely with the Technology Committee to publish whitepapers on *The Rural Digital Divide*, *Fiber vs FWA* and a number of research projects currently in development.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention the tremendous support from our strategic partners and their respective teams. Tom Cohen, KDW, is our regulatory attorney and general counsel, and Steve Perry and Kim Bayliss with Perry Bayliss are our Washington lobbyists. Jeff Kavadias and his team at Kavadias Hall, working closely with our Treasurer, Joe Jensen with Corning provide oversight of our finances. Rich Williams and his team at Connect2 Communications provide our PR and Mike Render, RVA, is our strategic research partner.

Next Steps

Our key focus areas for 3Q are the following:

- Execute a record 2021 Fiber Connect event
- Secure 70% of 2022 Fiber Connect exhibit commitments
- Drive bipartisan support for President Biden's Broadband Infrastructure package
- Launch OpTICs accredited Fiber Optic Technician program
- Publish global WFH study and execute corresponding webinars on the study across the world
- Continue to diversify FBA's revenue streams to expand our members services
- Research and secure a new Association Management System (AMS) platform and website

As we enter 3Q, I remain extremely excited about the tremendous opportunity in front of our industry as a whole and each of us individually as members. The Fiber Broadband Association has made great strides in gaining national and global visibility as the voice of fiber broadband. We will continue to work with the Administration, Congress, ISPs, and communities across the nation to accelerate the deployment of fiber broadband networks to ensure digital equity and enable every community to leverage economic and societal benefits that only fiber can deliver.



From the Office of the President & CEO

Sincerely,



Gary Bolton

President and CEO

Fiber Broadband Association

919.349.1025

gbolton@fiberbroadband.org

