TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS – SUMMER 2020

Click the headings below to link directly to a particular section.

Legislative Activities Regulatory Activities Wireless RERC Updates Other Items of Interest

OVERVIEW

This summer, the country celebrated the signing of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) in July. The ADA was signed on July 26, 1990, so this year the legislation hit the big 3-0, which in humans typically signifies a turning point into true adulthood where grand change occurs as a result of assessing the journey to 30. Perhaps, we'll observe similarly expansive impacts as the ADA turns the corner to 30. Though large gatherings are still discouraged, advocates and members of the disability community virtually celebrated the 30th anniversary. On social media, the National Council on Disability is commemorating the momentous occasion with a social media campaign called #30onADA30. The hashtag signifies a six-month campaign where participants are encouraged to share 30 words or less (or 30 seconds of audio/video) communicating their support and appreciation of the ADA. See one here, https://twitter.com/i/status/1286020356839440386.

In the regulatory space, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Public Notice requesting stakeholder input on the tentative findings for the *2020 Biennial Report on Accessibility Under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act* [**CG Docket No. 20-768**]. The FCC sought further comments "on whether these tentative findings accurately represent the current state of accessibility and usability of telecommunications equipment and services." Outside of rulemakings, there are other methods of contributing to the advancement of inclusive policies. To that end, the FCC is now accepting applications for its Disability Advisory Committee.

In Wireless RERC news, our User Experiences and Expectations project published *Technology Use for Social Connectedness: Exploring the Experiences of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Family Members, and Professionals*. Georgia Tech's Center for Advanced Communications Policy, and the home of the Wireless RERC, is currently seeking any U.S. residents aged 65 or older AND adults with disabilities (any age 18 and up) to take a survey of COVID-19 Information Access. We also continue data collection for our 2020 Survey of User Needs. If you haven't already, please take the survey.

This issue also includes news about accessibility in emergency services, broadband, telehealth, developer tools, assistive technologies, wearables, eye-tracking tech, smart cities, and more.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

THE ADA TURNS 30! VIRTUAL COMMEMORATIONS ABOUND!

July 2020 — Though large gatherings are still discouraged, advocates and members of the disability community virtually celebrated the 30th anniversary of the July 26th signing of the *Americans with Disability Act* (ADA). On social media, the National Council on Disability is commemorating the momentous occasion with a social media campaign called #30onADA30. The hashtag signifies a six-month campaign where participants are encouraged to share 30 words or less (or 30 seconds of audio/video) communicating their support and love for the ADA. See one here, https://twitter.com/i/status/1286020356839440386. They encourage everyone to share their contribution by Direct Messaging (DM) or tagging the Council on social media. Disability advocacy groups were not the only ones to celebrate the momentous occasion. Across the country, other institutions also celebrated the 30th anniversary. Georgia Tech's AccessGA, Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation, hosted a webinar entitled "Celebrating the ADA 30th Year Anniversary," where they highlighted several organizations in Georgia and their initiatives to improve access for people with disabilities.

National and local leaders recognized the progress that the ADA has made possible. FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, released a statement where he affirmed the FCC's commitment to equity and access to emerging technology for people with disabilities. The mayor of Tempe, Arizona, signed a proclamation that re-committed the city to the disability work that remains to be done; and also acknowledged the progress and inclusive efforts that the city has made in Tempe. The proclamation rededicated the city to inclusivity and accessibility. [Source: FCC; City of Tempe; National Council on Disability; and Georgia Tech]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
https://www.tempe.gov/home/showdocument?id=83307
https://ncd.gov/events/2020/30onada30
https://www.fcc.gov/document/chairman-pai-americans-disabilities-acts-30th-anniversary
https://diversity.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/images/ada_30th_anniversary_webinar-7-24-2020.pdf

INCLUSION IN STATE EMERGENCY PLANNING

June 10, 2020 – In Sacramento, California state legislators passed *Assembly Bill 3267* with unanimous bipartisan support. This state bill requires the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to update the State Emergency Plan every five years, beginning January 1, 2019. The bill stipulates that OES must consult with the "access and functional needs population" regarding the feasibility of

the State Plan for this population. Per FEMA and the California Emergency Management Agency, the access and functional needs population refer to those who "may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to maintaining independence, communication, transportation, supervision, and medical care. Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities, live in institutionalized settings, are elderly, are children, are from diverse cultures, have limited English proficiency, or are non-English speaking, or are transportation disadvantaged." The Assembly Bill aims to ensure an inclusive emergency planning process. [Source: SCVNews; 211 San Diego]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Smith Functional Needs Emergency Planning Bill Advances in Assembly
https://scvnews.com/smith-functional-needs-emergency-planning-bill-advances-in-assembly/
People with Disabilities or Access & Functional Needs
https://211sandiego.org/resources/disaster-support-services/access-functional-needs-services/

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES

FCC EVALUATES THE STATE OF INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE WITH THE CVAA

July 21, 2020 - The FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau released a Public Notice requesting stakeholder input on the tentative findings for the *2020 Biennial Report on Accessibility Under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act* [**CG Docket No. 20-768**]. A directive of the CVAA requires that the FCC evaluate its effectiveness and impact and submit a report to Congress on the state of industry compliance. Attached to the Public Notice was the CVAA Preliminary Findings Report. The FCC sought further comments "on whether these tentative findings accurately represent the current state of accessibility and usability of telecommunications equipment and services, ACS, and Internet browsers built-into telephones used with mobile phones. If commenters believe that certain tentative findings are not accurate, we invite comments specifying the inaccuracies and proposing revisions to the findings." The findings from this round of public input must be provided to Congress by October 8, 2020, which is the 10th anniversary of the CVAA legislation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
CVAA Public Notice
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-20-768A1.pdf

CONTINUED FUNDING FROM CONNECT AMERICA FUND TO HIGH-NEED AREAS

July 17, 2020 — In the 14th round of funding from the Connect America Fund, the FCC granted Viasat and Fond du Lac Communications with more than $20 million over ten years. The first provider, Viasat, was granted $19,945,120 to service rural areas in Pennsylvania. Viasat is required to provide a minimum speed of 25/3 Mbps. The second provider, Fond du Lac Communications, received $55,011 to service small isolated Tribal communities in Minnesota. Fond du Lac's contract requires that they provide a minimum speed of 1 Gbps/500 Mbps to 13 locations. The providers have a three-year timespan to build the broadband on 40% of their assigned areas. Each year after that, service providers must increase their buildout by 20%. Since the inception of the Connect America Fund in 2018, the FCC has allocated more than $1.488 billion to broadband providers to service over 700,000 unserved rural communities in 45 states.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
FCC Authorizes Over $20 Million For Rural Broadband
https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-authorizes-over-20-million-rural-broadband

THE BROADBAND DATA ACT PRODS PROGRESS FOR BROADBAND ASSESSMENTS

July 16, 2020—The FCC has taken another major stride to close the digital divide by developing a broadband map with an unprecedented amount of detail and improving its broadband deployment data collection across the U.S. The significant advance towards transparency, accountability, and action was largely spurred by the Broadband DATA Act, passed in March 2020. The Broadband DATA Act requires the FCC to enforce semiannual collection and distribution of granular data related to the "availability and quality of service of fixed and mobile broadband internet access service." The FCC must also establish processes for data verification, for states and other entities to challenge coverage accuracy and data about the functioning and availability of broadband internet access. The Broadband DATA Act requires the FCC to begin enacting these processes and standards and enforcements within 180 days after the legislation passed. The Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (R&O and FNPRM) [**WC Docket No. 19-195**], adopted on July 16th, establishes standards for specific coverage reporting and disclosure requirements for fixed and mobile broadband providers, filing requirements, measures for determining the accuracy of broadband availability data, and implementing the Fabric. The R&O defines the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, or "Fabric," as a nationwide database where locations are geocoded for where broadband connections can be installed. The R&O also seeks comments on issues related to processes for states (and other government entities) to challenge and verify coverage data. The R&O also seeks comments on implementing the Fabric and other specific requirements to ensure compliance with the Broadband DATA Act. [Source: FCC; Joshua Guyan, Bradford Currier & Chris Laughlin via Commlaw Monitor]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
FCC Maps Out Requirements for Broadband Deployment Data Collection Framework
https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/fcc-maps-out-requirements-for-broadband-76987/
Establishing the Digital Opportunity Data Collection
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-20-94A1.pdf

FCC REQUESTS APPLICATIONS FOR STANDING DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 13, 2020 — The FCC is now accepting applications for its Disability Advisory Committee (DAC). The Committee composes recommendations on topics under the FCC's purview for consideration for rulemakings or regulations. In previous years, the DAC has provided recommendations on telecommunications relay services, closed captioning, video description, access to emergency information on television, telephone emergency notifications, device accessibility, technology transitions, and the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. The FCC notes that the Committee's size is left to the agency's discretion and is based on its measures of appropriate size to accomplish the Committee's work effectively. Members of the DAC are not eligible to receive payment or honoraria for their services, nor are they provided with reimbursements for travel expenses. However, the FCC allocates a small fund for members who demonstrate financial need for travel expenses.

Who: The FCC welcomes applications from interested persons with disabilities, consumer organizations, industry and trade associations, corporations, governmental entities, or other entities from both the public and private sectors that wish to be considered for membership on the Committee.

What: The FCC will consider applicants based on expertise and diversity of viewpoints necessary to address the topics before the Committee effectively.

When: Applicants must be willing to commit to a two-year term of service, should be willing to attend at least three one-day meetings each calendar year, either in-person or, if appropriate, by teleconference, and should expect to participate in at least one working group or subcommittee. Working group deliberations are conducted primarily through email and teleconferences.

How: Applications should be submitted via an online application at https://www.fcc.gov/disability-advisory-committee/membership-application (preferred), via email to DAC@fcc.gov, or via US Mail to the Federal Communications Commission, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Attn: Debra Patkin, 445 12th Street S.W., Room 3-C438, Washington, DC 20554. Note: Due to Coronavirus, the FCC is no longer accepting hand or messenger delivered documents.

Restrictions: Individuals who are federally registered as lobbyists are not eligible to apply. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
FCC Solicits Applications For Membership on the Disability Advisory Committee
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-20-722A1.pdf

ELEVENTH ROUND OF COVID-19 TELEHEALTH FUNDING APPROVED

June 17, 2020 — The COVID-19 pandemic response for social distancing and stay-at-home orders rendered hospitals and many healthcare facilities incapable of providing general and mental healthcare services. In efforts to flatten the curve, doctor's offices began limiting their appointments to critical emergency services, leaving many people with chronic health conditions without access to healthcare. The Federal Communications Commission's Wireline Competition Bureau stepped in with support for healthcare providers to deliver telehealth services as authorized by the CARES ACT. Since late March, the FCC has distributed over $128.23 million in funding to 367 nonprofit and public eligible healthcare providers in 45 states and Washington, D.C. This program provides expanded healthcare services for people in rural and urban areas, facilitating access to basic health-related services. Notably, the FCC granted these funds in "rounds." The 11th round of telehealth COVID-19 program applications were approved on the 28th of May. In this round, an additional 62 eligible telehealth providers, in both rural and urban areas, were given $23.25 million to assist them in providing medical services by allowing providers, even those in quarantine, to continue to provide patient care virtually, and to maintain remote treatment and diagnosis practices for low-risk COVID-19 patients to prevent them from spreading the virus to other patients and healthcare workers. Specifically, the funds are used for laptop and tablet computers, smartphones, videoconferencing software, network upgrades, telehealth software licenses, and telecommunications equipment. A variety of specific reasons for the need of telehealth capabilities have been outlined by the grantees, including dental, pharmacy, and optometry; to assist with psychiatric medication evaluation and management; improved patient communication through a consolidated platform; increased health care provider productivity; and the ability to concentrate clinic resources on preparation, response, testing, and education around COVID-19. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Commission Continues Approving Telehealth Funding During Coronavirus Pandemic
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-364980A1.pdf

FUNDING FOR IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY IN THE UNITED STATES' TERRITORIES

June 15, 2020 – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published a Public Notice [WC Docket Nos 18-143, 10-90] and a Press Release on the authorization of $258.8 million for expansion, improvement, and hardening of broadband networks in Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). These funds were approved for a three-year window to achieve these aims. Specifically, $233.9 million will be directed to Uniendo Puerto Rico Fund for the three carriers serving Puerto Rico and to the Connect USVI Fund in the amount of $4 million to the one carrier serving the USVI (Stage 2, FCC). From the $258.8 million, $59.5 million of this funding has been earmarked specifically for 5G deployment in all of the U.S. territories.

Each mobile phone carrier can elect to receive a "pro-rate" share of mobile support allocated to the territories based on its number of subscribers as of June 30, 2017. Only AT&T elected to receive Stage 2 mobile support in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The other five mobile phone carriers who elected to receive Stage 2 funding only selected this option for either USVI or Puerto Rico. These mobile phone carriers had to also submit their Disaster Preparation and Response Plans for the FCC's approval before receiving the allocated Stage 2 funds. In the report, these mobile carriers were required to indicate how they would comply with the five following criteria (1) Strengthening Infrastructure; (2) Ensuring Network Diversity; (3) Ensuring Backup Power; (4) Network Monitoring; and (5) Emergency Preparedness. All mobile carriers had approved plans, and funds were disbursed. These carriers are restricted to using the funding for "only the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended," which in this case is the improvement, expansion, and hardening of broadband networks [Source: FCC].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Includes First Universal Service Funding Targeted Specifically for 5G Deployment
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-364921A1.pdf

Public Notice - Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) authorizes high-cost mobile support funding
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-20-625A1.pdf

EXPANSION OF PHASE II RURAL BROADBAND RECEIVES FUNDING FROM FCC

June 12, 2020 – The FCC authorized $7.4 million to Oklahoma and Oregon over ten years to broaden, strengthen, and improve rural broadband connectivity. Redwire, a tribal provider, received $4,766,845.00 to ensure fixed broadband for rural communities of at least 25/3 Mbps, which is serving 8,041 rural homes, businesses, and Tribal areas in Oklahoma. In Oregon, the wireless provider, Viasat, received $2,708,529.40 to serve 3,811 rural homes, businesses, and Tribal areas. In total, these providers will serve 11,852 rural locations, including Tribal lands. This funding is a part of the 13th wave of support from the FCC's 2018 Connect America Fund Phase II Action. A

stipulation of this funding requires providers to build out to 40% of the assigned homes and businesses within three years of fund disbursement. These carriers must continue to increase the buildout by 20% in each subsequent year until the end of the sixth-year contract. The FCC maintains its efforts to close the digital divide in rural America through programs like the Connect America Fund Phase II Auction. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
FCC Authorizes over $7.4 Million for Rural Broadband
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-364899A1.pdf

ADDRESSING DIGITAL INEQUITY - PHASE I DIGITAL DIVIDE AUCTION

June 11, 2020 – In a detailed Public Notice [**FCC 20-77; WC Docket No. 19-126; 10-90**], the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published its procedures for the service provider funding auction. The auction intends to award up to $16 billion over ten years to service providers that commit to increasing and establishing fixed locations for voice and broadband services in eligible "unserved high-cost census blocks." This action is meant to improve availability to underserved rural areas. Regarding the Public Notice, FCC Commissioner Rosenworcel stated, "We need connections now—physical and digital—that strengthen our mutual bonds. We need connections that remind us that our states are united, and our interdependence is powerful. That's because networks that connect more people in more places lift us all. And that's why we need a plan for broadband for all."

As service carriers provide the necessary services at the appropriate performance levels, they will receive monthly payments over ten years. The FCC will accept bids for service at one of four performance tiers that have discrete minimum download and upload speed allowances. The four performance tiers are Minimum ($\geq$ 25/3 Mbps), Baseline ($\geq$ 50/5 Mbps), Above Baseline ($\geq$ 100/20 Mbps), and Gigabit ($\geq$ 1 Gbps/500 Mbps). Service providers who are bidding are allowed to offer a range of these performance tiers. However, they are required, at a minimum, to provide one standalone voice plan and one service plan offered at comparable rates to urban areas. Service providers will be allowed to bid in the auction beginning October 29, 2020. The full notice, filing, and procedural requirements for the Broadband auction can be found in the links below. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Public Notice: Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-20-77A1.pdf

SIMPLIFIED LIFELINE APPLICATION PROCESS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

June 1, 2020 – The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vast discrepancies in access to digital services for Tribal people. As a result, the FCC eased Lifeline program application requirements and

streamlined the enrollment process for low-income consumers living on rural Tribal lands. To achieve expedited enrollment of those most impacted on rural Tribal lands during COVID, the Wireline Competition Bureau of the FCC also gave Lifeline carriers temporary waivers to begin immediately providing services even if the consumers have not provided all necessary documentation. Lifeline carriers will be able to count these individuals as Lifeline subscribers and receive reimbursement from the Universal Service Fund after the subscriber provides all necessary documentation and is approved. The subscriber has 45 days from the time of application to submit the documentation. The FCC's wavier is valid until August 31, 2020, and aims to ensure that no existing Lifeline subscribers are involuntarily removed from the program. It also hopes to ensure that Lifeline eligible consumers on rural Tribal lands can access necessary services during this global pandemic. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
FCC Streamlines Lifeline Applications Process
https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-364654A1.pdf

WIRELESS RERC UPDATES

New Wireless RERC Research Brief - Technology Use for Social Connectedness

July 2020 – The Wireless RERC's User Experiences and Expectations project has published *Technology Use for Social Connectedness: Exploring the Experiences of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Family Members, and Professionals*. Wireless RERC partner, the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University, led the research discussed in the brief. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) have the potential to benefit from wireless technologies and social networking opportunities facilitated through these technologies. People with IDD, however, are often excluded from technology use and online environments. The aim of this research was to explore how wireless technology tools and software applications help people with IDD socially connect, and how people with IDD and those that support them perceive the usefulness of such tools within this population. To address this goal, a series of focus groups were conducted with adults with IDD, family members of adults with IDD, and professionals who work with people with IDD (e.g., vocational rehabilitation counselors, certified job coaches, transition coordinators in K-12 schools). The research team, following a qualitative descriptive approach, identified six themes:
Theme 1: Hardware and Software
Theme 2: Accessibility Features
Theme 3: Reasons for Connecting Socially
Theme 4: Barriers to and Supports for Connectivity
Theme 5: Concerns or Fears About Connectivity
Theme 6: Outcomes from Social Connectedness

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Word: technology_use_for_social_connectedness_research_brief_ervt_5.19.2020_00000004.docx
PDF: technology_use_for_social_connectedness_research_brief_ervt_5.19.2020_00000004.pdf

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID19

June 2020 - Wireless RERC researcher, Salimah LaForce, in collaboration with *Technological Innovations in Response to COVID19 Working Group* members, coauthored a Research Agenda-Setting Paper. LaForce's contributions ensured that digital access and equity issues were included. This paper was written to advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic. This Working Group is dedicated to reviewing the innovative uses of current technology and novel technology developed during the pandemic for response efforts and used by the public in daily life. The working group is a part of the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) network.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Read the Paper
https://converge.colorado.edu/v1/uploads/images/technological_innovations_covid_19-1595254567781.pdf
CONVERGE COVID-19 Research Agendas: Issues, Impacts, and Recovery
https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/covid-19/working-groups/issues-impacts-recovery/research-agendas

SURVEY ON ACCESS TO COVID-19 INFORMATION

Information and messaging about the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can be received in a variety of ways and from many sources. As events unfold, how information is shared with the public varies widely, from traditional news to social media and mobile alerts. Early messaging about COVID-19 focused on its severity for older populations and those with underlying conditions, but *did those most vulnerable to serious illness form COVID-19 receive timely and accessible emergency information and messaging?*

Georgia Tech's Center for Advanced Communications Policy, and the home of the Wireless RERC, is interested in knowing which COVID-19 information sources you rely on and trust, if the information is in formats that are accessible to you, and whether you received the messages in a timely manner. Your responses will be used to make recommendations for more effective preparedness and response messaging strategies and planning for older adults and people with disabilities. The goal of this research is to ensure the same timely and effective access to emergency information for people with disabilities and older adults.

The survey is open to any U.S. residents aged 65 or older AND adults with disabilities (any age 18 and up). We encourage you to take the survey yourself and share it with friends, family, and colleagues so they too can provide their responses. As an incentive for taking our survey, you can enter a drawing to win 1 of 12 $25 Amazon gift cards.

Start the Survey!
https://gatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lfKrBbcvaG7Z0p

If you wish to take the survey over the phone, please email Salimah LaForce to schedule a time or call her at 404-839-8741.

This research is being funded by Georgia Tech's Executive Vice President of Research COVID-19 Rapid Response Seed Grants.

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, TAKE AND SHARE THE LATEST SURVEY OF USER NEEDS!

The SUN is the Wireless RERC's cornerstone survey on wireless technology use by people with disabilities. This latest version has been updated in response to changes in technology. In addition to questions about cell phone and tablet use, this version of the SUN collects information about wearables, "smart" home technologies, and other next-generation wirelessly connected devices.

Your responses will:

- Help designers and engineers make more accessible wireless devices, features, and services for people with disabilities, and
- Inform recommendations to better ensure inclusive policies and practices.

If you have a disability, please consider taking this survey. If you know someone who has a disability, please send the survey to them.

Take the survey online at http://bit.ly/wRERC-SUN2020, or
Scan the QR Code to open the survey on your mobile device, or
Take the survey via phone, call 404-839-8741.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

TEXAS COUNTY COORDINATES WITH NONPROFIT TO IMPROVE BROADBAND SERVICES

July 23, 2020 — Bastrop County (TX) recently established a broadband committee that assesses wireless connectivity within the district. The Committee will identify portions of the district that have poor broadband service and devise a plan to tackle the digital gaps. The Committee will partner with Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas) to develop prompt and long-term solutions to address the low

rates of connectivity. The Committee requested residents, businesses, institutions, and establishments in Bastrop County to complete a survey which is live until September 2020. The survey results will allow them to develop data-driven methods to improve internet connectivity. The dataset will be a part of Connected Nation's Connected Community Engagement Program that creates county-specific Technology Action Plans. As with any survey, the results of which intend to improve services to communities, it is essential that individuals with disabilities and organizations that work in the disability space participate to ensure that the methods improve internet connectivity will be inclusive of people with disabilities. [Source: Jessica Denson via Connected Nation]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
How's Your Broadband Connection? Bastrop County Launches Effort to Expand Internet Access
https://connectednation.org/blog/2020/07/23/hows-your-broadband-connection-bastrop-county-launches-effort-to-expand-internet-access/
Survey: https://www.myconnectedcommunity.org/bastrop-county/

NEW AUDIO STORIES FEATURE ON APPLE NEWS INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY

July 15, 2020 — Apple News is incorporating a new audio feature for readers and premium subscribers. Apple News will now include an audio news briefing that highlights the daily news headlines. The audio news will also utilize voice talent for the remainder of the briefing to discuss several stories in more depth. The audio briefings are succinct, lasting between seven to eight minutes and available to all Apple Newsreaders. Apple also rolled out audio stories for Apple News+ (premium) subscribers. There will be approximately 20 audio stories per week that delve into numerous topics. The stories are professionally narrated by popular newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal, LA Times, and NY Magazine. For premium members, the audio stories will have their designated tab. However, news stories found in other places in the app that have audio features will have a special badge indicating that audio is available. Apple News is also testing expanded local news coverage to include local weather, politics, sports, and more. However, this feature is only available in select markets, including San Francisco and the wider Bay Area, New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. [Source: Sarah Perez via TechCrunch]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Apple News adds new audio features, including a daily briefing, alongside expanded local coverage
https://techcrunch.com/2020/07/15/apple-news-adds-new-audio-features-including-a-daily-briefing-alongside-expanded-local-coverage/

UK FUNDS MOBILE DEVICES FOR ELDERLY AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

July 10, 2020 — The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected historically marginalized groups, specifically people with disabilities and the elderly. To counteract the negative impacts of

COVID, Kent County Council (UK) recently rolled out assistive technology devices in a digital support package via a contracted company, Alcove. The targeted population is approximately 2,000 people with disabilities and/or elderly. The assistive device, in the support package, is a videophone system within a tablet that allows these individuals to access virtual healthcare and connect with loved ones. The secure tablet device is "one touch" and can support video-calling to an individual's support network, which permits support staff to monitor the target population and support their well-being. At approximately 1.5 million pounds, it is one of the largest programs in England of its kind. The program was well into the works when COVID happened, and the Council simply expedited the process. The Council hopes to ensure the longevity of the program via a long-term assistive technology strategy. [Sarah Sarsby via THIIS Magazine]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Council commissions assistive tech provider to roll out digital support packages in Kent
https://thiis.co.uk/council-commissions-assistive-tech-provider-to-roll-out-digital-support-packages-to-vulnerable-residents-in-kent/

REMOTE SCIENCE LABS ENCOURAGES INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

July 9, 2020 — In an increasingly digital world, the Heriot-Watt University lab launched its virtual laboratory, which focuses on developing assisted living solutions for people who are elderly or living with a disability. The decision to create the world's first remote lab has allowed them to partner with researchers and assistive technologists across the globe. The primary platform of the lab is the Internet of Things (IoT), digital win, and Cloud technology, which will allow researchers, across the world, to co-develop innovative tech solutions. The technologies aim to address current challenges and broader societal barriers, as well. [Source: Assistive Technology via Global Accessibility News]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
'World's First' Remote Assisted Living Lab Seeks Collaboration with Assistive Tech Suppliers
http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2020/07/09/worlds-first-remote-assisted-living-lab-seeks-collaboration-with-assistive-tech-suppliers/

CUSTOM COMMANDS MAKES INCORPORATING SPEECH FEATURES EASY FOR DEVELOPERS

July 8, 2020 — Contactless interactions are becoming the preferred way of operating and engaging. As a consequence, voice-enabled assistants are commonly incorporated into app designs. To assist app developers and designers in including this feature, Microsoft Azure Cognitive Services launched Custom Commands. The Custom Commands (CC) is the latest feature in the Cognitive and Speech Services division of Azure's app development center. CC draws from various aspects of the Speech and Language Center in Azure's Cognitive and Speech Services to make task completion or command-and-control scenarios a seamless operation in a developer's app. Some of the CC's

features include speech-to-text, language understanding, and voice response with text-to-speech. Azure touts the Custom Commands as an add-on that only requires low-code authoring experience. However, these are not the only capabilities of Custom Commands. CC is also able to support solutions in a variety of industries, for instance, if a developer wanted to create an in-app "room" with voice-controlled experiences or enable in-vehicle communication via the app. For more complex tasks, Custom Commands can handle open-ended conversational interactions. Azure prides itself on creating a simple process to develop customizable voice-first experiences that can easily be integrated into one's brand. In doing so, Azure is providing an opportunity for developers to create more accessible products. [Source: Vishesh Oberio via Microsoft Tech Community]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Easily add voice commands to your apps with Custom Commands
https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/azure-ai/easily-add-voice-commands-to-your-apps-with-custom-commands/ba-p/1503443

TEXT-TO-911 FEATURE ENABLED AT WEST COAST AIR FORCE BASE

July 6, 2020 — There are certain emergencies where it is impractical or simply dangerous to voice call 911. However, there are also individuals hearing or speech disabilities who are unable to utilize voice to contact emergency services. In response to the need for expanded methods to reach emergency services, Santa Barbara's Vandenberg Air Force Base is implementing Text-to-911 digital messaging. The digital messaging service became available to individuals located in Santa Barbara County on June 15th. But before the program's roll-out, the service received extensive testing. The county's dispatchers assessed the length of time for messages to arrive, location accuracy, and properly working transfer capabilities. Despite the successful implementation of the program, dispatchers still caution that voice calling is preferable when possible because a) text location is not precise, b) time taken for messages to arrive, and c) messages received out of order. To address these standing concerns, the 911 industry is working collaboratively with the FCC and wireless carriers. In the meantime, when texting 911, be sure to include your location (address, intersection, or landmarks) in the 911 text message. [Source: Senior Airman Hanah Abercrombie 30th Space Wing via Santa Maria Times]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Text-to-911 now available at VAFB
https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/military/vandenberg/text-to-911-now-available-at-vafb/article_0614dca2-37d9-5e5e-82e8-94c39201d350.amp.html#click=https://t.co/PVIxNUhZzY

TechSAge Publishes Progress on Assistive Technologies Projects

June 2020 – Project Steady Wheels, spearheaded by Dr. Jacob Sosnoff, seeks to explore the validity of smartphone-based postural control assessments in adults with mobility disabilities who use wheelchairs. In project SmartBathroom, the Principle Investigators, Drs. Brian Jones and Jon Sanford, lead a team that examined bathroom assistive technologies and adaptive devices. The SmartBathroom device has mechanically adjustable grab bars and a toilet with an array of sensors that measure mobility performance (speed of walking, balance, stability). The project builds upon the work of previous TechSAge work such as SmartToilet, SmartFloor, and SmartGrabbar systems, and the researchers intend to "develop predictive algorithms that can be used to automatically adjust SmartBathroom features to meet the transfer support needs of individuals at any point in time." [Source: TechSAge]

Additional Information:
Steady Wheels
https://techsage.gatech.edu/development/d31-steady-wheels
SmartBathroom
https://techsage.gatech.edu/development/d11-smartbathroom

New Mobile Phone released for Aging and Disabled Population

June 10, 2020 – The parent company Vodacom recently released the Alcatel 2019G that has a charging dock, SOS emergency functionality, large keypad, simple user interface with large icons, and a torch. These features were included specifically for people with low vision and dexterity disabilities. The company also assists its user with VoiceOver and TalkBack activation on the device. For people with hearing disabilities, users can register for customized bundles that increase the number of SMS messages and has no voice call functionality. To further address accessibility, Vodacom allows users with other specific accessibility needs not included in the device, to register on the Vodacom ICT Accessibility website. The Alcatel 2019G's SOS emergency function is connected to Vodacom's 112 Emergency Service App, which contacts the ER24 Emergency Contact Centre to request police, fire, or ambulance services. [Source: Megan Ellis via Gearburn]

Additional Information:
Vodacom launches phone for elderly, people with impairments
https://memeburn.com/gearburn/2020/06/vodacom-launches-phone-for-elderly-people-with-impairments/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork

Multi-purpose Eye Tracking Technology Enters Oxygen Market

June 9, 2020 – Cognixion, a neurotech company, released the Expression Eye speech-generating tablet that incorporates facial and eye-tracking software powered by the Speakprose app. The tablet

is compatible with either the Speakprose Pro+ app and the Speakprose app that allows people to quickly access communications via hands-free, eye tracking, and facial recognition interface controls. Both versions of the app give its user multiple communication options, which assists people with motor-function disabilities. In the Speakprose Pro version, individuals can quickly use expressive phrases and a conversational interface through gestures, swipes, and taps. In an updated version of the app, Cognixion is also attempting to increase access to expressive communications for intubated and ventilated patients. Using the tech in the medical environment would allow these patients to communicate personal messages and medical concerns through eye movements and facial expressions that would, in turn, create phrases that are spoken aloud. Presently, the Expression Eye tablet, powered by Speakprose, is covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance. [Source: Mai Ling Chan via BusinessWire]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Eye Tracking for AAC as Accessible as Oxygen: Cognixion® Expands Access to Its Eye Tracking Technology Through Nationwide Oxygen Supplier
https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200609005279/en/

INCLUSIVE SMART CITIES

June 8, 2020 – The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society recently published *Toward Inclusive Urban Technology: Lessons, Cases, and Resources* developed by local technology champions and planners. The report discusses the changing landscapes of city designs as technology is integrated into the city infrastructure, from sidewalks to streetlights. The report identifies privacy, diversity, and data ownership as key challenges to building tech-enabled communities. To rally public support, there is a spectrum of civic engagement methods for local technology projects from outreach and sharing methods to problem sourcing methods. The spectrum ranges from relatively low collaboration to high collaboration with the community. In the case of smart cities, the report draws on several city cases, which include Boston, Austin, Seattle, Kansas, Chicago, Asheville, Louisville, and Chattanooga. The summary of lessons show that cities should "delight and inspire" (citizens through technology-based games and the arts), create processes of inclusion that will outlast the project, engage with residents early and often, lower barriers of engagement as much as possible. Finally, cities are encouraged to check their assumptions. The advice also notes the "don'ts" from the case studies. Interested cities should NOT ignore residents' local expertise, ask for feedback on things that cannot realistically be changed, rush change for the sake of a win. The full report is available below. [Source: Denise Linn Riedl via Benton Institute for Broadband & Society]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Toward Inclusive Urban Technology: Lessons, Cases, and Resources
https://www.benton.org/sites/default/files/inclusive_tech_final.pdf

Toward Inclusive Urban Technology
https://www.benton.org/publications/inclusive-urban-tech

ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION YIELDS RESULTS

June 5, 2020 – Individuals with colorblindness regularly encounter inaccessible designs, including determining whether the LED lights on a Wi-Fi are blinking green or red to finding the Zoom meeting's red-on-black "Leave Meeting" text on their computer screen. People with colorblindness have begun to make louder calls for inclusion in designs through awareness and education. Several organizations, such as Colour Blind Awareness and We Are ColorBlind, have led the charge to influence product designs to be more inclusive. These organizations have also specifically called out inaccessible digital designs and offered companies advice on accessibility. Tom van Beveren, the founder of We Are Colorblind, has found that more developers, publishers, and creators are requesting the insights of the colorblind community before launching their products. Companies such as Trello, Spotify, and Apple have introduced small but effective accessibility changes to ensure that their products are usable for the colorblind community. In March of 2020, Google Chrome launched a developer tool that recreates a range of different colorblind visions for designers to check their work for accessibility. [Source: Katie Deighton via Wall Street Journal].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Colorblind Users Push Technology Designers to Use Signals Beyond Color
https://www.wsj.com/articles/colorblind-users-push-technology-designers-to-use-signals-beyond-color-11591351201

OFF THE WALL, HAPTIREAD DISPLAYS BRAILLE IN THE AIR

June 4, 2020 – HaptiRead, a tactile feedback device, utilizes ultrasound technology that transforms patterns to recreate the Braille text in midair. This device may be particularly useful for those who use Braille to read displays and signs in public. The HaptiRead device is comprised of a panel with 256 ultrasound energy converters that emit frequencies up to 200 Hz. Built-in Leap Motion and the depth-sensing camera determines the location of the user's hand and guides the ultrasound dots towards them. The researchers identified the most accurate way to present the text through testing three different methods. After the experiments, the team decided to utilize the point-by-point system where only one dot was displayed at a time. This method produced an average 94% accuracy rate for the research participants in the sighted group and an average 88% accuracy rate for the research participants with vision disabilities. The preliminary results are promising, but the research team says that the design is still in the developmental phases. [Source: Michael Irving via NewsAtlas; ArXiv]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Ultrasound haptic system projects readable Braille into thin air
https://newatlas.com/technology/haptiread-ultrasound-haptic-braille/

ORCAM MYEYE 2.0 IMPROVES INDEPENDENCE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED

June 3, 2020 – The assistive technology company, OrCam, released OrCam MyEye 2.0, which is a camera that attaches to the arm of eyeglasses and can read printed text aloud through a small speaker located near the user's ear. In trial tests, the OrCam MyEye 2.0 has successfully read books, newspapers, menus, signs, product labels, and even computer/smartphone screens. The wearable smart camera's text recognition does not require cellular or Wi-Fi connection. MyEye 2.0 can also scan bar codes and readily provide information on millions of products. Even better, the device can store up to 150 of the user's favorite products. OrCam reports that the device can identify colors and recognizes fiat bills when it comes time to pay. It also recognizes faces after the initial encounter. Thus, family members, friends, colleagues, and others are immediately announced when they enter the room. Users can add voice tags as soon as they come into view. According to OrCam, the MyEye 2.0 can store up to one hundred faces at a time with instant recognition. At this present juncture, MyEye 2.0 is pricey. However, it may be subsidized with a grant from the National Disability insurance Scheme (NDIS). [Source: Stephen Fenech]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
OrCam MyEye 2.0 and OrCam Read allows visually impaired to read and recognise people
https://www.techguide.com.au/news/gadgets-news/orcam-eye-2-0-orcam-read-allows-visually-impaired-read-recognise-people/

SENSORS OUT. TRANSMISSION LINES IN.

June 2, 2020 – New experimental "smart fabrics" that can detect the user's respiration or heartbeat have become increasingly prevalent in the assistive technology realm. However, one new smart fabric device stands out because it claims that it works better by using transmission lines instead of individual sensors. Dissimilar to the other smart fabrics on the market, Switzerland's École Polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) research institute has developed an alternative smart fabric design in which rows of soft, thin transmission lines run through it, as opposed to multiple linked sensors that are typically fragile. The smart fabric could be utilized in clothing or hospital bed sheets and monitor vital signs and movements. The research paper on this smart fabric implementation was recently published in the Nature Electronics journal. [Source: EPFL; Ben Coxworth via New Atlas]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Transmission lines replace sensors in new smart fabric
https://newatlas.com/wearables/transmission-lines-smart-fabric/

UPCOMING EVENTS

TOOLS FOR LIFE COVID-19 WEBINAR SERIES

Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, has created a four webinar series that highlights assistive technology solutions on topics including Communication Options When Hospitalized; Solutions for Living; Learning, Working and Playing; Tips and Resources for Successfully Managing Mental Health; and Strategies to Improve Your Executing Functioning. This series is in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is intended to help individuals with disabilities find solutions to maintain and increase independence during these uncertain times.

This series is not meant to replace advice or instruction from a doctor or medical team. These resources are here to educate and empower. We encourage you to take this information, do further research, and share what you've learned with your medical and support teams.

We ask that you share this information with anyone that will benefit. We are in this together, and together we are stronger. Stay safe and educated!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
TFL COVID-19 Webinar Series
https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=TFL_COVID-19_Webinar_Series

DEMONSTRATION TUESDAY'S: VISION SERIES

DemonstrATion Tuesdays, a weekly virtual event, has covered wearable assistive technologies, video magnification, and exploring options for nonvisual Access, among a host of others.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Access the Webinar Archives
https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Webinar_Archives

LIVE VIRTUAL DEMONSTRATIONS OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Join Tools for Life (TFL), Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, and the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) for live virtual demonstrations of assistive technology. Assistive technology demonstrations are a core service of AT Act Programs, and Tools for Life is excited to provide these in a virtual format while in-person services are suspended. These interactive live demonstrations are hosted by experts in the field of assistive technology. Each session will highlight a different type of AT, followed by a Q&A for participants. The upcoming sessions of *Wired Wednesday's AT Bits and Bytes:*

- Wednesday, August 12, 2020

- Wednesday, August 26, 2020
- Wednesday, September 9, 2020
- Wednesday, September 23, 2020

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Register for the sessions
https://gatfl.gatech.edu/webinars.php
Find archived sessions
https://gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Webinar_Archives

SAMSUNG ROLLS OUT LATEST DEVICES DURING TWO VIRTUAL EVENTS

Samsung is hosting two subsequent digital events: Galaxy Unpacked (August 5) and Life Unstoppable (September 2) to display its newest wearables, wireless devices, and tech gear to the public. According to Samsung, the "latest innovations within Samsung's integrated ecosystem will offer solutions to consumer needs." At the Galaxy Unpacked event, Samsung will release the Galaxy Note 20 Plus, and four other devices whose names have yet to be released. The second event, Life Unstoppable, will be a bigger release of devices. Unfortunately, the virtual format does not change the size of the event. Samsung will still limit access to the event to members of the media and technology trade. [Source: David Lumb via TechRadar; Balakumar K and Gerald Lynch via TechRadar]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Samsung 'Life Unstoppable' digital event to show phones, wearables, TVs and more
https://www.techradar.com/amp/news/samsung-life-unstoppable-digital-event-to-show-phones-wearables-tvs-and-more#click=https://t.co/hlF0M5CBFI
Galaxy Note 20 almost certainly among 5 devices Samsung is unveiling August 5
https://www.techradar.com/news/galaxy-note-20-almost-certainly-among-5-devices-samsung-is-unveiling-august-5

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE COVERS A MYRIAD OF DISABILITY-RELATED TOPICS

The American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (AAAED) is hosting its 46th national conference, but this year it will be completely virtual. The theme of this year's annual conference is "Turning Obstacles into Opportunities." The conference commenced on June 23rd with a virtual summit, and Mickey Silberman, Esq., of Silberman Law gave the keynote address. Thereafter, the conference hosted two subsequent plenary panels named "ADA Thirtieth Anniversary: Celebration and Challenges" and "The Internet and Beyond: Federal Intervention and the Future of Work." On June 25th, they hosted the first of sixteen Virtual sessions that are bi-monthly until December 16th. The topics of the first three virtual sessions were:

- The EEO Laws in the Time of COVID-19
- FACTUALITY the Game: A Crash Course on Structural Inequality in America
- Healing Our Divided Society: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities Fifty Years Later

Upcoming sessions include:

- August 6 Virtual Session #4: An All-Female Pay Panel: "'Women-splaining' Pay Equity"
- August 18 Virtual Session #5: "Tips and Tricks for Navigating the Road to Affirmative Action Compliance"

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Conference Agenda
https://www.aaaed.org/aaaed/Conference_Agenda1.asp
Conference Registration
https://www.aaaed.org/aaaed/Registration.asp

2021 COLORADO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE STATEMENT

The Colorado Emergency Management Conference committee members met, and after reviewing the current modeling data and discussing COVID-19 impacts, the Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA) and Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) decided to look at alternatives to an in-person annual conference in February 2021. An in-person conference will not be scheduled in 2021. CEMA and DHSEM members are researching virtual conference options and will distribute a survey to gather your feedback on moving forward with a virtual or web-based conference.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Subscribe to Receive Updates
https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dhsem/join-our-media-list
2021 Conference Statement
https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/dhsem/news/2021-colorado-emergency-management-conference-statement

2020 M-ENABLING SUMMIT

The M-Enabling Summit will convene from September 14 to 16, 2020, in Washington, D.C. Summit presenters will cover topics such as robotics, wearables, virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and IoT.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
M-Enabling Website
https://m-enabling.com/

SUBSCRIBE TO NEWSLETTER

The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) is a monthly newsletter that reports on national public policy events and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities, researchers, policymakers, industry, and advocacy professionals. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs, user experiences, and expectations of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our website at [http://www.wirelessrerc.org]. For further information on items summarized in this report, or if you have items of interest that you would like included in future editions, please contact this edition's editors Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu], or Dara Bright [dara.bright@cacp.gatech.edu]. For upcoming virtual event-related questions, please contact our contributing editor, Samantha Peters [speters37@gatech.edu]. If you wish to update your email address, send an email to salimah@cacp.gatech.edu.

Unsubscribe

The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RE5025-01-00). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.