

# Telecom Industry News

By: Scott St. John

As the [coronavirus pandemic](#) continued to gain strength around the globe, much industry news in April and early May [centered on its effects](#): on network traffic, on consumer retail spending and supply chains, and on security concerns. The merger between T-Mobile and Sprint was officially completed, leading to the debut of the New T-Mobile. Microsoft made headlines with two major new strategic alliances—with Coca-Cola and the National Basketball Association.



The top telecom industry news stories from the month are summarized below. To view all the news as it breaks, check out *Pipeline's* [News Center](#) or [subscribe](#) to receive our telecom industry news summary.

## Network Evolution News

It was a busy news month for the Federal Communications Commission. As the coronavirus pandemic accelerated in the US, the agency took steps to make additional spectrum available to [AT&T](#), [T-Mobile](#), [Verizon](#) and [US Cellular](#) to boost wireless connectivity to accommodate the additional remote working, learning and communicating Americans are undertaking during social distancing. This special spectrum access was also extended to [AT&T](#) to serve Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. The [FCC](#) also took action to help ensure that no current Lifeline subscribers are involuntarily removed from the Lifeline program during the coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau waived several rules that could otherwise result in de-enrollment of subscribers from the Lifeline program, which provides monthly discounts on broadband and voice services to qualified low-income consumers. And, as part of the passage of the CARES Act, the FCC voted to adopt a [\\$200 million telehealth program](#) to support healthcare providers responding to the pandemic. It also approved [Ligado's application](#) (with conditions) to deploy a low-power terrestrial nationwide network in the L-Band that will primarily support 5G and Internet of Things services.

In late April, the [FCC](#) adopted rules that make 1,200 megahertz of spectrum in the 6 GHz band (5.925–7.125 GHz) available for unlicensed use. These new rules will usher in Wi-Fi 6, the next generation of Wi-Fi, and play a major role in the growth of IoT. In addition to expressing support for the FCC's decision to open 1,200 megahertz of spectrum in the 6GHz band, the [Wi-Fi Alliance](#) announced that it is extending Wi-Fi CERTIFIED 6 into 6 GHz to ensure Wi-Fi users can quickly benefit from additional capacity, wider channels, and less congested spectrum.

The FCC also adopted new rules requiring implementation of caller ID authentication using technical standards known as ["STIR/SHAKEN."](#) These rules will further the FCC's efforts to protect consumers against malicious caller ID "spoofing," which is often used during robocall scam campaigns to trick consumers into answering their phones.

In long-awaited news, [T-Mobile US Inc.](#) announced that it has officially completed its merger with Sprint Corporation to create the New T-Mobile.

Broadband usage in the United States experienced a one-day spike to new Sunday highs on Easter, according to data from [OpenVault](#), a leading provider of technology solutions and industry analytics for broadband operators. Easter Sunday downstream

consumption was 16.3 GB per subscriber, an increase of 15.8 percent over the previous Sunday (14.1 GB) and of 37.9 percent over Sunday, March 1 (11.8 GB), immediately before COVID-19 social distancing measures began to take effect.

In Germany, [DE-CIX](#) in Frankfurt am Main saw further growth in data traffic during the COVID-19 crisis and increased Internet use in a range of segments. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, the growth previously observed in video conferencing traffic (for example Skype, Teams, and Webex) has risen by 100 percent as a result of the widespread use of home offices.

## 5G News

Developments in 5G from overseas included deployments in Europe and Asia. [Magyar Telekom and Ericsson](#) have launched commercial 5G in Hungary, with initial services live in parts of Budapest and Magyar Telekom's headquarters in Könyves Kálmán körút. In Thailand, Thai communications service provider [True Corporation Plc \(True\) has selected Ericsson](#) as a 5G Radio Access Network (RAN) vendor as part of its national 5G network. In other news, [Ericsson and British Telecommunication PLC \(BT\)](#) have signed a deal to deploy Ericsson's dual-mode 5G Core (Evolved Packet Core and 5G Core), a fully container-based, cloud native Mobile Packet Core for 4G, 5G Non-standalone and 5G Standalone services as a single fully integrated core. In the Netherlands, [VodafoneZiggo](#) selected Ericsson Spectrum Sharing to deploy 5G using existing spectrum assets. Nationwide 5G coverage is planned for July 2020.

[Iskrate!](#), a leading European ICT provider, together with PJSC Ukrtelecom and SID Bank, have signed an agreement to build a fiber-optic Internet network (GPON) to connect the rural areas of Ukraine and close the digital divide. In rural Slovenia and Croatia, [Iskrate!](#) will provide active and passive telecommunications equipment for the construction of an ultra-fast fiber-optic broadband network in 210 municipalities as part of the RUNE (Rural Network) project with its partners Rune Enia in Slovenia and Rune Crow in Croatia.

[Nokia](#) announced it has achieved the world's fastest 5G speeds in its Over-the-Air (OTA) network in Dallas, Texas. Utilizing 800 MHz of commercial millimeter wave 5G spectrum and Dual Connectivity (EN-DC) functionality, Nokia achieved 5G speeds of up to 4.7 Gbps in tests performed on base station equipment being deployed in major U.S. carriers' commercial networks. It has also expanded its [AirScale portfolio](#) with a number of new product innovations designed to fulfill the evolving needs of 5G networks and help mobile operators realize the full potential of 5G. Also, [Nokia and Bharti Airtel \("Airtel"\)](#) announced a multiyear agreement to deploy Nokia's SRAN solution across 9 circles<sup>1</sup> in India, helping Airtel to enhance the network capacity of its networks, in particular 4G, and improve customer experience. The rollout will also lay the foundation for providing 5G connectivity in the future. In the land down under, [Nokia and Vodafone Hutchison Australia \(VHA\)](#) announced that they are complementing their 3.5Ghz 5G rollout, with the first deployment of low-band NR700Mhz spectrum in a field test environment in a 5G network in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

## Leaderboard News

News related to the coronavirus pandemic came from all corners of the industry. A new analysis from [Juniper Research](#) found that the coronavirus pandemic could cause around a \$42 billion revenue gap over the next 9 months for smart device vendors. The analysis examined a number of key device verticals including smartphones, tablets, consumer robotics, smart speakers and smart wearables. [DetectaChem Inc.](#) announced that it will launch a ground-breaking new smartphone-based COVID-19 testing solution for its popular MobileDetect App for Apple and Android platforms. The [FCC](#) launched a portal to begin accepting applications for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program this month. Over \$200 million in funding has been approved to help fight the coronavirus pandemic.

A new study from [Juniper Research](#) found that global spending on digital commerce will fall by 14 percent in 2020 as lockdowns and reductions in consumer spending are felt.

Spending will fall from \$11.2 trillion in 2019 to \$9.7 trillion. Recovery and an additional shift to online spending will occur in 2021. A new report from [OpsRamp on IT spending](#) during the coronavirus pandemic reveals that most spending is focused on minimizing business risk: 73 percent of IT operations and DevOps leaders expect to either accelerate or maintain digital transformation initiatives through the global pandemic.

Microsoft Corp. announced key deals and partnerships. The Coca-Cola Company announced a five-year agreement with [Microsoft Corp.](#) for a new strategic partnership to standardize its business operations on Microsoft's cloud and deliver rich new digital experiences that will provide innovative solutions to modernize how the company engages with employees and customers. [The National Basketball Association \(NBA\) and Microsoft Corp.](#) announced a new multiyear alliance, which will transform the way fans experience the NBA. As part of this collaboration, Microsoft will become the Official Artificial Intelligence Partner and an Official Cloud and Laptop Partner for the NBA, Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), NBA G League, and USA Basketball beginning with the 2020-21 NBA season.

Nokia also announced its collaboration with Microsoft as part of the [SONiC initiative](#), an open source network operating system based on Linux that has been production-hardened in the data centers of some of the largest cloud-service providers. And C3.ai, which focuses on enterprise AI software for accelerating digital transformation, announced plans to collaborate with [Microsoft Corp.](#) to enhance C3.ai's global customer experience and elevate sales performance using intelligent cloud technology. [FedEx Corp. and Microsoft Corp.](#) announced a new multiyear collaboration to help transform commerce by combining the global digital and logistics network of FedEx with the power of Microsoft's intelligent cloud. In another partnership announcement, [Sony Semiconductor Solutions \(Sony\) and Microsoft](#) announced they are partnering to create solutions that make AI-powered smart cameras and video analytics easier to access and deploy for their mutual customers.

[Evolving Systems, Inc.](#) has announced the signing of an extended multiyear Managed Services contract with Tier 1 mobile operator, EE (now part of BT Global). The contract extension significantly expands Evolving Systems' collaborative engagement with the mobile operator.

Mergers and acquisitions news also rolled in. [Nokia](#) announced the successful completion of its acquisition of Elenion Technologies, a U.S.-based company focusing on silicon photonics technology. [NVIDIA](#) announced the completion of its acquisition of Mellanox Technologies, Ltd., for a transaction value of \$7 billion. The acquisition, initially announced on March 11, 2019, combines NVIDIA's leading computing expertise with Mellanox's high-performance networking technology for the advancement of next-generation data centers.

A new report from [Juniper Research](#) found that total eRetail transaction values will reach \$4.8 trillion by 2024, up from \$3.3 trillion in 2020. This growth will be driven by emerging markets, with China having 62 percent value growth over the next 4 years.

## AI News

A new report from [Juniper Research](#) has found that consumers will interact with voice assistants on over 8.4 billion devices by 2024; overtaking the world's population and growing 113 percent compared to the 4.2 billion devices expected to be in use by year end 2020. Despite this, monetization of the voice assistants themselves remains a challenge.

[Cerence Inc.](#) announced that Bean Tech, a strategic partner of Great Wall Motors, will deploy Cerence ARK (AI Reference Kit) to build AI-powered automotive assistants for the Chinese automotive group. These technologies provide fast and accurate voice-powered access to a range of in-car systems and functions, including the telephone, radio and media, vehicle controls, navigation and point-of-interest search, and more. In other connected-car related industry news, BMW Group has selected the new [NVIDIA Isaac™ robotics platform](#) to enhance its automotive factories—utilizing logistics robots built on advanced AI computing and visualization technologies.

[QuillBot](#) announced that it raised over \$4M in seed funding, led by GSV Ventures and

Sierra Ventures with participation from Service Provider Capital. QuillBot is the first and only comprehensive AI writing collaborator that rewrites full paragraphs and refines content.

## Security News

The pandemic is also creating some new security concerns for service providers. [Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.](#) announced findings from a new survey, conducted by Dimensional Research, examining the coronavirus pandemic's impact on enterprise security. The survey results show that 71 percent of IT and security professionals globally report an increase in security threats and attacks since the coronavirus outbreak started, as criminals seek to exploit the remote working explosion. [Check Point Research](#) has published its latest Global Threat Index for April 2020. Researchers saw several COVID-19 related spam campaigns distributing a new variant of the Agent Tesla remote access trojan, moving it up to third place in the Index, impacting 3 percent of organizations worldwide.

The [ETSI Technical Committee CYBER](#) has recently released a key standard for digital evidence bag (DEB). ETSI TS 103 643 covers "techniques for assurance of digital material used in legal proceedings" and provides a set of extra tools for those wanting to demonstrate the integrity of digital evidence.

[NordVPN](#) has released survey findings indicating trends in global digital surveillance by country—and that these might extend beyond the end of the current pandemic.

-----

To read more telecom industry news stories, be sure to visit [Pipeline's News Center](#) and [subscribe to Pipeline's weekly and monthly newsletters](#). You can also follow [Pipeline](#) on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), or [Facebook](#) to get telecom industry news alerts in real-time. To have your company featured in this column, send your breaking news and press releases to [pressreleases@pipelinepub.com](mailto:pressreleases@pipelinepub.com) for consideration.