

No issue next week: BPL Today publishes 50 weeks/year and next week we'll skip an issue for our

summer break. The other break is at the end of the year. Vacation next week means we'll miss the UPLC's audio

conference focused on the CenterPoint BPL pilot and technology lab — but you don't have to (www.uplc.com).

Intel, Linksys (Cisco) and Motorola join HomePlug

Intel's Matt Theall is new president

The HomePlug Powerline Alliance revealed the new members and new president at the Intel Developer Forum (IDF) in San Francisco last week where it was showing off new 200 mbps HomePlug AV technology.

The AV standard was ratified this month (*BPL Today*, 8/22).

Intel's Matt Theall, marketing manager for bridge products, was elected HomePlug president.

He reminded attendees of the conference in a keynote address.

The firm is a former member of the group and left in 2000 to focus on wireless solutions via successful WiFi-based Centrino products.

BPL and HomePlug have come a long way since then and Intel re-joined HomePlug "to advance the use of electrical wiring as a way to share data throughout the home," the firm explained.

HomePlug technology can create networks where wireless isn't available or doesn't work, said Don McDonald, general manager for Intel's digital home group, in an IDF keynote.

"Wireless is great, but it's not always the right tool for the job," he explained, and "we need a good wired solution."

Outgoing HomePlug president Oleg Logvinov, founder of BPL chipmaker Arkados, sees these developments as "an inflection point" where HomePlug developers "pass the torch" to the implementers, he told us Thursday.

"Now the volumes of these products will pick up and multiply because ... one application will feed multiple applications and this reverse spiraling-out of proportion will help this whole market grow," he added.

Andy Melder called the new members "a gold plated set of partners" and dubbed them "market makers — companies that have the ability to really drive this technology forward in a meaningful way."

Melder is BPL chipmaker Intellon's senior vice president of strategic business development.

He expects to see HomePlug AV-enabled gear from vendors at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Jan 5-8.

Getting working gear to CES — at least prototypes — has "clearly been the focus of a lot of industry attention," Melder reported.

"It's really what's driving the interest level that you're seeing now from folks like Intel and Motorola."

HomePlug members have HomePlug AV development kits in hand — letting them design devices in their own platform — and will have actual chipsets to work with "later this year," Melder predicted.

"It's been a standards effort from day one," he added, starting when HomePlug 1.0 was released four or five years ago.

That version lacked the "critical mass" needed to for a global standard to get off the ground, noted Melder.

"The shift of the alliance's emphasis towards global implementation — and the addition of these industry-leading companies as sponsor members — signals to the industry that major changes are coming in the world of the digitally connected home," said Pete Griffin,

IBEC lands nation's first RUS loan for BPL

Loan for BPL at 20 more co-ops planned

Congress boosted coffers; RUS now hip to BPL

International Broadband Electric Communications (IBEC), the Huntsville, Ala — a BPL one-stop-shop as vendor, integrator and consultancy — landed a \$19.2 million loan from the US Dept of Agriculture's Rural Utility Service (RUS).

Such loans are meant for infrastructure only and will be used by IBEC on hardware and installation at its power co-op BPL deployments in Alabama, Indiana and Virginia.

Congress renewed RUS last year

and upped the funds from the expected \$331 million to \$550 million (*BPL Today*, 12/06).

A second IBEC application is planned in February or March for a much bigger piece of that RUS pie to pay for BPL hardware and installation at 20-plus co-ops now closing deals with IBEC.

The firm for a fee will help co-ops get RUS loans where they don't want to hire IBEC as an integrator, IBEC CEO Scott Lee told us last week.

The broadband loan program was created by President Bush to help get broadband into rural areas and meet his goal of nationwide broadband deployment in 2007.

Rural utilities have often been advised to include RUS loans in their

Continued on page five

chairman of HomePlug and RadioShack's director of corporate technology.

"The alliance is now poised to play a major role in driving both to-the-home and in-the-home connectivity solutions across the world," said Griffin.

To speed global proliferation of HomePlug products, the alliance created an implementers' forum board of directors with sponsor members Comcast, EarthLink, Intel, Cisco's Linksys, Motorola, RadioShack, Sharp and Sony, said HomePlug.

Those firms "will lead the alliance's commitment to driving the implementation and use of jointly approved HomePlug standards as well as creating a diverse ecosystem of HomePlug-based products."

That "shift" is more like a tightening-up of the alliance's message on existing initiatives — in hopes of winning global acceptance — aka IEEE and ETSI acceptance as "the" BPL standard.

It's the race to the finish line as the IEEE's P1901 working group hammers out an interoperability standard over the next year or few years.

Just so the message is crystal clear,

HomePlug renamed existing efforts as "initiatives:"

- In-home networking via the original HomePlug 1.0 (14 mbps or 85 mbps using Intellon's "Turbo" version) and the new AV standard (200 mbps) optimized for audio and video with quality of service packet prioritizing;

- Internet access via the under-construction HomePlug BPL standard (based on AV and delivering 200 mbps raw bandwidth), and

- Home automation using command-and-control applications.

We knew that but remember, HomePlug is speaking to a wider audience now that it has names like Intel, Cisco and Motorola on its board.

We noticed lots of tech press picked up the story and expect to see more of that.

Logvinov has been an exemplary spokesman for and leader of the alliance and we expect him to continue helping guide the group's efforts and wares — but electing an Intel manager for the top job raises antennae at a wide range of press firms and no doubt research houses and financial analysis shops.

It brings a big corporation with lots of R&D money right into the heart of the development process.

The three sponsor members "instrumental in contributing technology to the alliance's standards" — Arkados, Conexant and Intellon — "will continue to play a key role in the development of HomePlug technology as contributor members in what the alliance calls the Promoter's Groups.

Millions of products based on the alliance's initial standard, HomePlug 1.0, have been sold worldwide, noted Theall, the new HomePlug president.

Completion of HomePlug AV means products based on this standard will reach consumers in 2006, he added.

HomePlug BPL is based on HomePlug AV "and will shortly conduct competitive lab and field tests for development of a home automation standard," said Logvinov.

HomePlug's newly elected leadership will get to work at the group's annual meeting and technology conference Sept 27-28 in Burlingame, Calif (www.homeplug.org).

Bell Canada, Goldman Sachs, Intel, Motorola back Intellon

BPL chipmaker revs-up 'global' aspirations

"Intellon's HomePlug ICs will be the driving force behind the digitally connected home of the future by providing consumers and service providers with a robust, cost-effective and easy to use network backbone for audio, video and data applications," said Intellon CEO Charlie Harris.

IC stands for integrated circuit, industry slang for what we call on the street a "computer chip."

"HomePlug is the universal connectivity solution for the digital home and Intellon is the world leader in HomePlug technology, IC sales and product enablement," Harris added.

Use of in-home multimedia networks is expected to grow "substantially" over the next five years as the consumer appetite for connected home entertainment grows, the firm said.

The firm revealed Wednesday that it raised \$24.5 million in new equity financing.

That funding was led by BCE Capital — affiliated with Bell Canada, reportedly Canada's largest communications company; Goldman, Sachs & Co; Intel Capital, and Motorola Ventures.

We reported Motorola's investment Aug 15, but the amount was not released.

Goldman Sachs helped make headlines recently joining Google and Hearst

Communications in investing \$100 in BPL hardware vendor and integrator Current Communications Group (*BPL Today*, 7/11).

Existing Intellon champions include:

- Comcast Interactive Capital — Comcast is reported to be America's biggest broadband and cable TV provider;

- Chicago venture capital (VC) firm Duchossois Technology Partners;

- EnerTech Capital — a VC firm focused on "early-stage companies and technologies that can have a dramatic, profitable impact on large industries facing large, hard-to-solve issues, especially in the energy and power industries;

- Boston VC firm Fidelity Ventures — boasting one of the best track records in the "venture" industry;

- Hydro-Québec CapiTech, a VC firm "set up to give Hydro-Québec ... a better understanding of energy-related products and services and enable it to take advantage of new business opportunities;"

- Liberty Associated Partners, the VC arm of media giant Liberty Media with electronic retailing, media, communications and entertainment businesses including some of the world's most recognized and respected brands including QVC, Encore and Starz;

- Philips Venture Capital Fund — the VC subsidiary of Dutch electronics giant Royal Philips Electronics — maker of Philips brand TVs and appliances;

- Wayne, Pa, VC firm TL Ventures that reports having invested over \$1.4 billion in

over 190 companies and claims to be "one of the most active firms in the market," and

- UMC Capital Corp, investment arm of the giant Taiwanese computer chip manufacturer.

Intellon plans to use the new funds to continue growth and speed deployment of HomePlug AV compatible chips.

HomePlug 1.0 compatible chips are being used on six continents for home networking, BPL and commercial applications, the firm reminded, and HomePlug AV will enable whole-house distribution of HD video and digital audio over existing electrical wiring "and coaxial cable, with robust quality of service and tight control of latency and jitter," said the firm.

"This new round of funding will help Intellon capitalize on the continuing growth of the power line communications market," said CEO Charlie Harris (above).

BCE Capital was founded in 1987 and built "a track record of investing in and developing some of the most successful emerging growth communications and information technology companies in North America," BCE reported.

The firm backed over 40 management teams and has seen several of them through IPOs and acquisitions.

Telecom firms are looking for a way to compete with cable firms as VOIP begins to erode long-distance revenues, noted Intellon's Andy Melder (above).

Those firms will probably use DSL and

fiber for access but power outlets are ubiquitous and the wires allow robust in-home networking that wireless simply can't match.

Brad Fisher, Bell Canada's vice president of consumer services is to be the keynote at the upcoming HomePlug conference, noted Melder.

Goldman Sachs is a leading global investment banking, securities and investment management firm.

Intel Capital focuses on making minority

equity investments to grow the internet economy in support of Intel's strategic interests as leading chipmaker of the world.

The firm invested more than \$4 billion in about 1,000 companies in over 30 countries since 1991.

About 160 of those firms were acquired by other firms and another 150 went public on various exchanges around the world, said the firm.

Intel Capital employs investment managers in about 25 countries worldwide

and last year invested over \$130 million in about 110 deals with about 40% of its investments made outside the US (www.intel.com/capital).

The firm started the \$200 million Digital Home Fund in January last year and targets firms developing hardware and software plus connectivity and supporting technologies that let people enjoy digital content such as music, games, photos and video on multiple devices in the home and beyond.

Big-name backers could influence IEEE process

Will HomePlug pull a 'VHS' on BPL?

As the IEEE's P1901 effort gets into gear to decide to what degree existing technologies are represented in a universal BPL interoperability standard, the leading technology camps are HomePlug using

Intellon's chipsets, the Universal Powerline Assn (UPA) using DS2 chipsets and the Consumer Electronics Powerline Communications Assn (CEPCA).

If one of these camps gets a majority of industry support it's possible the IEEE could name that camp the winner.

We've seen reports suggesting that's what happened when the cable modem

spec DOCSIS was released by CableLabs and won wide support from vendors.

When beta and VHS "duked it out" to win the video tape market, beta was a higher quality technology but the market chose VHS thanks to effective marketing. Beta went on to have a long career in the professional video industry because of its superior quality picture.

If HomePlug's plan is to win the way VHS and DOCSIS did, it's starting to pack a wallop adding new members last week to its already-impressive board.

Intel is the world's largest computer chip maker.

Linksys is a well known brand of small office and home office networking owned by Cisco — the company that built the gear that built the internet.

We reported recently that Motorola invested in Intellon, thus joining HomePlug is a logical next step (*BPL Today*, 8/15) — and Motorola sales last year were \$31.3 billion.

Rounding out the team are those previously committed to HomePlug:

- Comcast calls itself the nation's leading provider of cable, entertainment and communications products and services, with over 21.5 million cable subscribers and 7.7 million high-speed internet customers;

- Conexant isn't as well known to the general public but the home electronics chipmaker reported \$197 million in revenue for the third fiscal quarter of this year;

- EarthLink, calls itself the nation's leading ISP, serves over 5 million subscribers with dial-up, high-speed internet, web hosting, wireless voice and data services and "EarthLink Extras" such as home networking, security and VOIP, plus

- RadioShack, Sharp and Sony.

The other camps have support, too and from some of the same firms.

Sony is a member of all three camps. Japanese manufacturer Sumitomo joined HomePlug recently (*BPL Today*, 8/15) and was a founding member of CEPCA.

Meanwhile DS2's chipsets were

Trimax wins Canadian in-building BPL firm

Trimax Corp acquired PLC Network Solutions (PNS) of Toronto in an all-stock transaction.

PNS is an in-building BPL hardware vendor created last year when Electrolinks (*BPL Today*, 4/04) narrowed its focus to access BPL for utilities.

Trimax has been looking for "communication technologies that will give it a niche in fast-growth sectors."

PNS gear can "broadband-enable an entire building in days instead of weeks without the capital costs of new wiring," Trimax noted.

The vendor licensed from Electrolinks the latter's non-exclusive Canadian and global rights for BPL hardware and software from Swiss firm Ascom.

The PNS license includes exclusive Canadian distribution rights for in-building, low-power solutions and worldwide rights for mid- and low-power solutions.

Ascom gear is deployed in over 25 countries in homes, apartments, office towers, schools, hotels, hospitals, museums and government buildings, noted Trimax.

Ascom's "next-generation" BPL modems offer 205 mbps bandwidth," said Trimax President Derek Pepler (www.ascom.com/plc).

"As consumers begin to demand economical bandwidth solutions for a

range of new applications such as VOIP and IPTV, we believe there will be a trend towards the adoption of these low-cost BPL technologies worldwide," he forecast.

Trimax plans to adopt the name PLC Network Solutions and get a new stock symbol.

"Government and business leaders have mandated broadband as an essential service for the social and economic benefits it provides citizens and business," noted Trimax.

The firm sees lots of potential in its BPL technologies — including those under R&D — "to help to bridge the digital divide by bringing broadband to underserved urban and rural areas around the globe."

The Trimax deal let PNS "look at potential expansions and acquisitions to complement existing business and to drive future growth," added PNS Founder Bir Flora.

Electrolinks and Ascom are to play a major role in the success and growth of the firm (www.plcnetworksolutions.com), he added.

Electrolinks is providing services, tech support staff and the aid of its board members to help PLC Network Solutions win residential and commercial BPL business, Electrolinks Director Roman Hrycyshyn noted.

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chosen by in-home BPL vendor/retailer Corinex for a box to deliver networking throughout a home — including data, voice and video and orders in the tens of thousands of units are stacking up, mostly from large telecom firms bent on competing with cable TV to offer the triple play including HDTV (*BPL Today*, 8/08).

International Broadband Electric Communications (IBEC) used the DS2 chip to create a BPL box that can communicate over 13 miles (*BPL Today*, 6/20) and Korean newcomer Kaicom looks poised to shake up the US BPL market with DS2-based boxes with added functionality at what may be a disruptive price point (*BPL Today*, 8/22).

Designed Telecommunications (D-tel) has a deal to bring DS2-based BPL gear from Swiss vendor Ascom, a UPA founding member, to the US and, at first, focus on the in-premises market (*BPL Today*, 5/30).

Since only DS2 and HomePlug are announcing support from technology industry giants, we expect one or the other is likely to dominate the ultimate interoperability standard.

But we're not seeing the kind of headlines HomePlug is generating from the UPA and CEPCA.

Those two could have some surprises at CES.

But the fact that CEPCA co-founder Sony joined HomePlug in May (*BPL Today*, 5/09) is a hint that UPA hasn't built the momentum needed to compete against the likes of Intel, Cisco and Motorola and the rest of HomePlug's team.

No camp seems willing to compromise and if becoming the most entrenched is the strategy for ultimate acceptance at IEEE, HomePlug's news will be more compelling when new and existing members have

HomePlug AV gear on shelves and in homes and offices.

"Interoperability specifications are vital to ensuring digital content can get inside and move between devices in the home quickly and easily," said Don McDonald, general manager for Intel's digital home group.

He told of Intel's planned Viiv (rhymes with five) entertainment computer systems due out next year that lets users watch, play, format and network entertainment content throughout the home.

The systems will use Microsoft's Windows Media Center operating system and include a remote control to use the computer more like a TV.

"Intel continues to work closely with industry groups and alliances such as the Digital Living Network Alliance, a group that has grown to nearly 250 members worldwide," plus key wired and wireless technologies such as WiMAX, WiFi and Wireless USB, he added.

The IEEE put its own corporate standards group in charge of P1901 as a way of speeding the approval process, Jim Mollenkopf, vice president of products and architecture at Current Communications Group and co-chairman of the IEEE P1901 PHY/MAC Working Group, told an EE Times reporter writing for Embedded.com.

"The members all realize that IEEE has had a reputation for doing things the right way but not necessarily with optimum speed.

"We want to do this particular job quickly," the report quoted (www.embedded.com/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=170000032).

HomePlug membership has several tiers including a basic membership for firms that want to make or interact with HomePlug-enabled gear, said Melder (www.homeplug.org).

All other BPL rendered useless?

Advanced Powerline Technologies "acquired" some BPL/PLC intellectual property that it believes is the most advanced technology of its type in the world.

The new technology is from three inventors.

It's under patent applications and "renders the other technology virtually useless," said the Woodward, Okla firm.

We have yet to get an interview with this firm since its last announcement that it was developing TVs with BPL chips built-in, allowing a connection to a BPL network through the power cord (*BPL Today*, 7/25).

APT's products include cellular phones and liquid crystal display (LCD)

digital TVs with HDTV tuners — reportedly made in China with plans to move production to the US.

As soon as R&D is done and test results are in APT plans to use the technology in existing product platforms to "enhance" their abilities.

Implementing the new inventions into APT's products "shall catapult the company into the forefront of ... BPL and power line communications (PLC) making Advanced Powerline Technologies 'THE WORLD LEADER IN POWERLINE COMMUNICATIONS(TM).'"

The firm hired Chicago patent law firm Patzik, Frank & Samotny "to prosecute patents and protect this intellectual property from any infringers."

IBEC lands nation's first RUS loan for BPL

From page one

BPL plans, but IBEC is the first to do it, said Lee.

The telecom and electric offices at

RUS worked together for the first time in processing IBEC's application reflecting the unprecedented cooperation between the FERC and the FCC in October when the latter released its BPL order.

We hear meeting the RUS loan rules is tricky.

"We started the process about a year ago and got our application in at year-end last year," reported Lee.

RUS "did a tremendous job," he declared.

"They took the time and learned about BPL and actually had some RUS representatives go visit our Virginia install — looked at what we were doing."

It's not easy to learn a new technology and understand how it fits into the rural market — "a space that no one to-date has been able to go into" with BPL.

Lee gave the RUS team high marks for doing just that.

A RUS grant normally is approved in 60 to 90 days, said Lee, but because it was the first time covering BPL, IBEC's took seven months.

Lee wasn't the slightest bit critical of the delay.

He reported excitement at IBEC and the RUS office about their success.

"We're just tickled to death to be able to participate in the program," noted Lee. IBEC was told a few weeks ago that the application was approved but the announcement was delayed to coincide with a visit by Indiana native and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Connor to the Indiana state fair where he was holding Farm Bill meetings.

Connor presented IBEC with a five foot check.

IBEC's goal fits with its ethic of helping the underserved.

Lee plans on turning a profit, he assured, but "it really means something special to you when you make a difference in people's lives."

Rural Americans "are often neglected but ... have the same need for broadband services as those living in urban and suburban America," reminded Lee.

"These loans will allow IBEC to begin building the broadband networks necessary to serve rural America and close the 'digital divide.'"

The funds will be split among Cullman Electric Cooperative in Cullman, Ala; South Central Indiana Rural Electric Membership Cooperative (SCI) in Martinsville, Ind, and Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (SVEC) in Lovingson, Va.

IBEC plans to offer high-speed, always-on internet "services similar to DSL and cable modem services, to as many as 104,000 customers.

Prices for service will start as low as \$29.95 and unlike DSL and cable, BPL delivers broadband directly to every power

5 stories in 3 minutes

Biggest US BPL not

interfering: A Computerworld story on continued support for BPL from big name firms despite concerns from radio groups, quoted Cinergy's Kathy Meinke that 95% of the firm's "thousands of users" rate the BPL service as "satisfactory," adding that ham radio users haven't filed any complaints. American Radio Relay League Public Relations Manager Allen Pitts confirmed the assertion, Computerworld reported. Current Technologies Director of Engineering Jim Mollenkopf — co-chair of the IEEE's BPL PHY/MAC Working Group — attributed the lack of ham radio complaints to hard work by Current, said the report. The BPL firm isn't wearing a white hat, but it's beige, the report quoted Pitts (www.computerworld.com/industrytopics/energy/story/0,10801,104067,00.html).

Canadian BPL firm

3One Networks won a \$70,400 grant from the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program. The grant's called *Research and Development of Next Generation BPL Modem* and is to develop solutions that allow for the seamless routing of data, voice and video within BPL networks. The firm was required to complete an extensive evaluation and due diligence process to make sure the firm is developing a commercially viable product that doesn't already exist. The firm showed it has the technical expertise and experience to do such a project and is financially stable with a sustainable business model, it reported (www.3one.ca).

Intellon showcased

next generation HomePlug AV gear delivering HD video over power

lines at the Intel Pavilion at IDF (story above) plus at its own booth and at an installation called the Intellon Pod. The chipmaker showed off now-available adapters from hardware vendors using its HomePlug 1.0 with Turbo chipset (85 mbps) delivering standard definition video from an IPTV set top box (STB), across power wires to a video display. The demo included gear using HomePlug 1.0 chipsets networking entertainment, data and security camera applications. Intellon is based in Ocala, Fla and has offices in San Jose, Calif, and Toronto.

BPL and the Energy Act: UTC hired the law firm of McDermott, Will & Emory to report on the Energy Act of 2005 and its impact on the association's members — utilities with communications networks. "These provisions will require electric utilities to examine in a very short time frame the testing and deployment not only of smart meters, but also of the necessary communications networks and support systems," said the report. "In order to comply with this mandate, many utilities may need to look to a number of wireless and wired technologies including broadband over power line (BPL) for cost-effective communications strategies for smart meter deployment" (www.utc.org).

Music to nay-sayer's ears:

"Utilities have never really operated in competitive markets before and the broadband market is a very competitive market," Rick Nicholson, vice president of research at Energy Insights, told Reuters. "The intensity of competition in the broadband business could effectively keep utilities on the outs," the report quoted Vamsi Sistla, broadband director at ABI Research. "Electric utilities should not jump onto the internet bandwagon just because they have a pipe into a home, many analysts say," the report added. We'll see.

outlet in a home or business, the firm reminded.

It's also synchronous, folks — same upload speed as download creating an advantage for gamers, VOIP and anyone sending or streaming big files.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: It would be remiss of us not to make use of ... some 4,000 miles of electric lines that our members

have already paid for to bring this service to our members.

*Howard Scarboro,
CEO of Central Virginia
Electric Cooperative.*

“Less than 10% of our membership currently has access to broadband service and the prospect of them getting broadband service any time soon if we don't provide it is not very good,” said

SCI CEO Kevin Sump

“The potential of extending BPL in rural America today is very similar to the extension of electric service some 70 years ago,” said Grady Smith, CEO of Cullman Electric Cooperative.

All three plan to use internal utility applications to monitor, manage and maintain their networks, improve customer service and cut the day-to-day operating costs of providing reliable energy to their customers.

Don't miss ...

What is the Outlook for the Texas Commercial, Industrial Power Market?

Join *Restructuring Today* on Sept 9 to ask Texas PUC Commissioner **Barry Smitherman**, **Reliant Energy** Sr VP and General Manager of Commercial and Industrial marketing **Jim Ajello**, **Cirro Energy Services** President **Jeff Nottingham** and **Pioneer Natural Resources** Energy Manager **Jim Uhelski**. See last page of this issue for details.

Tell us what you think. We want to hear from you. Send your comments, questions and suggestions about this week's *BPL Today* to sam@ghinews.com.

Abbreviations: To see a glossary of *BPL Today's* abbreviations, go to www.bpltoday.com/glossary.htm.

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