

wireless broadband network, said Jon Banks, USTelecom senior vice president of law and policy. The commission also recommends establishing competition policies and creating incentives for universal availability and adoption. "Telecom companies tend to pay the highest rate for pole attachments," he said. "The FCC is looking to drive down the cost of that part of broadband infrastructure." As part of a USF and intercarrier compensation overhaul, the FCC plans to transform the high-cost program into the Connect America Fund in a three phase process over the next 10 years, Matthey said (CD March 8 p1). The overhaul will involve dispensing with per-minute intercarrier-compensation charges, said Rebekah Goodheart, an FCC policy adviser.

FreeConference encouraged its customers to write Congress to oppose banning what big telcos call traffic pumping. Universal Service Fund legislation in the works by Chairman Rick Boucher, D-Va., of the House Communications Subcommittee and Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., includes a section that would ban agreements by rural local exchange carriers to pay free conference-call companies for sending traffic to their networks. Meanwhile, an item on the subject is on circulation at the FCC, and several states are also looking at it. Proposed rules would kill free conference calling services, FreeConference said in an e-mail to customers Wednesday. "Your Congressman needs to understand that eliminating your ability to communicate with your business and non-profit colleagues through free teleconferencing services is unfair, unacceptable and anti-competitive," it said. "Additionally, large telephone companies are alleging that customers of free teleconferencing services are using these services for pornographic and controversial activities. We need you to tell Congress that this is simply not true." Other free conference call providers have taken a more direct approach to fighting the proposed rules. They recently sent a study they had commissioned to the FCC and every member of Congress (CD March 9 p5).

Wireless

The Department of Homeland Security approved the Joint ATIS/TIA Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) Federal Alert Gateway to CMSP Gateway Interface Specification as a national standard, said the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions and the Telecommunications Industry Association. When fully adopted by communications service providers, the specification will provide anyone with a CMAS-capable mobile device an additional way to receive alerts during natural disasters and other emergencies. The specification will benefit end users by allowing widespread use of 90 character text message emergency alerts and warnings of imminent threats to life and property, Amber Alerts and presidential emergency messages, they said.

The Federal Trade Commission wants comment on possible revisions to its Children's Online Privacy Protection Act rule, which has remained unchanged for nearly 10 years. The rule requires online operators to notify and get parents' permission before collecting, using or disclosing personal information about children under 13, secure that information and only collect what's "reasonably necessary" for children to use their websites. The FTC decided against changes in its 2005 review, but "in light of rapidly evolving technology and changes in the way children use and access the Internet," it's considering changes, the agency said Wednesday. In a notice to be published shortly in the *Federal Register*, it asks for feedback on the implications of COPPA enforcement on mobile communications, interactive TV and gaming and similar two-way forms; the use of automated systems to filter out personally identifiable information; whether the definition of "personal information" should be expanded to include data that can identify a "specific individual," such as persistent IP addresses and mobile geolocation data; other ways to get "verifiable" parental consent; whether parents are using their right to review or delete their children's information and the difficulty in authenticating them; and whether the FTC's safe-harbor programs have improved compliance.

Apple users download 140 percent more mobile applications on average than smartphone users overall, In-Stat research said. Free mapping and directions were the most downloaded apps on most platforms, but just sixth on Apple. But usage, not downloads, determines success for an application said Frank Dickson, an In-Stat ana-