MCCC News

Killing Net Neutrality

[Editor's Note: This is just the latest in a series of anti-consumer actions taken by the current administration. If you haven't done so already, reach out to your representatives and let them know this is not acceptable.]

The FCC on Tuesday finally rolled out its plan to kill off net neutrality. There's a strong chance that doing so will screw over millions of American consumers and lead to a rise in online censorship across the US.

But on the hand, it will make internet service providers and mobile carriers a shitload of money.

The vote to repeal net neutrality will be held by the commission on December 14th, according to a statement from FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. Pai has painted his efforts to grant companies like Verizon broad authority to control which websites its customers can access as "restoring" the internet to its former glory.

Republicans control three of the commission's five seats, granting them the majority needed to pass the new rules.

Since appointed chairman by President Donald Trump, Pai has been determined to roll back the Obama-era net neutrality rules, which reclassified internet providers as "common carriers" under Title II of the Telecommunications Act. The reclassification allowed the FCC to impose new rules on internet providers such as Verizon and AT&T. Specifically, it made it illegal for the companies to discriminate against content by blocking or slowing traffic to websites whenever they choose.

Pai has repeatedly claimed that net neutrality has forced broadband providers to decrease their investments. But that's a lie.

Newsletter Announcement

This will be the final printed copy of the MCCC News. Beginning in January 2018 the newsletter will be delivered via email in PDF format. This month you should have received the newsletter via email as well as the printed copy. If you didn't receive the emailed version, be sure to check your junk drawer. If it's not there, please let me know the correct address.

...Bill Raecke

"Today, I have shared with my colleagues a draft order that would abandon this failed approach and return to the longstanding consensus that served consumers well for decades," Pai said in a statement. "Under my proposal, the federal government will stop micro-managing the Internet."

Pai added that his plan will require internet providers to be transparent and allow consumers to "buy the service plan that's best for them." The responsibility of policing ISPs will be transferred back to the Federal Trade Commission, as it was before the net neutrality rules were approved in 2015.

FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel called Pai's justifications "ridiculous" and "offensive" to American consumers. "Following actions earlier this year to erase consumer privacy protections, the Commission now wants to wipe out court-tested rules and a decade's work in order to favor cable and telephone companies," she said.

"You've got to hand it to Chairman Pai," Sen. Ron Wyden said in a statement. "He really gets the job done for the titans of Big Cable. Tearing down net neutrality is the crowning achievement of the most anti-consumer FCC chair in history. Consumers, rural Americans, small businesses and pretty much everyone except Big Cable executives will lose out thanks to this terrible proposal."

Congressman Frank Pallone Jr., the ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, noted that millions of Americans have spoken out in defense of net neutrality. "In making this announcement, the Trump FCC is choosing to ignore the public and push forward with a harmful plan

to kill net neutrality and destroy the internet as we know it," he said.

"Internet rights are civil rights," said Jay Stanley, a senior policy analyst at the American Civil Liberties Union. "Gutting net neutrality will have a devastating effect on free speech online. Without it, gateway corporations like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T will have too much power to mess with the free flow of information."

...https://gizmodo.com/republicans-finally-set-a-date-to-kill-net-neutrality-1820645506

Flashback

Welcome to another month. This year seems to be drawing to a close both too quickly and not nearly fast enough at the same time. It seems like one of those years of one step forward, two steps back, or if you're a public figure—run around in a circle, fall over, catch fire, then bitch about how bad media treats you. I'm glad I'm not a public figure, though I do like to bitch about the world in small computer user group newsletters.

On the continuing saga of Vampire-Quest®, I have been able to contact Kipper about my ordered card, and it looks as though mine may have been overlooked (as in—someone in Germany named Schwartz had theirs shipped out, which caused an assumption that someone in the US named Schwartz was taken care of as well. With this error corrected, I'm hoping we can get back on track, and back to waiting for the right reasons, as opposed to the wrong ones.

As you've no doubt been aware over the last handful of articles I've written, I have been on a bit of a classic and retro-gaming kick lately. In fact I recently completed playing

through the original DOOM game, thanks to a program called Odamex on MorphOS. Odamex is an 'engine' with an interface for playing DOOM files and related mods, either one player or over networks. Even playing the original game with its original graphics, it's nice to see it running smoothly on a 1080P screen on my G5 Morph machine.

Finally, I thought I would mention a new bit of hardware I picked up. You might be familiar with the "Flashback" line of plug-and-play TV game systems, which covered retro consoles from Atari to Coleco to Sega and more. Last year I wrote about the then-new Atari Flashback Portable handheld device. At-Games has a new 2017 edition of the portable available (along with new versions of their standard consoles, including versions of their Atari and Sega systems that output an HD signal, if not actual HD game content).

The Atari Portable has a slightly updated case design, though functionally identical, save for the nice touch of making the rechargeable battery user-removable via a screwed-on rear panel in the newer version. The directional pad is different in shape and feel. I don't know if I'd say it's worse than the 2016 version, but it's certainly not any better, as it was always pretty poor for me (seemingly made for a small child's thumbs, as the end of my thumb can completely cover it). The 2017 Portable offers seventy built-in games to the earlier version's sixty, adding some classic gems from Activision along with Atari versions of Namco-licensed arcade games like Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Galaxian, and more. It's worth noting that the Pac-Man on the portable is not the heavily-panned 1981 Atari version, but a much more recent and arcade-like home-brew. Whether this was done for licensee appeasement or revision-

ist history is unknown. On that note, the version of Frogger which is not an Atari 2600 version, but an arcade port, remains.

Like last year's model, the true standout here is the SD card slot, which lets you play your own downloaded Atari 2600 ROM files on the device. Compatibility and emulation quality is far from perfect, but seems a bit improved from the previous device, and makes it easy to have a large collection of Atari games on the go.

So at roughly $50 (less at some places), is the Atari Flashback Portable (2017 Edition) worth getting? If you don't already have the 2016 version, I would say sure. While it does improve on last year's model in several ways, it backsteps / side-steps in one or two others, and it's not much of a net gain if you were paying full price. Overall though, it's a convenient method to play the majority of all Atari 2600 games in a handheld form factor, and one of the only 'Flashbacks' or other retro TV game systems that is of much worth (IMO you're better off with emulation on your home computer or a Raspberry Pi than any of the machines that hook up to a TV). On the downside, the controls aren't too great (especially if you have large adult thumbs) and the small LCD screen doesn't always work too well with Atari games that flicker objects on the display (which is a lot of them), but if you like your Atari games, the mix of price, capabilities, and form factor is difficult to beat (unless maybe you have an unusually good setup for playing Atari games through your phone.) With all the classic (and not-so-classic) mini game consoles, as well as retro mini C-64 and Sinclair Spectrum either here or on the way, I wonder how long we have to wait until the plug-and-play Amiga mini 500 shows itself with its 50

packed-in games? (about ten of which are any good, I'd wager)

...Eric Schwartz
From the AmiTech Gazette
November 2017

X5000 Update

The AmigaOne X5000/20 was released last year by A-EON technology featuring a PowerPC-based dual-core Freescale CPU with a frequency of up to 2.5 Ghz. The AmigaOne X5000/20 was released with modern hardware in mind offering support for SATA, USB, etc. The AmigaOne X5000/20 also features a PCI-Express video card slot, up to 64 GB RAM, dual gigabit Ethernet ports, built-in sound, and an extra co-processor best referred to as the Xena, an XMOS 16-core programmable 32-bit 500 MHz chip that can be configured by software to act as any type of custom chip imaginable. The AmigaOne X5000/20 is capable of running Amiga OS 4.1 and several Linux PowerPC distros.

However, recently A-EON Technology announced that it has a more powerful AmigaOne X5000/40 in development as well, featuring a quad-core PowerPC CPU. Details and release date are unknown. The tech company is mainly focusing on its upcoming AmigaOne A1222, a new powerful, low-cost, entry level PowerPC motherboard to be released late 2017 or early 2018.
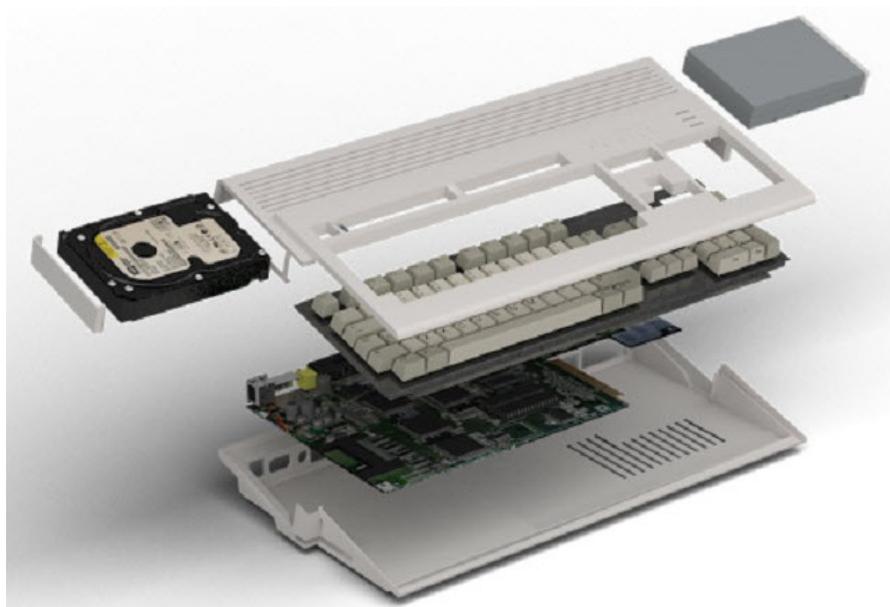
Amiga Reloaded

Much like the C64 Reloaded, the Amiga Reloaded will be a new Amiga motherboard using original MOS/CSG chips. It does not directly compare to any existing Amiga mainboard, but if you want a comparison basis, then an A1200 is probably the closest match. Amiga Reloaded is an AGA Amiga using the original chips—Alice, Lisa and Paula—along with two CIA chips. Other chips of the computer will be replaced by modern logic chips.

The Amiga Reloaded will not have a CPU but will work with official released accelerator cars from Individual Computers (ACA series). It would be very interesting if Vampire team's upcoming Vampire Amiga1200 accelerator would work.

The Amiga Reloaded will use a modern laptop power supply as its only power source. Even with today's standards, the Amiga can be considered a low-power system.

The Kickstart ROMs will be properly licensed from Cloanto, and will be stored in a flash ROM. Flash space will be 1 Mbyte.

After individual Computers finish the first prototype, they will take binding orders to find out the actual demand of the Amiga Reloaded. After this order phase is over, production will start and the boards will be delivered about 18-20 weeks after the initial order phase.

December Calendar

December 4 — MCCC Chapter Meeting
7:00 PM — Grand Prairie Airport
3116 S. Great Southwest Parkway, Grand Prairie

December 4 — Board of Director's Meeting
Approximately 9:00 PM — Location TBD

January 2 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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