

July 1, 2024

Dear Fiber Broadband Association Members,

As we exit the first half of 2024, Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) research indicates that network operator FTTH-related inventory is normalizing, and the supply-side of our membership should start seeing orders and shipments aligning with record fiber deployment in 2H24. During the second quarter, our industry saw some highs and lows with regards to federal broadband programs. We saw the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) run out of funding, without Congress taking any action, and leaving 23 million Americans without a clear path to affordable broadband. On the other hand, we are pleased with the progress made by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), approving 14 additional state and territory Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) initial proposals. These additional approvals open the path to closing the Digital Divide. We expect NTIA's approval velocity to continue to ramp in the third quarter, but at measured pace. As a result, we should see some BEAD-funded fiber projects begin later this year. Our research indicates that 2024 continues to be on track for another record fiber deployment year and will continue to ramp to successive record deployment years through the end of the decade. The fiber industry could not be in a better position going forward.

### **FBA Performance**

In the second quarter, the Fiber Broadband Association's momentum continues to grow. As of May 31, our revenue was \$1.16M favorable to budget while expenses came in \$46K below budget. Our strong financial performance is a result of continued membership growth, the success of the Richmond, Little Rock, and Deer Valley regional events, investments, and non-conference sponsorships. FBA added 52 new member companies, including three tribal members bringing our North American membership to 526 with 37 Tribes.

In May, Kristin Cabana, FBA Platform Administrator, along with Nadir Noon launched the FBA Community Platform for our 16 committees, working groups, and roundtables as a new way to track progress on work products and collaborate. The FBA Community Platform is now open to all members in Q3 and will serve as a way to stay informed and network within the industry.

We also are now fully staffed with the addition of Max Hahn to serve as the Director of Marketing. I am also pleased to announce that Nadir Noon was promoted to the Director of Operations and Events.

### **Fiber Connect 2024**

Fiber Connect 2024 will take place in Nashville, July 28-31, and will be the biggest and best fiber broadband event in the world. Our registration is tracking at 30% above last year's record registration in Orlando. Since the pandemic, our annual conference has steadily grown by about 1,000 attendees each year and we are expecting about 5,000 attendees this year in Nashville. The theme this year is "*Accelerating Our Fiber Future.*" We continue to elevate the quality of experience with 275 expert speakers, 75 sessions, two pre-conference educational tracks, seven main conference educational tracks, 43 breakout sessions, a series of five "Ted Talk" style Operator Light Talks, The C-Suite Forum, Fiber Meet Ups, Technology Deep Dives with the Broadband Forum, the return of our Proof-of-Concept demos, The State Broadband Summit, Broadband Policy Symposium, Overbuilder Toolkit, Women in Fiber Luncheon, Awards Luncheon, 281 (up from 237 last year) exhibitors in our biggest Expo Hall yet with 50,000 sq ft (up from 41,000 sq ft) of exhibits, and much, much more. We will continue our tradition of weaving in live music entertainment from up-and-coming Nashville stars. This will be a conference that will set the bar for the industry.

### **Public Policy**

The second quarter was a strong quarter for the Fiber Broadband Association's Public Policy Committee. Some of the key highlights during the quarter included the following:

#### *Fiber Day On The Hill*

On April 11, 2024, the FBA held our second annual "Fiber Day on the Hill" in Washington, DC, in the Rayburn Foyer of the Capitol. Honorary co-chairs for this event were Senators Peter Welch (D-VT) and Roger Marshall (R-KS), along with Representatives Annie Kuster (D-NH-02) and Troy Balderson (R-OH-12). Over 40 FBA members participated this year, as well as the full FBA Board of Directors, led by Chairman Jimmy Todd of Nex-Tech. This event grew in both numbers and enthusiasm for fiber, bringing over 350 bipartisan attendees from Congress and the Administration and FBA member companies. Senators Welch and Marshall along with Representatives Balderson and Fleischmann spoke about the invaluable connectivity fiber for all will bring.

#### *National Permitting Summit*

On May 9, 2024, FBA partnered with the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, the American Association for Public Broadband, and the Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy, Brightspeed, Google Fiber, Lumos, and NTCA, to host a national summit with key stakeholders on local broadband permitting. The goal of this summit was to convene a diverse set of experts, put them in conversation, and identify areas of consensus. Over 30 permitting experts participated in the summit and a white paper resulting from the event will be forthcoming from the Benton Institute.

#### *FBA Comments Filed*

- FBA submitted comments on the FCC’s public notice seeking input for its 2024 Communications Marketplace Report. <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/10606657422018/1>
- FBA submitted comments to Federal Highway Administration related to Buy America for Manufactured Products. <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/FHWA-2023-0037-0087>

#### **FBA Research**

A heavy focus was placed on research during the quarter. The Technology Committee released the following studies:

- The Benefits of Retiring Copper Today (June 2024) <https://fiberbroadband.org/resources/the-benefits-of-retiring-copper/>
- Fiber 101 Series <https://fiberbroadband.org/resources/fiber-101-series-application-considerations-for-aerial-fiber-drops/>
  - Aerial Drop (May 2024)
  - Lash & Strand (June 2024)

In addition, the following studies and whitepapers are under development for release by Fiber Connect 2024 in July:

- Economic Impact Studies:
  - Ting Internet/Charlottesville, Va. - in development
  - Economic Impact of Fiber – underway with Brattle (former FCC Chief Economist)
- “Broadband Market Workforce Needs”
  - Joint effort with PCCA and Continuum Capital to calculate the workforce requirements by state
- “Gigabit Fiber is All About Productivity”
  - Research led by Mike Render, which illustrates how fiber will deliver \$270B to GDP
- Sustainability White Paper
  - Developed by FBA’s Sustainability working group
- “Enhancing Timeliness in Locating Underground Utilities”

- Developed by FBA's Deployment Specialists working group

### **FBA Workforce Development**

Two years ago, FBA and Wilson Community College held the pilot of FBA's OpTIC Path™ Fiber Optic Technician training program with a cohort of eight students. We had 25 OpTIC Path students graduate in 2022 and we ramped to a total of 235 graduates by the end of 2023. I am pleased to report that we have reached a total of 423 OpTIC Path graduates, and we are on track to graduate a total of 1,085 fiber optic technicians by the end of the year. Even more exciting is that 87% of our graduates are veterans. We currently have 15 active learning institutions in 12 states so far as we work to roll out our program to all 56 states and territories.

### **FBA LATAM**

The LATAM Chapter delivered successful events in Puerto Rico in April, and Peru in June. In Puerto Rico, speakers from the FCC, NTIA, and USDA covered the broadband funding for the territory. The Peru event highlighted the successful deployment of fiber across the region. Peru has a very diverse geography from the Pacific Ocean, to the high mountains of the Andes, to the rain forest of the Amazon. Speakers from the region's network operators highlighted the challenges of reaching some of the remote rural areas and the success of deployment in the metro area.

In Q2, the LATAM Chapter has also taken our Training and Certification Program to Colombia, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Peru, to support the growth of the industry. FBA LATAM believes that prioritizing investments in training and workforce development is essential to boost the telecommunications industry in Latin America's vastly expanding market.

### **Results Against Q2 Goals**

As we close the second quarter, the following is our progress against our 2Q 2024 goals:

- ✓ Capacity attendance at FBA's Regional and LATAM Fiber Connect events
- ✓ On pace for a record turnout at Fiber Connect 2024 in Nashville, July 28-31, as registration is pacing at 30% ahead of last year's record attendance
- ✓ Successful Fiber Day on the Hill with over 350 bipartisan attendees from Congress, the Administration, and FBA member companies
- ✓ Continue to ramp and scale our OpTIC Path fiber technician training program nationwide as we progress toward 1,085 graduates by year-end

*From the Office of the President & CEO*

- ✓ Develop a Canadian presence as we prepare for our Regional Fiber Connect workshop in Alberta on October 9
  
- ✓ Continued strong growth in membership, while growing Tribal members, uniting the industry, and investing in our volunteer leadership

As we head into the second half of 2024, I am confident that we will see network operator FTTH-related inventory normalize, the pace of NTIA BEAD initial proposal approvals accelerate, and our industry come together at Fiber Connect 2024--the largest and best fiber broadband conference in the world this year.

FBA's continued success is a testament to our hard-working board of directors, led by our chairman Jimmy Todd, CEO, Nex-Tech, and vice chair Kimberly McKinley, CMO, UTOPIA Fiber and our amazing staff, strategic partners, and volunteer leaders. I could not be more excited about our mission and opportunity to connect every American with fiber by the end of the decade. *When Fiber Leads, The Future Follows.*

As always, you can reach me 24/7 on my cell phone (listed below) or by email. If I or anyone on my staff can help you and your company accelerate the deployment of fiber, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



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