Inside Towers

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SBA is Solid

Even though Crown Castle and American Tower get the majority of the attention in the tower world, SBA Communications shouldn't be forgotten. This week, SBA reported their third quarter earnings ahead of expectations. Colby Synesael at Cowen and Company wrote in a research note, "SBAC posted solid 3Q14 results and provided a solid initial 2015 outlook that lacks the outsized 'acquired networks' churn that Crown expects. As such, we expect the stock to benefit from a bit of a relief rally today after trading down ~3% the last three days. Reiterate Outperform." On the conference call yesterday morning, the tower company noted the four major wireless carriers contributed to more than 80% of incremental leasing revenue, and expects solid network build activity from Verizon and T-Mobile. Jennifer Fritzsche, Senior Analyst at Wells Fargo explained that SBA expects T-Mobile to be stronger with their 700MHz build and Verizon to continue to grow as it begins densifying its network. They also believe Sprint will be active deploying 2.5GHz in certain markets. Even though there have been widely reported network slowdowns from AT&T, SBA noted it has not seen it yet. While the other towercos in the market are looking to expand their international presence from Brazil to India, and many places in between, SBA will continue concentrating on the Western Hemisphere, specifically South America.

American Tower Eyes Nextel Towers in Brazil

American Tower is looking to strike a deal with NII Holdings to acquire another 900 towers in Brazil. President and CEO of American Tower, Jim Taiclet, explained in their third quarter conference call, "The wireless sector in Brazil is at roughly the same pace – place as the United States was in 2009 with smartphone penetration of approximately 20%. While that smartphone penetration in the U.S. grew from 20% to 70% over the last five years, we believe that the slope of the adoption curve could be even steeper in a country like Brazil given the greater availability and relatively lower cost of advanced devices today as compared to five years ago." In June of this year, American Tower acquired BR Towers with about 2,530 towers and the right to use another 2,110 towers.

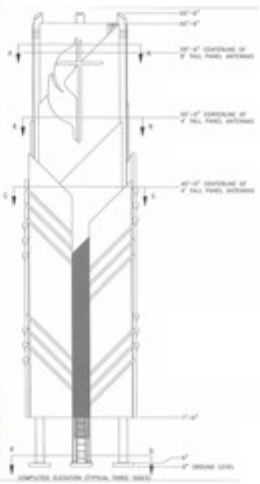
San Francisco to Bring in $1 Million for Antennas on Streetlights

The idea of wireless antennas on streetlight poles isn't a new one, but the execution is. City officials in San Francisco, California, plan to raise more than $1 million by charging private telecommunications companies a fee to install small wireless antennas on some of the city's 16,800 publically owned street poles. Certain telecommunications companies have already approached the city to ask about putting "outdoor distributed antennae systems" -- low-frequency antennas connected by fiber to wireless carriers' hubs -- on city-owned property like light poles, according to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. By renting out the light fixtures to telecom carriers, the city could make $4,000 a year per tower, a fee would that increase 4% each year.

American Tower Registers for First In-House Lobbyist

The Hill, an online newspaper for and about Congress, reported that American Tower Corporation is registering its first in-house lobbyist, Becca Gould. Ms. Gould runs the government affairs shop and came to the company in May after running her own lobby shop. She also spent 12 years lobbying for Dell. The firm will be lobbying on trade and tech, according to forms. But will also tackle advocacy on tax reform — specifically mentioning a financial maneuver used to cut corporate tax bills, known as a real estate investment trust. (The Hill)

Focus on Photo Simulations
By Cindy Wishart at STEALTH



I think we can all agree that technology is an amazing thing. Photo-altering software has allowed companies to create wonderful simulations of future concealments. They help us paint a picture of the possibilities. This is a good thing. But used incorrectly, this is a bad thing. A photo-simulation that someone perceives as a "guarantee" is akin to an airbrushed cover model: both bear little resemblance to reality. STEALTH originally offered Photo Sims to help overcome resistance to the unknown. We thought they would make a big difference. Now, customers ask for them to get an idea what antenna concealments might look like. Resulting photos are intended to be directional tools, but they become the single biggest generator of disappointment since the Cubs.

Artists labor over these images, working hard to ensure textures and colors closely match reality. But too often, the image becomes the epitome of over promising and under-delivering. Nowhere is this tool more abused than in simulating what a tree will look like. Ansel Adams couldn't find more beautiful trees than some of the Photo Sims I've seen. Imagine the disappointment when installers erect Charlie Brown's Christmas tree. No more! There is a way out. Continue reading here.

New Canann Cell Tower to Go Live in Early 2015

AT&T customers in New Canaan, Connecticut, won't have to wait too much longer for cell service to improve in the area. AT&T announced that their new tower installed on Silver Hill Hospital's campus will likely go live in the first quarter of 2015. The timing of the tower going live is important to the Utilities Commission because they are overseeing data collection through a "drive test" of town roads that has seen specially outfitted vehicle record cell strength on a street-by-street basis, providing New Canaan with site-specific data that it's never had before, according to the New Canaanite. Even though the test is soon to be finished and a draft of the map is in progress, there are still questions about whether some areas of the town ought to be retested once the tower at Silver Hill, and a second planned tower, goes live.

Tennessee Tower Up in Flames

Early this week, a fire that started in Greenville, Tennessee, damaged the top section of a Verizon cell phone tower. Contractors from MWT Telecommunications, based in Nephi, Utah, were working on the tower when the fire started. Site foreman Alex Knight told deputies that workers were welding on the tower and heard "two loud noises," according to the report. All of the power had to be cut off to the tower so the United Volunteer Fire Department could put out the fire. According to the Greenville Sun, “The United Volunteer Fire Department responded to the fire with one truck and three firefighters, fire Chief Brad Ball said. Ball said that a coaxial cable caught on fire as welders worked. The fire was up too high on the tower for United firefighters to extinguish. A fire extinguisher was used but the fire mostly burned itself out.”

Soil Testing Required for Ohio Radio Tower

The next step for a proposed radio tower in Huron County, Ohio, is to test the soil. A new tower, which will cost between $216,000 and $260,000, must be constructed after the current radio tower was damaged by an employee who struck it with a backhoe. The tower has been repaired, but a recent visit from the county insurance adjuster has reinforced the need for a new tower. The original tower was built in 1986 and the insurance adjuster is concerned that due to the age of the tower, it’s probably not safe and could blow over in a wind or ice storm.

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Tower Ticker

SYMBOL	TIME & PRICE		CHG & % CHG		DAY'S LOW & HIGH		VOLUME
AMT	04:01pm EST	97.65	+0.77	+0.79%	96.47	97.66	2,004,229
CCI	04:01pm EST	79.34	+1.18	+1.51%	78.27	79.41	8,764,815
CIGW	01:45pm EST	0.38	+0.06	+18.75%	0.32	0.38	34,877
SBAC	04:00pm EST	110.41	-0.28	-0.25%	108.73	111.95	1,862,557
TMUS	04:07pm EST	28.54	+0.09	+0.32%	28.13	28.74	2,792,908
VZ	04:00pm EST	50.34	+0.01	+0.02%	49.93	50.98	10,872,612
S	04:00pm EST	4.92	-0.26	-5.02%	4.91	5.18	41,831,685
T	04:00pm EST	34.92	+0.13	+0.37%	34.71	34.96	15,323,858

Small Cells

Towersteam Applauds New FCC Rules

The FCC recently voted to approve new rules designated to accelerate the deployment of small cell and wireless infrastructure as carriers look to densify their networks with small cell architectures. Many industry professionals support the FCC's decision, such as Towerstream, a 4G and Small Cell Rooftop Tower company, who released a statement praising the FCC. "The FCC recognizes that wireless networks need to be densified in order to address the tremendous growth in mobile data consumption," stated Jeffrey Thompson, President and Chief Executive Officer. "Densification will require a multitude of solutions including small cells, Wi-Fi, and distributed antenna systems. The FCC's order will accelerate the deployment of these wireless technologies to address the unique challenges associated with delivering wireless services in densely populated urban areas. The FCC's action addresses many of the challenges that HetNets Tower Corporation encountered in constructing a small cell based, wireless infrastructure solution in four major urban markets in the country," noted Arthur Giftakis, Vice President of Engineering. "These rules will streamline the review process by state and local municipalities regarding environmental, historic preservation, and other regulatory matters. Clearer rules that favor build-out over red tape will not only accelerate carrier adoption of small cell solutions in dense urban markets, but also provide a strong platform if HetNets expands into other markets in the future."

Zoning & Moaning

AT&T Files Lawsuit Over Proposed Alabama Tower

Roughly three months ago, the city of Montgomery, Alabama, Board of Adjustment (BOA) denied a Special Exception Application to locate a 185-foot tower near the entrance of Montgomery's largest neighborhood, Deer Creek. Now AT&T has filed a lawsuit to ask a federal judge to reverse that decision. AT&T cites that the BOA violated the Federal Telecommunications Act, which intends to accelerate wireless technology by the private sector. In a response to the lawsuit, the City of Montgomery says the BOA heavily weighed material evidence when making the decision. If a federal judge rules in AT&T's favor, the tower would be planted near the entrance of Deer Creek, and in the backyard of Glen Rose, a section of the Deer Creek subdivision. City Councilman Glenn Pruitt said at a recent Deer Creek homeowners meeting, "I understand this is a business, they've got to do what they've got to do. But we are dealing with the biggest investments these people will ever make," Pruitt explained. Pruitt says this is the third time AT&T has attempted to construct a tower in Deer Creek. This time, AT&T mapped out 19 possible locations, but only two to three landowners agreed to lease the property. Ultimately the corporation decided on the site on Vaughn Road. Pruitt says that isn't the worst of it. "This cell phone tower is for coverage in [the nearby town of] Wynlakes. If this is for Wynlakes, go stick it over there," Pruitt said. Documents filed by AT&T seem to corroborate this by calling the property in question "Wynlakes Sites." It's widely known AT&T has a dead zone inside Wynlakes, and it's suspected this tower would remedy the issue. "It's unthinkable to decrease the property value in one neighborhood to increase cell service in another," said Pruitt.

Local Missouri Officials to Consider Tower in Park

Officials in the Missouri city of Warson Woods are contemplating whether or not to allow placement of a 120-foot cell tower in Royal Oaks Park. Besides offering improved cell service, the tower, which would be concealed as a tree, would offer service for the local police department as well. Two weeks

ago, the Warson Woods Board of Aldermen discussed possible installation of the tower, according to Mayor Larry Howe. He said it was proposed by a representative of a real estate company representing TowerCo, who would be the ultimate owner of the tower. The board agreed to discuss further with the real estate company the merits of allowing a tower, Howe said, adding the board would need to vote to approve any contract. The tower would have a number of antennas to serve various providers. When asked about nearby residents of the park, Howe noted that, "We would discuss the plan with neighbors of the park."

T-Mobile Tower Denied in New Mexico

At the recent Taos County Planning and Zoning meeting in Taos County, New Mexico, residents crowded in to voice their opposition to a proposed T-Mobile cell tower. The commission denied the proposal, submitted by a representative of T-Mobile, because they reasoned it was in violation of the Taos County land-use regulations in two areas. First, the Taos County Planning and Zoning Commission ruled it was in violation of section 4.7.1 subsection (B) of the land use regulations, which states “The development shall be sensitive to and consistent with the architectural design, scale, density, bulk building height, historical character, and orientation of the existing properties in the neighborhood.” In the case of the proposed tower, it would be concealed to look like a tall evergreen tree. Second, the applicant failed to submit evidence that it solicited additional users, in this case, other cell phone companies, to use the tower. The applicant must do this per section 4.10.1 of the land-use regulations. Planning Commissioner Ceilidh Creech said she hopes T-Mobile appeals the decision. She, along with all of the other planning commissioners, denied the application, but she said had the applicant complied to the land-use regulations she would have voted to approve it. “I’m all for telecommunication, I telecommute from home.” She explained T-Mobile could have done a better job giving residents in Arroyo Hondo more than one option for the location of the tower. “I’d like to see the people of T-Mobile come and work with the community,” she noted.

North Carolina Shop Owner Not Happy With Nearby Tower

Scott Thomas, owner of Thomas Pottery in Seagrove, North Carolina, isn’t exactly pleased with a 300-foot cell tower that will not only be near his home, but within view of his pottery shop as well. Thomas thinks that the tower, once built, will be a “black eye” on the community. Contributing to his opinion is that the tower will be visible from North Carolina highway 705. This stretch of road is known as the Pottery Highway due to the numerous potters along the road and is designated as a scenic byway by the state. Thomas and Susan and Don Walton, owners of Walton's Pottery, said they aren't happy the county changed the rules for cell towers on the Pottery Highway. In February, commissioners adopted a new Unified Development Ordinance that combines the county's development and zoning laws into a single document. The law changed cell tower regulations, which previously had said towers had to be at least a mile from scenic byways, such as Pottery Highway. The new law says towers have to be 500 feet from all public and private roads, including scenic byways. "They've made every road in Moore County the same," Thomas said. The Waltons explained they put up a storage building behind their shop so they won't be able to see most of the tower. Susan Walton said she doesn't understand why the county would let such a "monstrosity" be built close to the Pottery Highway. She noted that they wouldn't have bought their property in 2013 if they had known about the tower.