

Fiber Connect: A Preview

In its annual conference, which will be held virtually from December 14–16, 2020, the Fiber Broadband Association will bring together experts in all aspects of fiber to the home (FTTH).

By Masha Zager / *Broadband Communities*

The Fiber Broadband Association's (FBA's) 2020 Fiber Connect conference will feature overviews of the industry; breakout sessions on business, engineering, operations and customer connections; and a fiber starter kit for people new to the business. As in past years, speakers represent a wide range of expertise and viewpoints, from service providers and vendors to government officials and industry analysts. What they all have in common is a dedication to the growth and success of high-performance, fiber-based broadband.

Following are some of **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES'** recommendations for don't-miss sessions. All times are in Eastern Standard Time.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

10:00 a.m. – Fiber Broadband in the 2020s: Strategies to Succeed With Fiber

Focusing on fiber in multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) buildings, this session will feature service-provider presenters, including Dan O'Connell, CenturyLink's general manager for consumer markets in the Northeast. O'Connell is a veteran of the MDU broadband market as well as a former head of the FBA (or FTTH Council, as it was known at the time).

Deploying fiber to the unit in MDUs has always been challenging, despite the fact that MDU residents highly value fiber connections. Panelists will discuss why they chose fiber, how they deployed fiber cost-effectively, what challenges they faced and

overcame, and what business and marketing tactics were most successful. The session is intended for service providers at all levels of experience.

12:15 p.m. – Next-Generation PON Technology

FTTH technology has never stood still, and now the GPON standard that has been the industry's mainstay for more than a decade is giving way under the strain of advanced video, AR/VR, high-bandwidth enterprise applications and mobile backhaul.

Service providers and vendors, including Gregg Logan, vice president of engineering for C Spire; Ryan McCowan, director of product management for ADTRAN; Wolfgang Moench, senior product line manager for Viavi Solutions; and Doug Blue, head of business development in North America for Nokia, will discuss new 10G PON architectures, including XGS-PON and NG-PON2. A deep dive into the engineering and business issues will explain new architectures, such as cascaded and unbalanced splits; new use cases; key market drivers; and the PON technology evolutions that are key to building tomorrow's networks.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

9:00 a.m. – Conversations With Government Leaders

FBA's new president and CEO, Gary Bolton, will chat with two officials directly involved

in administering broadband funding programs and leading the effort to make broadband available throughout all parts of the United States. RUS administrator Chad Rupe is responsible for administering the ReConnect program and other USDA broadband and telecom funding streams; Brendan Carr is an FCC commissioner and thus one of the group responsible for the Universal Service Fund in general and the new RDOF program in particular. If the next stimulus legislation creates new broadband funding streams, these agencies will likely be responsible for administering them, too.

Watch these chats to find out more about how these funding programs work and how to position your community or company to take advantage of them.

10:00 a.m. – Discussion With Tennessee Service Providers on Economic Development

Tennessee was an early leader in municipal broadband because many of the municipal electric companies distributing electricity generated by the Tennessee Valley Authority decided to add broadband subsidiaries to promote economic development in their service areas.

In this session, three executives of Tennessee municipal broadband networks will discuss current trends, economic development and what's next in the industry. Join David Wade, executive vice president and COO of EPB (Chattanooga); Mike Browder, CEO of Bristol Tennessee Essential Services; and Brian Taylor, general manager of CDE Lightband (Clarksville) to learn how cities are using fiber networks to take control of their economic futures.

12:15 p.m. – 5G – Leveraging the Capacity Provided by Fiber-Based Technologies to Support the Densification of 5G Technologies

5G wireless networks and fiber access networks complement each other, together offering a more cohesive internet experience than either could alone. Without 5G, fiber would lack mobility. Without fiber, the revolutionary goals of 5G would be impossible. In this session, Joe Jensen, Corning's director for FTTH market development in the Americas, and Ana Pesovic, marketing director at Nokia, will talk about new fiber technologies and approaches that enable 5G experiences on the go and at home.

In this session, you'll gain insights into innovations beyond 10G PON, fixed-wireless access and virtualization that will enable converged networks to connect more people everywhere, quickly and simply.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

10:00 a.m. – The Customer Experience

Getting the customer experience right is critical in today's competitive environment. Learn how customer experiences increase satisfaction, loyalty and revenue or encourage churn, stagnation and disengagement.

Speakers in this session include Jeremy Harris, portfolio management director at ADTRAN; Jeremy

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Graves, president of Pivot Group; and Tanya Bohannon, director of communications at T.A.K. Fiber Optics.

Topics will include defining the customer experience, identifying the components of a successful customer experience strategy, and building morale to motivate employees to serve customers well.

11:00 a.m. – Lessons Learned in Year One of a Fiber Deployment

Be prepared for surprises when first deploying fiber to the home. Learning from others' experiences will help you weather the inevitable ups and downs of getting a new network up and running. This panel of operators and service providers will discuss lessons learned and new considerations to factor in after a year of running an FTTH network. FTTH beginners especially will benefit from learning what surprised these communities.

Speakers include Ryan Smith, engineering manager of the City of Loveland – Pulse; Stacy Evans, chief broadband officer of BrightRidge; and Chris Calhoun of Newport Utilities.

12:15 p.m. – Smart Cities

Smart-city programs, which are cropping up all over the world, rely on network connectivity as an essential enabler. Fiber optic networks are an essential component of the infrastructure necessary to get to smart. Networks are funded by public safety, transportation and education projects through savings, grants and public-private partnerships. In addition, the implementation of small cells and 5G will require ubiquitous fiber connectivity to street furniture and rooftops. This well-rounded panel will explore real-world examples of successful smart-city network deployments.

Presenters include Morne Erasmus, director of smart cities for CommScope; Carl Meyerhoefer, senior director for solutions marketing at Calix; and Scott Jackson, national market manager for broadband markets and applications at Graybar. ❖

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